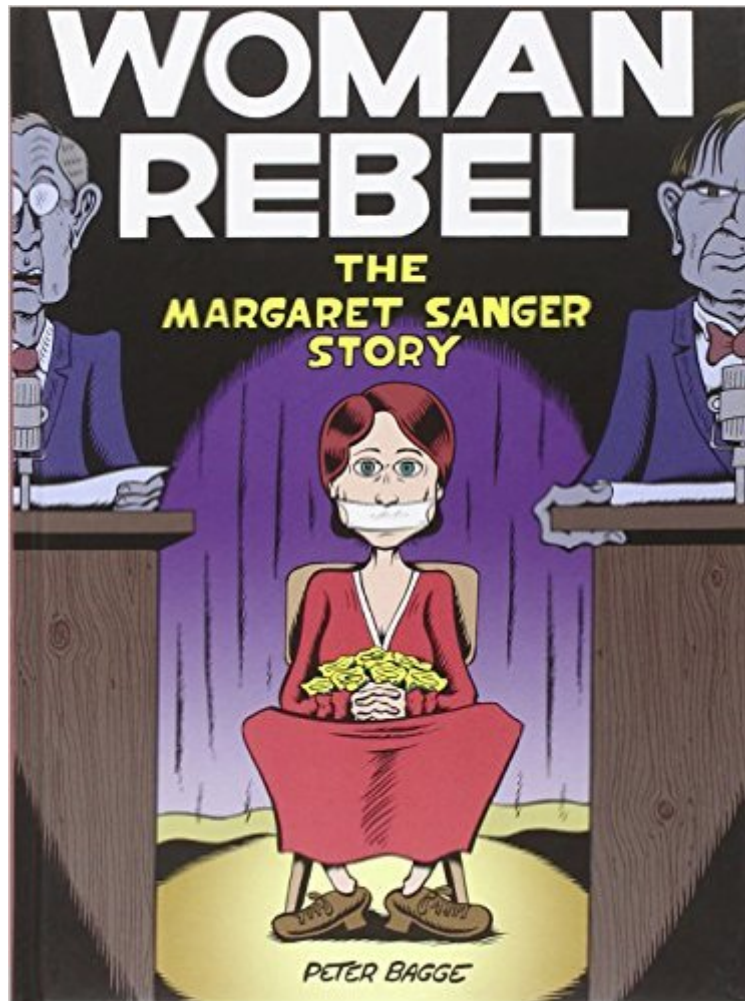


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# Woman Rebel: The Margaret Sanger Story



## Synopsis

The alternative-comics master offers an indelible and idiosyncratic take on the protofeminist "[Woman Rebel] is fine work from an excellent cartoonist and I urge you to jump right in." -Tom Spurgeon of The Comics Reporter, from his introduction Peter Bagge's *Woman Rebel: The Margaret Sanger Story* is a dazzling and accessible biography of the social and political maverick, jam-packed with fact and fun. In his signature cartoony, rubbery style, Bagge presents the life of the birth-control activist, educator, nurse, mother, and protofeminist from her birth in the late nineteenth century to her death after the invention of the birth control pill. Balancing humor and respect, Bagge makes Sanger whole and human, showing how her flaws fueled her fiery activism just as much as her compassionate nature did. Sanger's life takes on a whole new vivacity as Bagge creates a fast-paced portrait of a trailblazer whose legacy as the founder of Planned Parenthood is still incredibly relevant, important, and inspiring.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'll be completely honest: I had no idea who Margaret Sanger was until I read this book. Having finished it, I'm now very much informed on the subject and thoroughly enjoyed reading about Sanger's extraordinary life thanks to Peter Bagge's wonderful storytelling and research. Comics are a wonderful medium and one of the things they do extremely well, which is never emphasised enough, is non-fiction. Whether biography, true crime, philosophy, politics, science or history, comics can make nearly every non-fiction type much more appealing

