

Susanna Kaysen's Journal-Memoir, *Girl, Interrupted*

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Susanna Kaysen's Journal-Memoir, *Girl, Interrupted*

Sane or normal people have wondered at one time or another what it is like in a hospital that houses the insane. Susanna Kaysen opens the door to the reality and true insanity of being a patient in a mental hospital renowned for famous ex-patients, including Ray Charles, Sylvia Plath, and James Taylor in her book, *Girl, Interrupted*. She stays focused on reality and her idea of perception as well as the friendships she acquires in her two year stay at McLean Hospital and her recovery period once she is released.

Girl, Interrupted, written by Susanna Kaysen, is a documentation of her stay in a

psychiatric hospital including events building up to her taxi ride to the hospital and her recovery period outside the hospital. Susanna voluntarily admitted herself into McLean Hospital on April 27, 1967 after just one visit with a psychiatrist who had pushed her into

thinking she needed "rest". She was told that she would only be staying for a couple of weeks. Those couple of weeks turned into six hundred seventeen days.

Susanna's [roommate](#), Georgina, was admitted after a tidal wave of darkness had

broke over her head in a theater. When she realized no one else was experiencing this

[sensation](#), she knew she had gone crazy. Along with Georgina, Susanna was friends with a

group of girls including Lisa, Polly, and [Cynthia](#). Lisa never slept and rarely ate so she was always thin and yellow. She was very independent and often ran away. Even though she was always caught, she yearned for that freedom that she had tasted on the outside. Polly was a girl who had set herself on fire using gasoline at an age when she wasn't even old enough to drive. Her neck and cheeks were scarred the most, but strangely enough she was never unhappy. Kind and comforting to others, Polly never complained and always had time to listen to other people. Not much was said about Cynthia except that she would have electric shock therapy once a week and would come back crying.

Susanna randomly mentions encounters with other patients but they never stay

fixed in the storyline. One such character was Wade, Georgina's boyfriend. Wade was

seventeen and enraged about almost everything. Susanna recounts listening to him tell

stories about his father one day. According to Wade, his father was a spy who had killed

dozens...

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...character.

Whatever it was he was attacking Susanna would comfort him by telling him it was ok to

spend money at which point the attacking would stop. On one occasion Susanna and her

boyfriend visited the Frick. She viewed a Vermeer titled Girl Interrupted at Her Music

which she remembered seeing twenty years ago with her high school English teacher. She

had made a connection with the painting all those years ago and now she realized that the

girl had been interrupted from her music just how she had been interrupted from her life.

While reading Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted*, I opened my eyes to the reality

of insanity in this world and how we perceive insane people is the same way they perceive us. We all have the same thoughts and processes going through our mind, but the ones who are considered "crazy" actually say it out loud whereas the rest of us keep it to ourselves. Maybe Susanna Kaysen wasn't really insane, but I do not doubt the people she was institutionalized with were. Her perception and depth of reality is a bit more sane than what most of us ever acquire in our own lives. That is what makes this book worth the time and effort of reading.

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