



*The Book*  
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## How *Fifty Shades Of Grey* Is Like The Measles

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### synopsis

In a world that bombards us with millions of messages a day, we need to be careful about romanticizing things that mask as entertainment, but are harmful to women.

When I was in grade school in the 60's, we got our vaccinations at school. We lined up in the hall, and a nurse came down the row with a cotton ball and a bottle of alcohol, followed by a deep injection. I tried so hard not to cry. If you cried the other kids made fun of you, and I can remember being so nervous that I asked my mother if I could stay home that day. Why did they hurt us like that?

It's hard to explain pain as protection to a seven-year-old, but I think she did a pretty good job. She told me that kids got bad diseases that would run through schools like a wildfire. Most of the kids got sick, and some of them got really, really sick. Everyone itched everywhere like they had a million chigger bites, and their head hurt so bad they couldn't lift it off the pillow. Sometimes their brains swelled up so tight they thought their skull would burst. Every year some children died, particularly the babies. She said that if I got this one little shot this one time, those things wouldn't happen to me. I decided I would hold my breath and squeeze my eyes tight, so I wouldn't cry.



It's not love when a man manipulates a woman, then sees her become so afraid of disappointing him that she allows him to do anything to her that he wishes, even when it causes her excruciating pain. That's called **sexual, emotional, physical, and psychological abuse.**

If only there was a vaccine for what ailed women in the 60's.

Soon after, the measles were eradicated. Poof! Gone! No child in our country would ever get them because we were all vaccinated, and best of all, babies who were too young to get the shot couldn't get the measles either because our vaccines protected them. There was no one to catch them from, so there was no more suffering.

If only there was a vaccine for what ailed women in the 60's. They had bosses who harassed them and copped a feel or more if they could get away with it, grocers who told them not to worry their pretty little heads about calculating change, they went to college to be trained as a teacher or to get their MRS degree, and some ended up with heavy-handed husbands who shoved them on the bed for forced sex, who handed them their allowance and demanded an account for every penny, who expected supper at six with a smile—even if it came through gritted teeth. Get me the newspaper, get out of my chair, bring me a cigarette, get me a scotch. Equals? Choices? They couldn't even imagine it.

But they had children who adored them, and their fierce drive to protect their babies meant that they patted them on their heads and sent them to school to get their shot.

Not one of them would have gone to a movie that portrayed handcuffs and whips and slaps and unrelenting control and pain and torturous sex as romance—or even worse, as love.



While we cry out for greater protection for women against sexual assault, we fork over \$15 a ticket to be entertained by it.

Women have worked so hard to get beyond those times. We've labored and lobbied and legislated so that we'll be *empowered*, so we'll be treated with the dignity we deserve and will be valued as equals in our homes and in society. And we were successful! So much so that our daughters think that being doctors and lawyers and teachers and social workers and bankers and retail clerks and venture capitalists and senators and singers and equals while being moms is the norm. Because it is. We've eradicated so much of that cultural disease that thrived in the 60's.

Then along came *Fifty Shades of Grey*. The old disease all prettied up with a brand new book cover.

There's nothing romantic about an older man who stalks a young virgin, charms her with his rapt attention and wealth, wines and dines and valentines her—with the sole intent of making her his sexual slave. We call such men sexual predators.

It's not love when an older and powerful man manipulates a younger woman, causes her to fall in love with him, then sees her become so afraid of disappointing him that she allows him to do anything to her—*anything*—that he wishes, even when it causes her excruciating pain. We call that sexual, emotional, physical, and psychological abuse.

Men who stalk women to make them their sex slave are called **sexual predators.**



When we hear of collective incidents or crimes against women in other countries, we organize charities and raise money and fly the flag of human dignity.

When families learn that their young woman has fallen under the spell of a controlling, abusive man, they find ways to rescue her, to physically remove her from the situation. And when we hear of collective incidents or crimes against women in other countries, we organize charities and raise money and fly the flag of human dignity. After all, we eradicated this in the US. We can carry it to the world.

I totally get the fun of a frisky frolic a few times a week, maybe throw in a couple of toys or a game or two to make it playful. You've got to keep it interesting, right? But the first time you lay a firm hand on me, or force me, or use your superior strength on me, or whip me, or slap me, or put me in holds so I can't get away from you, I'm calling the cops.

And if you do it to my daughter, I'm coming after you.

I've read the *Fifty Shades* trilogy. In truth, the sex got to be rather boring, so I eventually skipped over those parts. I'm no prude and don't mind a bit of erotica from time to time. The buzz generated by the books was a kind of whisper-behind-your-hand to your girlfriends talk and a surprise-your-man-with-a new-toy kind of thrill.

But now it's on the big screen, larger than life, IMAX to the max, touted as romance, as a love story, released for Valentine's Day. And the tickets are sold out.

Imagine the teen girls and new women who will learn that it's okay if a whip or a slap sneaks in. *If Anastasia can take it, so can I. If that's what he likes, then I'll be what he wants.* We've worked so hard to teach them to love themselves, to be empowered, to value their bodies, their selves, and their lives. All that can be undermined by one movie, especially one with such buzz. And while we cry out for greater protection for women against sexual assault, we fork over \$15 a ticket to be entertained by it.

What are we thinking?



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