



Sweet Tooth: The Bittersweet History of Candy

Kate Hopkins

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A cultural history of candy-how it evolved from medicine and a luxury to today's Kit Kat bars and M&M's

Told through the Kate Hopkins' travels in Europe and the U.S., *Sweet Tooth* is a first-hand account of her obsession with candy and a detailed look at its history and development. The sugary treats we enjoy today have a prominent past entertaining kings, curing the ill, and later developing into a billion-dollar industry. The dark side of this history is that the confectionery industry has helped create an environment of unhealthy overindulgence, has quelled any small business competition that was deemed to be a risk to any large company's bottom line, and was largely responsible for the slave trade that evolved during the era of colonization.

Candy's history is vast and complex and plays a distinct part in the growth of the Western world. Thanks to the ubiquity of these treats which allows us to take them for granted, that history has been hidden or forgotten. Until now. Filled with Hopkins' trademark humor and accompanied by her Candy Grab Bag tasting notes, *Sweet Tooth* is a must-read for everybody who considers themselves a candy freak.

Sweet Tooth: The Bittersweet History of Candy Details

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Author : Kate Hopkins

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From Reader Review Sweet Tooth: The Bittersweet History of Candy for online ebook

Nichole says

I devoured "Sweet Tooth" in two days. This well-researched book brings the reader along on travels to Italy, tours of Hershey, Cadbury & Theo, and through the author's own evolving ideas of the role of candy in nostalgia, economics and privilege. It's always thoughtful but never preachy, and the enthusiasm for the subject is catchy.

The conclusion is especially well-done, synthesizing the author's previous assumptions and theories about sweets with the results of her studies - it really left me thinking (which is something I tend to like in a book).

I would pair Sweet Tooth with Steve Almond's Candyfreak for a delicious and edifying reading experience.

(I read an advance copy kindly provided by the author & publisher.)

Kara says

I think, just as a person's like or dislike of a candy doesn't always reflect how good or bad the candy is, just so with books – just because I didn't care for the taste of this particular book, doesn't necessarily make it a *bad* book.

For me, what I didn't like was the fact that the book was neither a history book nor a memoir, but an awkward melding of the two – as if she didn't have enough history to make a full book, but neither was she willing to commit to a whole book just on her European vacation. Neither side pulled me in, leaving me just bored with the overall blend.

Katie says

I'm not sure when I started reading this book, but it seems like forever ago. Not a huge fan of this one. While the topic is surely interesting, this book did not manage to hold my interest. I only pushed myself to finish reading it because I had purchased the hard cover and refused to leave such a purchase unfinished. I probably should have read some reviews before buying. Had I realized that so much of the content would have been spent on the author's own personal reflections, I might have chosen a different book on the same topic. I feel like (as some others have mentioned) the author couldn't decide what kind of book she wanted to write and just decided to combine her travelogue with an informational history text. Really disappointing. But I am keeping a copy of the bibliography just in case I decide to do further reading on the topic. Always looking

for informational text to bring to school for the kids to read!

Delphia says

I work in a bookstore and came across this while shelving. I'm very glad I picked this up. To deal with a midlife crisis of sorts, the author tours Europe to dig out the roots of candy today. This is an interesting and very entertaining read. It would make a good gift for any foodie out there with a sense of humor!

Lynne says

I enjoyed some of the chapters but the writing and/or editing leave a lot to be desired.

Matt Willden says

Disappointingly, just an ok read on its stated topic of the history of candy. I respect the author's attempt to blend commercial/agricultural history with social commentary and autobiographical meandering, but she didn't pull it off well. Certainly many historical anecdotes were fascinating (she's at her best when she takes the reader fleet-footed through the finer points of confectionery's coming-of-age). Her childhood musings were cute but started to feel self-indulgent. Where she really bogged down was when she tried to tie it all up in a neat bow while engaging in weighty pondering over slavery's history. The three topics never blended well and may have been better served in larger discrete narrative units. I also found her rather un-self-aware in her snarky treatment of Cadbury's factory experience, only to turn around and be more forgiving of the same corporate shenanigans at Hershey's chocolate world (see the opposite reaction she showed to each having a good court, for example).

In the end, an interesting read, but not one is race to encourage others to pursue.

Martin says

I had the same experience with this book as I had with "Four Fish" by Paul Greenberg: I was amazed that a) a topic so mundane could be narrated in such a fascinating matter b) the author had such incredible depth of knowledge c) I was able to learn about vast chunks of history in the process. Who knew about its interrelation with world commerce and conquering! I do now, thanks to the passionate author!

Kristin Huston says

I loved this book. It was fun and interesting. Kate's attempt to recreate her candy history was entertaining. I think that maybe adults don't eat as much candy as children because we've discovered foods like blue cheese, balsamic vinegar and wine. We just have such a wide range of foods and our tastes are more sophisticated. I do disagree with her on black jelly beans..I've been told that, as a toddler, I would pick out the black ones

from the candy dish to eat. And I still love them! I do agree that Reese's PB cups are nearly the perfect candy...sweet, salty and with a bit of a snap when you bite into it. As a Chicago kid, give me Fannie May Pixies any time. Great read!

