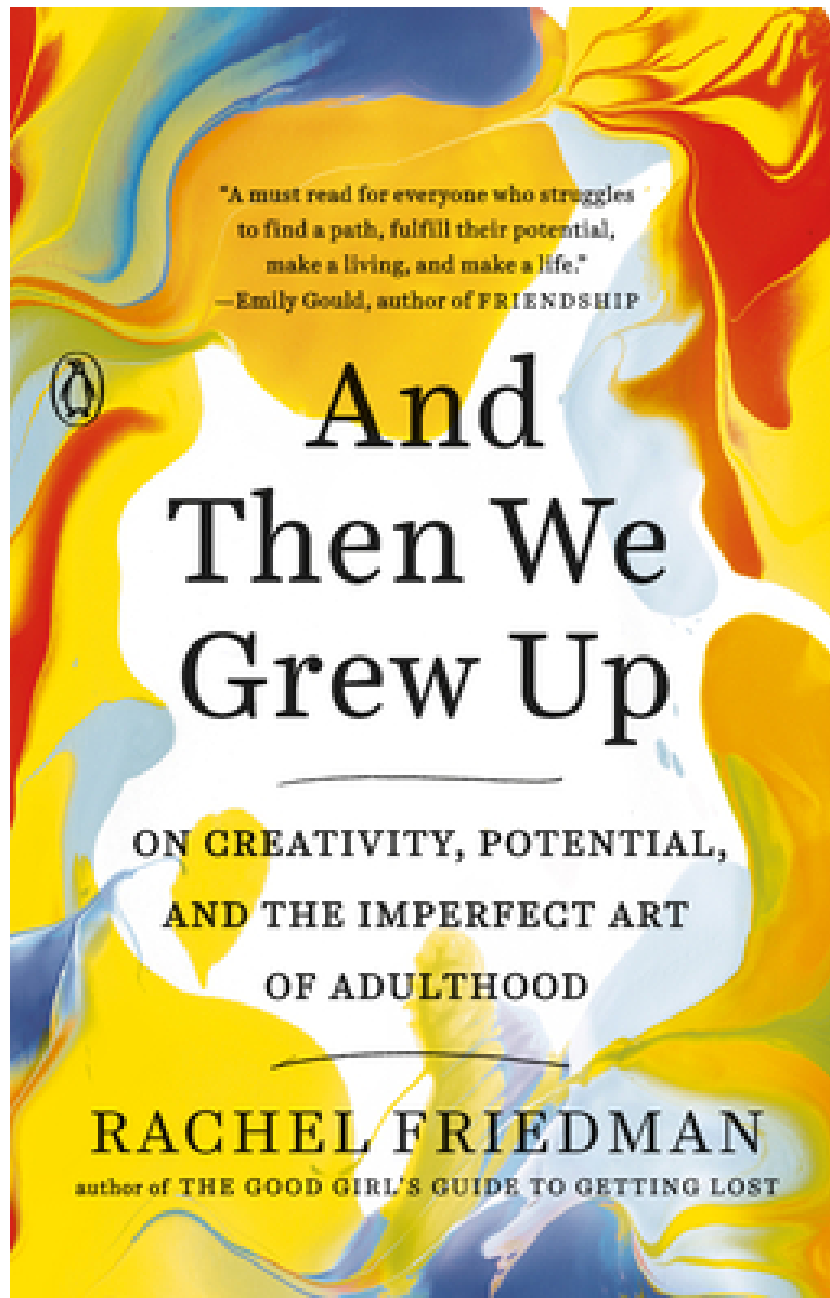


And Then We Grew Up: On Creativity, Potential, and the Imperfect Art of Adulthood Book PDF Download



By:
Rachel Friedman

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What people Say:

Laura Mills

This was a quick, easy read about coming to terms with the road not taken, and dealing with our American obsession with success. Overall enjoyable and relatable, though I thought some of her points were overdone and she quoted from several mainstream books I had already read, which was a strange experience to have as a reader. I did love her interviews with former artist camp friends, and her observations about their lives were interesting and thoughtfully done. Ultimately I was rooting for the

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Lorilin

Author Rachel Friedman grew up playing the violin, and she was very good at it. But when she began studying with the principal violist of the Boston Symphony while in college, she realized she

wasn't nearly as good as her competition. After several months spent lost in a haze of anxiety and self-doubt, she decided to stop working toward a career as a musician and switched her school and major completely.

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Flash forward ten years, now Friedman is a freelance writer in New York, relatively successful, sure, but still hounded by thoughts of what could have been if she had just stuck with the violin. She decides to interview eight of her former friends from the uber-prestigious arts camp they used to attend together called Interlochen. Her goal is to see how their career choices have played out and, more importantly, if they're happy.

