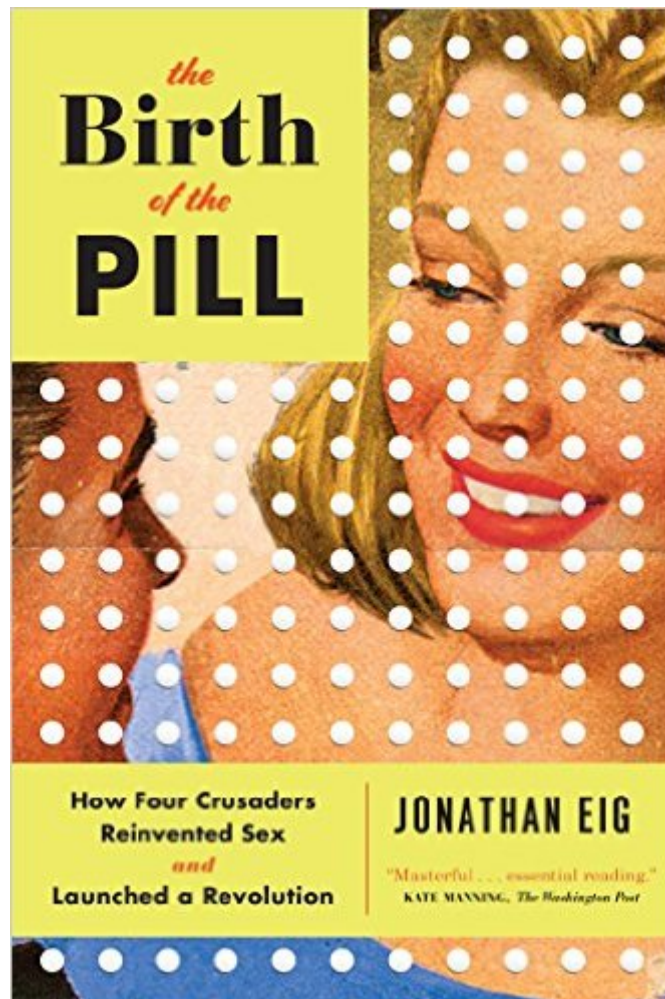


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# The Birth Of The Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex And Launched A Revolution



## Synopsis

A Chicago Tribune "Best Books of 2014" • A Slate "Best Books 2014: Staff Picks" • A St. Louis Post-Dispatch "Best Books of 2014" The fascinating story of one of the most important scientific discoveries of the twentieth century. We know it simply as "the pill," yet its genesis was anything but simple. Jonathan Eig's masterful narrative revolves around four principal characters: the fiery feminist Margaret Sanger, who was a champion of birth control in her campaign for the rights of women but neglected her own children in pursuit of free love; the beautiful Katharine McCormick, who owed her fortune to her wealthy husband, the son of the founder of International Harvester and a schizophrenic; the visionary scientist Gregory Pincus, who was dismissed by Harvard in the 1930s as a result of his experimentation with in vitro fertilization but who, after he was approached by Sanger and McCormick, grew obsessed with the idea of inventing a drug that could stop ovulation; and the telegenic John Rock, a Catholic doctor from Boston who battled his own church to become an enormously effective advocate in the effort to win public approval for the drug that would be marketed by Searle as Enovid. Spanning the years from Sanger's heady Greenwich Village days in the early twentieth century to trial tests in Puerto Rico in the 1950s to the cusp of the sexual revolution in the 1960s, this is a grand story of radical feminist politics, scientific ingenuity, establishment opposition, and, ultimately, a sea change in social attitudes. Brilliantly researched and briskly written, *The Birth of the Pill* is gripping social, cultural, and scientific history. 8 pages of illustrations

## Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition (October 19, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393351890

ISBN-13: 978-0393351897

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1.1 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (97 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #58,034 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Women's Studies > Abortion & Birth Control #20 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Special Topics > History #77 in Books > Medical Books > History

## Customer Reviews

We take for granted now that people can take steps to keep pregnancy from happening while they still enjoy all the pleasures of coitus. It is astonishing how recent an idea this is. Using contraception was illegal in most states until after World War I. Under the Comstock Law, just mailing information about contraception could land you in jail, and Anthony Comstock himself considered it his duty to seize not only pornography from the mails but any device for contraception. The American Medical Association did not consider contraception a matter for medical consideration until 1937. Some states continued to make contraception illegal for single women until the 1960s. Married women had few options if they wanted to space children out, so staying home and bearing babies was simply what they had to do. Eventually some dreamers thought this could be changed, and in *The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution* (W. W. Norton), Jonathan Eig has told how all the anti-pleasure societal forces were eventually thwarted. It is an astonishing story, told with detail and even excitement, of a triumph of idealists who were ready to work hard to make their dreams come true, and it is amazing that their victory came just a half-century ago. The first, and most famous, of the four dreamers was Margaret Sanger.. Sanger enjoyed sex, and knew that sex without fear of pregnancy was a feminist goal; women needed to take from men the final say about when they would become mothers. She had dreamed of an oral contraceptive for decades, but only in 1950 was she able to contact a researcher that might make it happen, physiologist Gregory Pincus, who, having been shut out of Harvard, was running his own shoestring-budget lab.

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