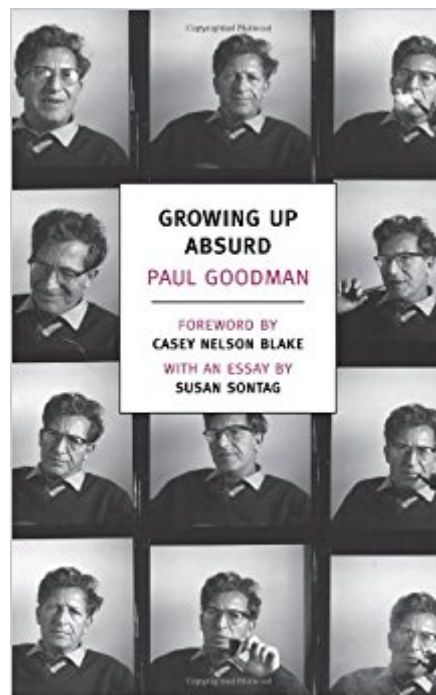


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# Growing Up Absurd: Problems Of Youth In The Organized Society (New York Review Books Classics)



## Synopsis

Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* was a runaway best seller when it was first published in 1960, and it became one of the defining texts of the New Left. Goodman was a writer and thinker who broke every mold and did it brilliantly—he was a novelist, poet, and a social theorist, among a host of other things—and the book's surprise success established him as one of America's most unusual and trenchant critics, combining vast learning, an astute mind, utopian sympathies, and a wonderfully hands-on way with words. For Goodman, the unhappiness of young people was a concentrated form of the unhappiness of American society as a whole, run by corporations that provide employment (if and when they do) but not the kind of meaningful work that engages body and soul. Goodman saw the young as the first casualties of a humanly repressive social and economic system and, as such, the front line of potential resistance. Noam Chomsky has said, "Paul Goodman's impact is all about us, and certainly it can be felt in the powerful localism of today's renascent left. A classic of anarchist thought, *Growing Up Absurd* not only offers a penetrating indictment of the human costs of corporate capitalism but points the way forward. It is a tale of yesterday's youth that speaks directly to our common future."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Growing up Absurd by Paul Goodman | pretty much founded the modern passion

for school reform. "Paul Goodman, a man deeply dissatisfied with things as they are, deserves more attention than other less-conscientious objectors. His book is a highly serious effort to understand the relation between society and the disaffected youngster." John K. Galbraith, *The New York Times* "Goodman might be called an intuitive sociologist in his unconventional, erratic yet convincing analysis of the encouragement toward human waste that our wasteful society provides. Growing Up Absurd is his cruelly apt phrase for this fatal lack of purpose and idealism. If [John] Updike's anxiety for his fellow man is subtle, Goodman's angry polemic leaves us no doubt what makes Rabbit run." *The Washington Post*, 1960 "His impact is all around us." Noam Chomsky "Philosopher, poet, sociologist, pacifist, psychologist, writer, anarchist, open bisexual and spokesman for a generation. Paul Goodman ranked among the most influential thinkers in the latter half of the 20th century." Ronnie Scheib, *Variety* "[The film] 'Paul Goodman Changed My Life' pays tribute to a man • poet teacher social critic, guru without portfolio • whose name was once a household word and whose books were talismans of intellectual seriousness and social concern. His current obscurity is something this documentary, directed by Jonathan Lee and including eloquent testimony from friends, family and admirers, is determined to overcome." His most famous book, *Growing Up Absurd*, originally commissioned as a study of juvenile delinquency and later a bible of the 1960s student rebellion, remains essential and troubling reading for anyone who cares about the problems of the young." A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*, 10/19/11, from his review of the film "Paul Goodman Changed My Life" "Mr. Goodman is terrifying. Utopians usually are when we take them (or they take themselves) seriously. And Goodman is all the more terrifying because he is a rational Utopian who has most of analytical apparatus and theoretical formulations of modern sociology, psychology, historiography and aesthetics at his fingertips." Webster Scott, *The Nation* "The best analysis I have seen of the spiritual emptiness of our technological paradise." Sir Herbert Read "Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* is an extraordinary good and important book • the best book I know on the subject of youth." Goodman "is a serious, profound and old-fashionedly moral book. With great originality and lucidity, he argues that the Organization Man, the beat and the juvenile delinquent are merely reactions to the same basic problem." Kenneth Keniston, *The American Scholar*

In this book, the author assumes that the young really need a more worthwhile world in order to grow up at all, and confronts this real need with the world that they have been getting.

