



We Boys Together: Teenagers in Love Before Girl-Craziness

Jeffery P. Dennis

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Teenage boys are wild about girls. When their hormones kick in at puberty, they can think of nothing else, and that's the way it has always been-- right? Wrong. Before World War II, only sissies liked girls. Masculine, red-blooded, all-American boys were supposed to ignore girls until they were 18 or 19. Instead, parents, teachers, psychiatrists, and especially the mass media encouraged them to form passionate, intense, romantic bonds with each other.

This book explores romantic relationships between teenage boys as they were portrayed before, during, and immediately after World War II. The author takes the reader through a rich landscape of media -- sci fi pulps, comics, adventure stories, tales of teen sleuths, boys' serial novels, wartime bestsellers, and movies populated by many types of male adolescents: Boys Next Door, Adventure Boys, Jungle Boys, and Lost Boys. In Hollywood movies, Boys Next Door like Jackie Cooper, Ronald Sinclair, and Jimmy Lydon were constantly falling in love, but not with girls. In serial novels, Jungle Boys like Bomba, Sorak, and Og Son of Fire swung through the trees to rescue teenage boys, not teenage girls. In comic strips and on the radio, Adventure Boys like Don Study, Jack Armstrong, and Tim Tyler formed lasting romantic partnerships with other boys or men. Lost Boys like Frankie Darro, Leo Gorcey, and Billy Halop starred in dozens of movies about pairs of poor urban teenagers sticking together, with never a girl in sight.

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