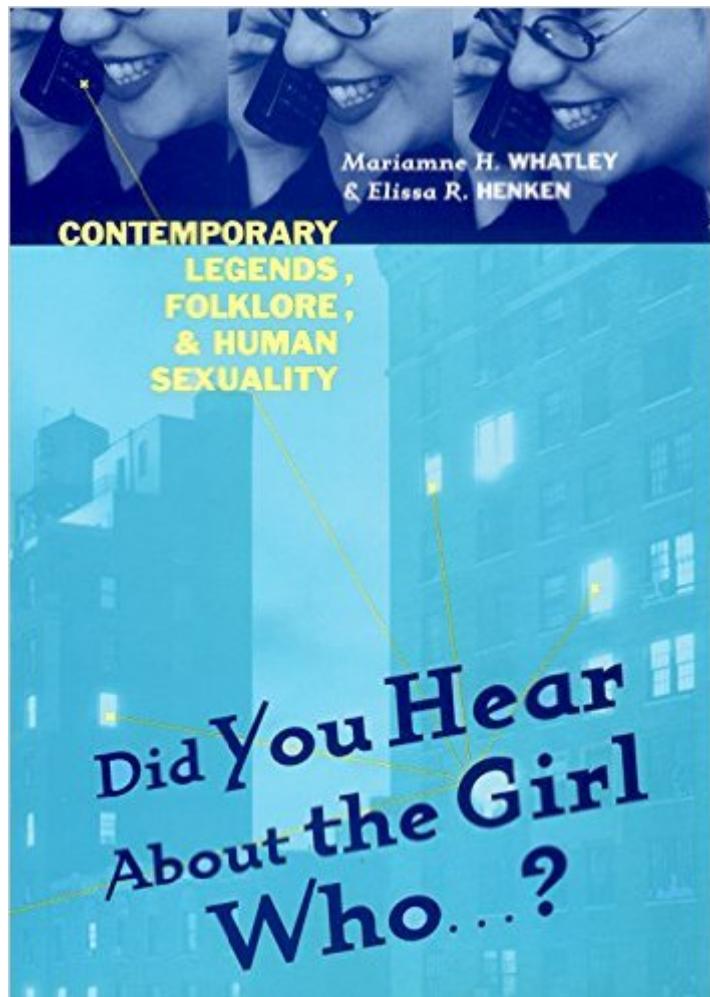


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# Did You Hear About The Girl Who . . . ?: Contemporary Legends, Folklore, And Human Sexuality



## Synopsis

Ever hear the one about the man who wakes up after a chance sexual encounter to discover he's been involuntarily relieved of one of his kidneys? Or the tiny gift-wrapped box from a recently departed lover that reveals a horrible secret? Everyone knows contemporary legends, those barely believable, often lurid, cautionary tales, always told as though they happened to the friend of a friend. Sometimes we pass them on to others unsure of their truthfulness, usually we dismiss them as mere myth. But these far-fetched legends tell us quite a bit about our deepest fears and fantasies. In fact, a large part of what we know about our bodies we have learned informally, from kids on the playground or colleagues at work, from piecing together the information contained in folk beliefs, jokes and legends. Sexual folklore goes beyond classroom lessons of mechanics to answer many questions about what people actually do and how they do it. Mariamne H. Whatley and Elissa R. Henken have collected hundreds of sexually-themed stories and jokes from college students in order to tell us what they reveal about our sexual attitudes and show us how they have changed over time. They confront myths and stereotypes about sexual behavior and use folklore as a tool to educate students about sexual health and gender relations. Whether analyzing popular rumors about celebrity emergency room visits or the latest schoolyard jokes, *Did You Hear About The Girl Who . . . ?* presents these tales in a way that is intriguing and educational.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 224 pages

Publisher: NYU Press; First Edition edition (March 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0814793223

ISBN-13: 978-0814793220

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #671,575 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 inÂ  Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Urban Legends #366 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > Mythology & Folk Tales > Folklore #421 inÂ  Books > Literature & Fiction > Mythology & Folk Tales > Fairy Tales

## Customer Reviews

This book is a collaboration between two sisters, one of whom is a biologist and health educator, and the other of whom is a folklorist. Together they examine a vast number of urban legends and

beliefs about sexuality, particularly in reference to teens and college students, and discuss how these stories can be used in an educational setting, both to glean information about things that need to be taught and to impart accurate information. As they point out, educators and health professionals sometimes make assumptions that are not shared by the young or uneducated people they deal with, and talking about popular beliefs and the stories that young people share among themselves can help clear up misunderstandings that otherwise might never have even been addressed. Discussion of stereotypes promoted by certain urban legends can also enable students to become better informed about stigmatized groups and behavior. Although I am not an educator, I am very interested in urban legends and other modern folklore, and not only did I find this book to be fascinating, but I can imagine how it could be used to great effect in educating our sadly ill-informed young adult population about an often awkward topic.

Did You Hear About the Girl Who...? is an extremely readable book about modern folklore (remember from junior high: the peanut butter joke, the tuna story, the needle in the movie theater) written by two sisters, one a health educator and one a folklorist. This book occasionally skimps on the folklore analysis to provide tips for educators, which is fine, but there's nothing on the jacket of the book to indicate its educational focus. That said, I was interested to learn about the idea of contemporary folklore and its manifestations in popular culture, including the ways that unusual or "humorous" assaults on men and women are gendered and the progression of "caught in the act" stories progressing historically from an engaged couple to a boyfriend&girlfriend. This book is a quick read and worth it.

For people who are interested in either Folklore, Sexuality, or any imaginable combination of the two, this is an excellent book to read.

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