

# A History of Female Adolescent Sexuality in American Cinema

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# Sex in the Cin em a

## The first onscreen KISS



Thomas Edison filmed the cinemas first kiss in 1896 in his New Jersey studio with actress May Irwin.  
This is no adolescent, however.

# The earliest era of films



Lillian Gish  
the woman,  
the child



D.W. Griffith  
Broken Blossoms (1919)

Adolescent or teenager was not really a concept at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were either a child, or a woman.

# Historical Events

## 1914-1929

- 1914-1918 World War I
- 1920-1933 Prohibition
- 1920 The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment is passed
- giving women the right to vote.
- 1929 Stock Market Crash beginning of the Great Depression



# *Finishing School 1934*



Virginia has sex with her  
boyfriend



In the Pre-Code era of cinema, women were allowed sexual desire... as long as they were saved by marriage in the end

Her boyfriend comes to rescue  
her with marriage



# Hays Code 1934 -1968

## Three Smart Girls Grow Up 1939

“Any problem will all work out, because somehow someday someone tall dark and handsome will dry her tears”



When the Hays code went into effect, young women were usually portrayed as pure and innocent, without any sexuality or desire



Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz  
Scarlett in Gone With the Wind



good vs. evil

# Historical Events

- World War II 1939-1945. By 1945 1 out of 4 married women worked outside the home.
- 1941 Attack on Pearl Harbor. United States enters War
- 1947 House Un-American Activities Committee subpoenaed their 1<sup>st</sup> Witnesses about communist infiltration in Hollywood
- 1948 Paramount Decree - studios must sell their theatres
- 1948 Television Network Programming





# Film Noir and the Femme Fatale



When he refuses, she shoots him repeatedly

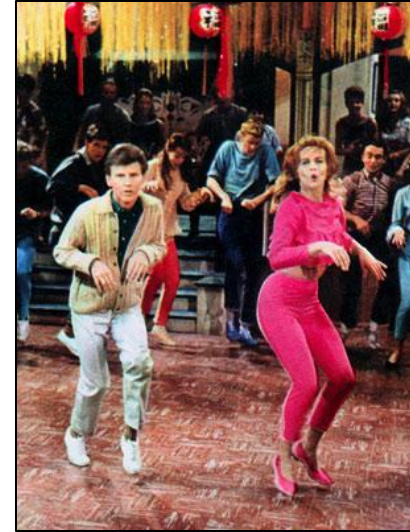
*Mildred Pierce 1945*

Veda uses her sexual allure to  
get Monte to marry her



# Post War Affluence and the Teen Pix

“all about sex, but without the sex”



Beach Party

1963

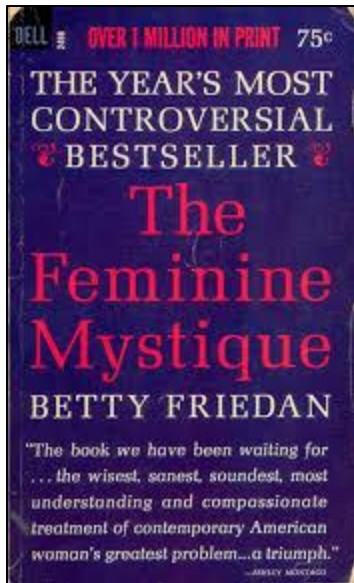
Bye Bye Birdie



In the 1950s and early 60s there was an explosion of films targeted at the new teen market – the rock and roll film and beach films portrayed girls as sexy nubile good girl virgins

# Historical Events

- 1960 The Pill is approved by the FDA
- 1963 Betty Friedan writes *The Feminine Mystique*
- 1966 NOW National Organization for Women
- 1973 Roe v. Wade



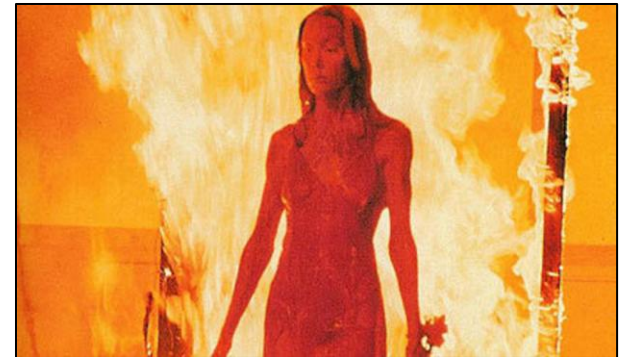


# Lolita 1962 & Carrie 1976

the 60s and 70s



There is no innocence in the sexually revolutionized female teen



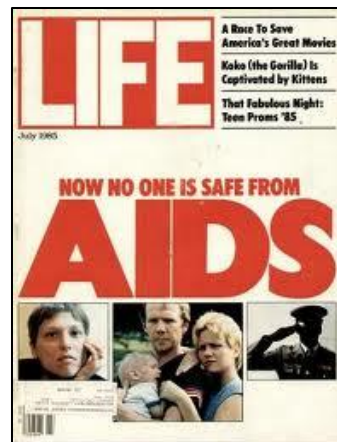
Molly Haskell writes of the cinema in the 60s and 70s, " Women's roles of the decade, what are they? Whores, quasi-whores, jilted mistresses, emotional cripples, drunks, daffy ingénues, Lolitas, Kooks, sex-starved spinsters, psychotics. Icebergs, zombies, and ballbreakers. That's what little girls of the sixties and seventies are made of.... The new liberated woman was nowhere in sight. "

