



The Personal is the Political

Betty Friedan was born in 1921 in Illinois. She went to Smith College, where she got excellent grades and graduated in 1942 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. She worked as a reporter in New York City in the 1940s, and married Carl Friedan in 1947.

After her first child was born in 1948, Betty Friedan went back to work. But when she became pregnant with her second child she lost her job; a not uncommon occurrence at the time, when women were expected to stay home and raise their children. So Betty did – but she was bored and restless. She wondered if she was the only woman who wanted to raise children *and* make an economic contribution to the family, *and* a professional contribution to the world.

So she started to survey other women who were mothers and homemakers. She studied. She met with experts. She combined her research with observations from her own life and this material became the book *The Feminine Mystique*, which was published in 1963. Before its publication, people believed that women could only be happy, and were only fit for, a life as a wife, mother and housekeeper. Friedan's book showed that women were capable of doing the same kinds of things as man, and she inspired many women to pursue the careers of their choice.

In addition to writing, Betty Friedan co-founded the National Organization for Women in 1966 and served as its first president. She established the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (now known as NARAL Pro-Choice America) in 1969, and joined with other leading feminists of the day such as Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug to create the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

Explain how Betty Friedan's personal life has effected your own life (if you are a girl) or the life of your mother, sisters or classmates (if you are a boy).