and understandable. So even if I knew nothing about Margaret Sanger, I know Peter Bagge is an accomplished cartoonist, I know Drawn & Quarterly publish quality books, and I knew the medium would bring the subject to life. And I was right - *Woman Rebel* is a great book! Sanger was the founder of Planned Parenthood, the American organisation for birth control. It's no surprise to see where her drive for birth control came from seeing that her own mother had 18 pregnancies (10 of whom survived into adulthood) and that, as a young nurse, she saw women harming themselves to prevent further pregnancies, and living in appalling conditions surrounded by financially draining unwanted children due to ignorance of birth prevention. This led to Sanger's lifelong crusade to educate and inform the women of the world about their bodies and push for sex education for everyone everywhere and the widespread use, and legalisation, of birth control methods like diaphragms. Surprisingly, she was against abortion, preferring women exercise safe sex to ensure against pregnancy, and advised women to carry their pregnancies to term, though this might have been because of it being illegal so she only saw the results of back-alley abortions. Sanger was a fascinating woman who, despite being diagnosed with TB at a young age, lived a full, long life. She was a proto-feminist who led a bohemian lifestyle despite being married and a mother of three, taking many lovers, among them Havelock Ellis and HG Wells. She frequently challenged the law to speak to great crowds of people on birth control, leading to numerous high profile arrests and making her a celebrity in the process - she became a rebel with a cause! Bagge's approach is to be informative but also funny at times - in a respectful way - to suit the scene such as when Havelock Ellis reveals his turn-on is to watch a woman pee and, after Sanger offers, Ellis' expression is still emotionless and blunt as he says yes. It's a humanistic portrait too that shows how her incredible drive led to great reform but also made her a difficult person to live with and in her final years, though she remains indomitable, she becomes a drug addicted alcoholic (that is the time to throw caution to the wind though, right? You're on your way out, so why not?). Due to the shortness of the comic - roughly 70 pages - Bagge's storytelling relies heavily on exposition. Normally I'd say this is an artless way of getting across information but it's necessary in the circumstances as Bagge eschews blocks of descriptive text or narrative boxes to set the scene or put across relevant information. Also, the choice to have the characters talk about their situations/actions as its happening makes for a more fluid and energetic reading that's also illuminating. If you're looking for more information, Bagge includes numerous pages of text at the end - with photos - that goes into Sanger's life in more detail and also shows how much research Bagge put into this book. If you're unfamiliar with

Bagge's work is worth checking out if you enjoy alternative comics. His art style is highly stylised. Characters aren't drawn in the least bit realistically, arms and legs appear curved and floppy, faces turn cartoonishly extreme depending on their emotions and so on but it's a great style that gives his work a unique look and suits Sanger's freewheeling and dramatic lifestyle. *Woman Rebel* is an accessible, well written and drawn book about a remarkable woman who changed the world. It's an entertaining and informative read that sets out to enlighten readers of the life of Margaret Sanger and accomplishes this fully. Absolutely brilliant!

Love, love, LOVE this book! Margaret Sanger spent her lifetime breaking the rules of societal expectations of what it meant to be a woman, and women now are certainly better off for it. That said, she was no saint, and certainly had missteps along the way. I'm not a big comic book fan, so it surprised me how much I enjoyed this format while reading this. The author CLEARLY did his research. Highly recommend!

Cool graphic novel of Margaret Sanger's life. Neat graphics. Kinda wish it was longer and the transitions were a bit smoother. It's a bit choppy of a story but it covers her whole life. Biography in graphic novel form.

Birth control advocate Margaret Sanger might not have appreciated the full disclosure she receives from Peter Bagge in this new graphic novel treatment, but she is portrayed with respect as a phenomenally important, if flawed, woman. He gives ample space to her excesses, her egotism, and her prolific sexual adventures, but he does so while characterizing her as a full, complex individual with her own troubling challenges. He presents the indomitable Sanger with a light touch, allowing the humor, irony, and comedy of her life to blend with her serious pursuits. Sanger faced enormous opposition from civil and church authorities for her attempts to bring birth control information to women, especially to working-class women. She endured harassment, ridicule, assaults, and jail terms to do what she believed was right and necessary. She overcame enormous odds to reach some of her goals, establishing birth control clinics and increasing public understanding and support for reproductive services. Bagge skillfully entwines Sanger's accomplishments with her sexuality and her desire to be the sole leader of the birth control movement. His characterization of Sanger—how he draws her—often results in angry, frustrated, cranky expressions, and he might have allowed her an occasionally more

good-tempered, light-hearted aspect. Bagge's twenty pages of notes and citations reflect the extent of his research about Sanger. He has clearly immersed himself in her story and gained a thorough understanding of her life and times. I've read biographies of Sanger and her autobiographies, and I was curious whether the comics art form would present her story with insight and thoroughness. It does both extremely well. This is a remarkable presentation of Margaret Sanger, and it should appeal to new students of her life as well as those curious about how she fares in a cartoon format. Michael Helquist, author, MARIE EQUI: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions

This is a perfect little book of a really interesting and complex lady. Peter Bagge did his best to stay to the truth of her story and not get sucked in to the tall tales others say about M. Sanger. The art is great as usual and the story is really funny and compelling. Great for feminists who happen to be comic book fans as well!

Love this graphic novel! I read the graphic section through once, and then looked through it again while reading the many historic footnotes in the back. Very thought-provoking and informative. Parts were emotionally difficult to read. I now know 95% more about Margaret Sanger than I did before reading this. I have since lent it to a friend and I hope I get it back!

This is an excellent, informative comic about the life of an incredibly influential woman whose amazing story has been marginalized and vilified by conservatives. The cartoony style threw me off at first, but the really expressive illustrations and solid storytelling won me over, and I ultimately felt very connected with Margaret's story and with the history of women's liberation. A really wonderful book. Peter Bagge is a very thoughtful and compelling writer/illustrator.

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