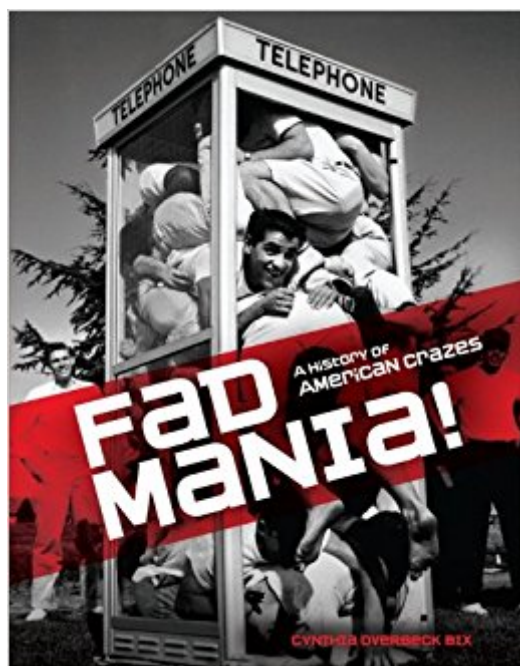


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Fad Mania!: A History Of American Crazes



Synopsis

College students crammed into phone booths. Couples dancing until they drop. Daredevils swallowing one live goldfish after another. Streakers dashing naked down the street. Planking and flash mobs and robotic pets. These are just some of the crazy fads that have caught hold in the United States over the last century. Where do these ideas come from and why do they catch people's imagination? Fads reflect the mood and spirit of a particular time, and they offer insight into a nation's culture. The 1950s, for example, was a time of economic prosperity and technological development. Americans expressed their delight in new inventions in many creative ways. One popular craze on college campuses was to stuff as many people as possible into a phone booth. On one campus, twenty-five people managed to squeeze into a single booth! In earlier decades, marked by the Depression and World War II, dance marathon frenzy caught on. Promoters lured couples with promises of fame and monetary prizes for those who could dance for hundreds, sometimes thousands, of hours. And great ideas never die. Almost one hundred years later, dance marathons came back. One creative variation, the flash mob dance, attracts spontaneous performances that range from flash mob wedding dances to "Gangnam Style" K-Pop flash mobs in cities all over the world. *Fad Mania!* explores a century of American crazes, offering an entertaining and informative look at the major historical events of each decade and the fads that defined them. As you learn more about smiley buttons and Webkinz, you may just be able to predict this decade's next craze!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 5 Up • Don't be fooled by the size of this slim volume. Inside, readers will find a collection of fads from the last 100 years that fascinated before quickly fading from mainstream American culture. Following a brief introduction to the nature of fads, each craze is presented in chronological order by decade, beginning with the 1920s and ending in the post-millennium years. While many more crazes exist than are discussed here, Bix explores the more notable ones that have dominated the past century. Audience members will be intrigued by entries on dance marathons and goldfish swallowing, but equally engaging are the specific examples, world records, and casual facts that Bix includes in each entry that provide additional support and context. As evidenced in her description of the chain letter craze, she deftly integrates social relevance and context into the narrative, which is especially helpful to today's technology-savvy audience, who may not understand the importance of mail, telephone booths, and pinball machines. Each chapter is filled with striking photographs as well as decade-specific sidebars that list the time period's milestones, further enhancing the connections between pop culture and history. The selected bibliography and list of additional information resources may inspire greater investigation. Don't expect to see this title linger on the shelf for long.

• Audrey Sumser, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Mayfield, OH

Cynthia Bix grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, where family visits to historical sites that dot the East Coast including Old Sturbridge Village, Colonial Williamsburg, and Baltimore's own Fort McHenry sparked her early interest in American history, crafts, and everyday life. After moving as a teenager to the San Francisco Bay Area, she added natural science the world of plants, animals, and the environment to her interests. She has been an avid reader ever since first grade, and there's always a stack of novels on her nightstand. (Sometimes she even sneaks in a reading session when she should be cooking dinner!) Cynthia loves to write about anything and everything. In her more than 30 nonfiction books for children and adults, she has written about such diverse subjects as carnivorous plants, the water cycle, flower gardens, and the Grand Canyon. She has also written how-to-do-it books about activities from planning a backyard cottage to making impressions of animal footprints! In addition to writing books and articles, Cynthia edits books for both children and adults.

How long have there been fads? Probably as long as there have been people. Nonetheless, recognizable fads in America have certainly been going on since the 1920s, when Clara Bow was the "It Girl," people sat on flagpoles, and kids started bouncing on pogo sticks! This highly entertaining book takes you on a jet tour of fads from the 1920s through to

today's electronics. Along the way, the reader is treated to many colorful pictures and interesting sidebars. I must say that I found this to be a really fun book, and my ten-year-old really enjoyed seeing all of the kookiness that people got up to over the years. We both give this book our recommendations!

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