# Historical Events



- 1982 Equal Rights Amendment Died

- 1981 AIDS is first clinically observed in the United States





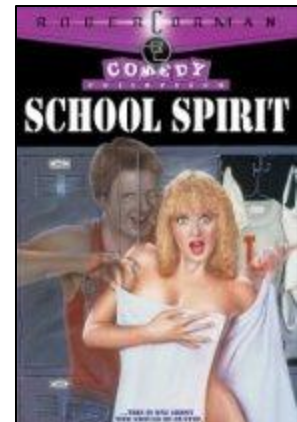
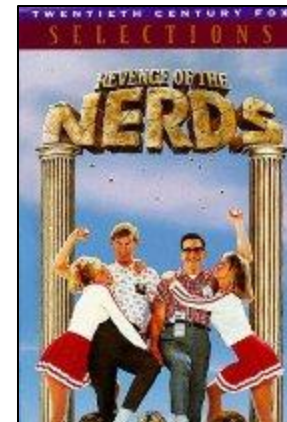
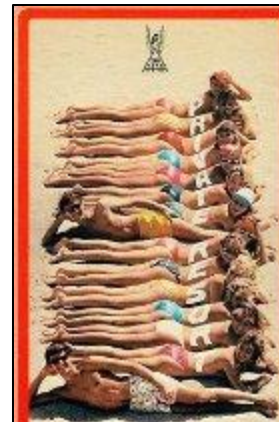
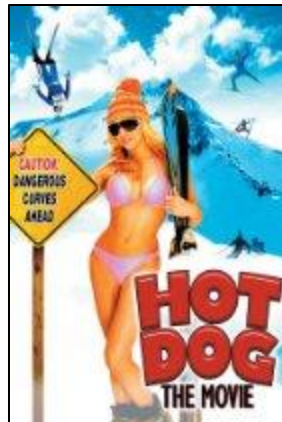
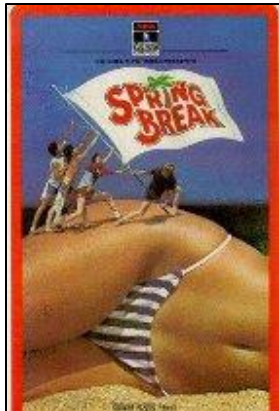
# Sexploitation!

Animal House 1978

Porky's 1982



Otherwise known as Boob Comedies





# The Confused Virgin



"Well, if you say you haven't, you're a prude. If you say you have you're a slut. It's a trap. You want to but you can't, and when you do you wish you didn't, right?"

Allison in The Breakfast Club 1985

"I just know I must be horny"

Lynne in Girls Just Want to Have Fun 1985



In the 80s there was a push back to the good girl ideal, yet left the characters confused without a valid right to a healthy sexuality

## 90s Consumerism & the Makeover films...



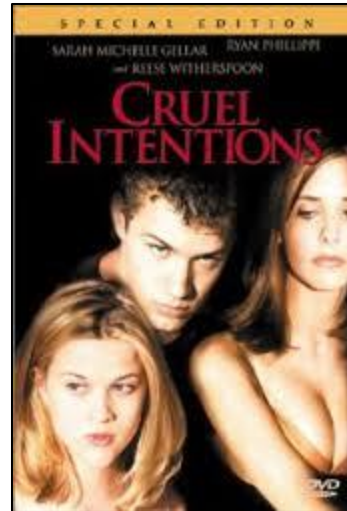
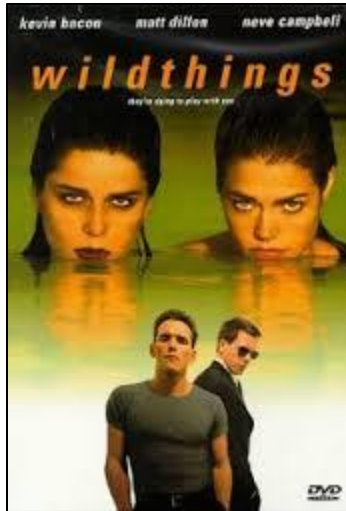
Clueless 1995



She's All That 1999

The 90s teen film was driven by marketing and consumerism. Filmmakers were reaching out to the influencers of the generation – the cool rich kids. The adolescent female was more about being popular than sexual.

# The 90s tragic and sadistic



Sexual desire is a result of her neglected childhood.  
What she really wants is love, not sex.





# Third Wave of Feminism

The many faces of woman



Snow White and the Huntsmen 2012

Saved by a kiss

Ready to Fight



The Hunger Games 2012

Able to Fight

Loves on her own terms



Definition of Self beyond perceived Sexuality

# Juno 2007

And a personal favorite...

Juno, who although  
knocked up... is



unapologetic about her  
desire and sexuality.