I'm still reading it but I've found lots original ideas about our contemporary society inside - the book was written in 1956!

This is a surprisingly appropriate analysis of life in America today, even though it's over 50 years old. Goodman's writing is spot on and pulls no punches. Youth in America today are in just as much an absurd place as in his day--little to look forward to, unprepared for life, and devalued by society. Reading the book, it strikes one how little progress we've made over the last half century. Why does society continue to disregard its future so badly? I gave it four stars, primarily because some of the book IS outdated and it is focused mostly on New York City.

A very interesting precursor of what is happening today to our families with children, the way we raise our children, and the difficulty of the children in becoming productive adults.

Gave this book to my brother as gift and he enjoyed it very much. A must read! Great price on the book!

Growing up AbsurdSloppy, Dated and ArrogantI'm getting tired of reading these kinds of dated books that were rife in the `50s and `60s. Books written in a self-congratulatory, prophetic, omnipotent, all-knowing tone, that implies we (the reader) are in need of a cultural or social guide to navigate this topic; because without one we would not have been able to perceive for ourselves the complexities of the socio-cultural or ethnographic dramas and narratives which form the content of this book, or reach the apparent points of clarity that apparently Goodman did. With very little reference to the Literature or solid data, this supposed, or should I say `self-appointed' `academic' not only tells us what is wrong with the world but then goes on to offer us his magic cure. All of which smarts of being subjective and rather naïf. And ve, not to mention terribly dull. For duller-than-dull is Goodman's (dare I say) `literary' style. His rambling, sprawling incoherent, unstructured juices just ebb, run and flow, flooding both the subject and the subject's narrative; their voice being drowned (quite literally) entangled in the weeds of the dull and murky stream that is Goodman's substantially unengaging consciousness. In terms of homage to academe, it is not that I want Goodman to simply regurgitate the works of other scholars, to `read&repeat' as is shamefully

the trend of faux-academia in this current epoch. But what I do want is more than a lazy rambling diatribe on what he saw as being wrong with America in the '60s and particular the loss of the American Ideal and the resulting loss of a generation. Now you may argue that I am saying this without social or historical context, that I am making the amateur historian's mistake of judging history retroactively, and yes, I would agree with that position to some degree. But what I am really saying is that if this work were be framed as what it really is (anthropological musings by an unordinary citizen) and not what it isn't (prophetic and insightful wisdom shared by one further on the Way) - we would see Goodman for what he was, unremarkable in the historical record. I mean one would only have to compare this failed attempt at an ethnographic exposé with that of Ervin Goffman (presentation of self in everyday life) to really grasp my point here. That, until recently, the world had forgotten Goodman is not an accident, but merely appropriate. The very fact he rubbishes the work of Max Weber (who has clearly not been forgotten) in a few incoherent lines (p.130~) speaks volumes about the perception of Goodman's own self-image and that of reality, corroborate by the world-at-large (and please forgo the misunderstood genius à la Andy Kaufman analogy)! In summation, I can see no purpose to spend time or money on this project, it is simply not a worthwhile equation of investment to return ratio. There is no overall merit unless to say that you read this unstructured mess and managed to get to the last page without having learned a single thing - except perhaps, how not to write. Forgo and treat yourself to something worthwhile.

I bought this book because it was recommended from a friend while discussing social culture. I haven't had the time to review it, but it is in my library so later in life, I'll have more time to read it. I enjoy learning about how our cultures are influenced by business.

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