



BEA 2014: Lena Dunham: Where the Girls Are

By Karen Jones | May 31, 2014



Golden Globe winner Lena Dunham is best known as the creator and star of the hit HBO series *Girls*, where she plays 20-something aspiring writer Hannah Horvath. Writing is not new to Dunham, who studied creative writing at Oberlin College and is a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker*. Her first book, *Not That Kind of Girl: A Young Woman Tells You What She Has “Learned”* (Random House, Sept.), is told with her trademark candor as she explores sex, work, and “how to remain 10 pounds overweight eating only health food.” She talks to *Show Daily* about prose as passion, the differences between her and alter ego Hannah, and how being around book lovers is “a dream.”

What was your inspiration for writing *Not That Kind of Girl* and why was now the time to write it?

Prose is my first passion and I’ve always loved essays, in particular—as a reader and a writer. I am inspired by authors from Joan Didion to David Sedaris to Nora Ephron, and the way they explore human experience using this elegant little form. I felt it was important to write a book now, at the relative beginning of my career, for a couple of reasons: because of the creative satisfaction it gives me, and to show people that prose is an important part of what I do.

What do you want readers to learn from this book?

I consider the book a mixture of (very) personal history, social commentary and cultural criticism. It’s as much about feminism and growing up in the Internet age as it is about my own history. I hope that all readers will come away with a sense that their most humiliating or confusing experiences have a certain unsung elegance. I want it to make people feel less alone, the way my favorite books have done for me.

How does this type of writing compare with your other artistic endeavors, such as creating websites, feature films, and the hit HBO series *Girls*?

With television and film, you have dozens of collaborators, dozens of voices encouraging and questioning you. With the book, it was just a very private relationship between my editor, Andy Ward, and myself. I had to trust him as my entire audience, and trust myself as a writer in a new way. There's no "we'll figure it out when we're shooting the scene."

What do you think fans of *Girls* might be surprised to learn in the book?

I think there is a lot of confusion on the part of the audience about what is Hannah and what is me, and this book makes it clear we had different childhoods, different ambitions, and different beliefs. She's a character and a repository for a lot of my worst instincts and fears. People will also learn a lot about my uterus.

You have a very large social media following. Can you offer any thoughts—good or bad—on being instantly accessible to fans?

I love my Twitter pals—they are a tough, funny bunch. Sure, I could do without some of the more aggressive interactions, but I have truly found a community online—and in a way I never expected. Also, I do all my window shopping via Instagram.

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