MY THOUGHTS

I'll say right off the bat that this book is a little too "angsty college kid's essay" for my taste. I really enjoyed reading about Friedman's interactions with and impressions of her classmates. Their insights into what ultimately made them content in their careers is interesting food for thought. But the filler between those vignettes bored me to tears. I don't care about the history of creativity or the history of how artists are perceived or at least that's not why I'm reading this book. I also don't need to read every supporting quote from the many books Friedman has read on the subject of artists and their creative processes. Halfway through the book, I started skimming all paragraphs that began, "Like X author says" and "As Y musician once taught." Enough already.

HOWEVER, there's still a lot to love about Friedman's story. I gleaned something from each classmate's experience, and I finished the book feeling better prepared to parent my own kids. I especially liked Adam's story, his faith in his own work ethic to get him through hard times and his willingness to stay flexible and open to new possibilities. I liked Eli's story, too, his recognition that some people get lucky and make it big early, but most people experience a "slow burn" until they really start running things in their 50s and that that's okay. It was refreshing to read about his simple appreciation for working in a job he enjoyed at all, since many people don't even have that luxury. And Dalia's story, while not necessarily my favorite, was a giant red flag, warning me that I need to let my kids experience frustration now when they're young so they can learn how to tolerate it and push through without falling to pieces later.

Ironically, there is only one classmate that Friedman interviews who makes it as a musician in an orchestra. Michelle, also a violist, was Friedman's main competition at Interlochen. She's also the person Friedman is most nervous about interviewing, since she represents what Friedman

was incapable of achieving. But even though Michelle is successful as a musician and mostly content with her career choices, it's more than a little comforting to hear her admit life isn't magically perfect from where she sits either. She experiences struggles and irritations, boredom and discontent, just like everyone else.

In the end, my takeaway from this book is that there is no perfect path—even when you're sure there is because you're not on it. And there most certainly is no path that is heartache-free. I hope it doesn't take Friedman as long as it took me to learn this one simple fact: life simply feels unpleasant sometimes—but not because you made the wrong choice or are inherently bad or the universe is plotting against you. This is just what life feels like. The trick is to stay flexible and open without getting fixated on extreme feelings or expectations. Easier said than done, I know, but there you have it.

Sarah

A bracing read for anyone who grew up in the 80s and was told they were "gifted" or "creative"!

Megan Bell

For anyone who grew up gifted but ditched violin or poetry (hi!) or sculpture after college and has always wondered, “What if?” Now you’ll be wondering, “Where has AND THEN WE GREW UP been all my (adult) life?” As a child, Rachel Friedman played viola so skillfully she made it into the prestigious Interlochen Arts Camp, but she left her bow behind amid the pressure cooker of college. Now she’s a freelance writer in NYC plagued by old questions about what creative success is supposed to look

For anyone who grew up gifted but ditched violin or poetry (hi!) or sculpture after college and has always wondered, “What if?” Now you’ll be wondering, “Where has AND THEN WE GREW UP been all my (adult) life?” As a child, Rachel Friedman played viola so skillfully she made it into the prestigious Interlochen Arts Camp, but she left her bow behind amid the pressure cooker of college. Now she’s a freelance writer in NYC plagued by old questions about what creative success is supposed to look like. Where are all those fellow campers now? Did they all achieve their childhood dreams? In tracking these former child prodigies down, Friedman discovers a vast range of creative engagement, from a screenwriter in Hollywood to a Pilates instructor in Denver. Interweaving these interviews with passages from sages like Elizabeth Gilbert and Pema Chodron, she finds an acceptance and appreciation for creativity in all its forms and gives us all the much needed encouragement to make peace with the possible selves of our pasts and rediscover the creativity that was with us all along.

*Also there’s several paragraphs meditating on the ending of Harry Potter so yeah, this book was made for me.

Kylie Mantei

Friedman’s debut novel, *The Good Girl’s Guide To Getting Lost*, is one I return to at least

two times a year. It is my absolute favourite example of a memoir - she develops her scenes so beautifully that I believe I am there, describes her "characters" in ways that, while often brief, are unique and understanding. I've been so excited for this book to be released so that we could see what Rachel's been up to since, beyond the little snippets of life I found in her other articles and twitter. She

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Eventually, I began to accept the book for what it was, and that's when I began to truly appreciate what was happening in the pages. It's a lovely examination on what happens when we grow up and how we reconcile what our passions were as kids and if we've pulled them into our adult lives. It is well-researched yet easy to be drawn into, with that balance of her storytelling, scene building side. I think this is a wonderful second book, and truly hope there won't be as long of a wait in between this one and her next (a brief explanation of why this happened is within the pages, actually!). My only quip is that sometimes I found that there was so much quotation and analysis, especially of quite well-known books and authors (Cheryl Strayed, Elizabeth Gilbert, JK Rowling), that I was skipping through a few paragraphs to get to newer information. But none of it took away from the overall interesting theme of the book. I recommend it to anyone who grew up with a talent (so, most people?) or high standards for their own performance!