Jen says

Here's another book I wanted to give 3.5 stars too. Kate Hopkins set out to recapture the magic that candy brought to her childhood in writing this book. She traced the history of candy all over Europe and back through the US. She relates a lot of interesting facts about the history - how most candy has its roots in medicine (much like the throat lozenges and cough syrups of today), and how slavery is associated with sugar and cacao plantations throughout history (even today), and how sugar went from being a very pricey commodity that only the rich could afford to one of the most common cooking staples available today. She also describes her quests in the present day to find candy shops of all sorts, from those making authentic historical treats to high-end chocolatiers to Hershey, PA. And she reflects back on the candies of her childhood in call-out boxes sprinkled through the text, giving short little bios on Necco wafers and Snickers bars and rating them all in trade value of York Peppermint Patties (i.e., if you were a kid trading candy with your friends or siblings after Halloween, a small bag of M&M's equals two York Peppermint Patties, but seven Pixy Stix straws only equals one Peppermint Patty).

Having a raging sweet tooth myself, a lover of all things sugar-related but especially chocolate, I definitely enjoyed reading about Hopkins's thoughts and findings. The reason I can't fully get to 4 stars on the book, though, is that it just felt kind of disorganized and meandering to me. I'd be reading along, interested in what was being described, and then the story would be interrupted for something else. Three pages later, we'd get back to what caught my attention to begin with. The historical aspects of the book were interesting and important, but sometimes felt redundant. I'm not sure how I would have organized the book better, but a certain flow seemed to be lacking in the text, which was sometimes jarring and sometimes boring for me. I think I would have been more amenable to a memoir told by candy.

All of that said, I learned a lot reading this book, and I did enjoy it, despite the fact that it took me almost 5 months to read it!

John says

Perhaps 3.5 stars, but where it dragged, it dragged; the historical research citations read a lot like a term paper at times. The travel narrative aspect was very well done, as were the references to her own life and candy. I found the "Kate's Candy Bag" sidebars an interesting feature.

Sara says

parts of me enjoyed this book and parts of me wanted to skip ahead just to get this book over with. Would I recommend it? nope.

Morgan says

I had the opportunity to read "Sweet Tooth: The Bittersweet History of Candy" because of a giveaway that I won through goodreads. I would like to thank goodreads and Kate Hopkins for posting this book.

I found "Sweet Tooth" very interesting! I definitely learned a lot about the history of candy and the role candy had in previous centuries. Non-fiction books, especially about the history of something, can easily become dry and let's face it...boring! Luckily Hopkins utilizes great humor and wit while informing the masses about candy and sugar. Within each chapter she includes "Kates Candy Bag" which compared candy in regards to York Peppermint Patties. Hands down this was the highlight of my reading. I was looking forward to see how other candies would be compared to these patties!

Lydia says

I was fascinated by all the history she packed into this text. If her goal hadn't initially been to set out to find fun, I think she would have poured a lot more history in, and I would have been okay with that. I'm okay that I got a tease of the history of candy, and it added a layer of depth to my understanding of history for so many countries that I will definitely use this (surprisingly) as a reference source. I want to find a way to incorporate it into my classroom, and I'm sure I'll come up with something. Who knew sugar made the world go round?

Robert Wright says

Disappointing.

Way too much on the (often) ancient evolution of sweets and far too little time spent in the modern era. I could have even dealt with a 50/50 split. But time spent on post-1850 candy history and brands is, at best, 20% of the book. Take the Hershey material down a notch (it's well covered in Hershey: Milton S. Hershey's Extraordinary Life of Wealth, Empire, and Utopian Dreams and The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars amongst others) and the modern era coverage shrinks to the miniscule.

For a book that is keyed to and punctuated with references to the author's own childhood, good coverage on modern candy (especially mid-20th century & onward) is pointedly lacking and spotty at best.

Guess I need to search around for a title that covers that era better and provides less insight into the sugar and slave trade.

Not a bad book, per se, just not what I was expecting from the jacket copy and a quick skim standing in the library.

Carol Surges says

I read through this one in one sitting. The author during an attack of mid-life angst decides she wants to re-

gain the innocent pleasure she felt as child every time she indulged/gorged on candy. She vows to find out everything she can about the sweet concoctions with a trip that takes her from Sicily to England to Salem, Massachusetts, to Hershey, Pennsylvania and finally back to her home in Seattle. Along the way she edifies readers with a well researched history of candy and sugar along with all the bumps and warts that come with globalization and mass production. It's not until her final stop at the chocolatier Theo's in Seattle that she finds what she's looking for.

P.S. the author writes the popular food blog "99 Drams of Whiskey".
