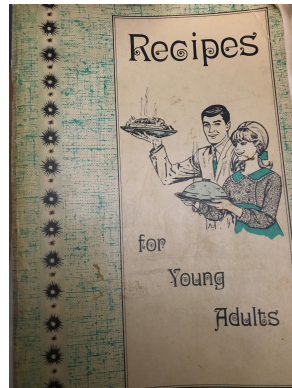


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Primary Document Analysis:

Recipes for Young Adults



Recipes for Young Adults is a textbook from a British Columbian Home Economics class, originally published in 1967. It was created specifically for the Home Economics curriculum in Alberta, and was published by the Canadian Sugar Factories Limited. A copy of this book was obtained through the mother of a friend, who attended secondary school in Armstrong, British Columbia and graduated in 1967. Though it is primarily a book of recipes, a closer look at its content provides insight into its intended audience and the ideals being taught in schools in the late 1960s.

To provide historical context, Canada was in the middle of the second-wave feminist movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when this book was originally published. The issue of gender roles was contentious during this time. In earlier times, household duties such as cooking and cleaning would traditionally be the role of the woman in the home, perhaps with the help of her daughters. Women in the 1960s and 1970s, however, began to fight against this preconceived notion, especially as many of them had full-time jobs outside the home, just like their husbands. For this

reason, the publication date for *Recipes for Young Adults* is very pertinent information. It provides an explanation for the overall lack of gendered language in the book.

The fact that the cover of this book features both a young woman and a young man holding plates of food suggests that the book is, at least outwardly, intended for both sexes. Furthermore, at no point does the text refer to the reader by a specific pronoun, or say overtly that it is expected that a woman will be preparing the recipes provided in the book. However, there a number of instances where there is the implication that a woman will be one in charge of household chores, including cooking. For example, in a section of the book dedicated to laundry, it is stated that “clean clothes are just as important as wholesome meals to you and your family’s sense of well-being.”¹ This implies that the person reading this textbook in Home Economics class will at some point be in charge of an entire family’s laundry. In many cases, especially during this time period, that would be the wife and mother. Another example occurs when the author of the textbook refers the oven as “the homemaker’s best friend.”² In the minds of the general public, and the book’s audience, a homemaker is generally a term used for women. If a young man were to read that statement in his textbook, I believe he would feel as though he might not be the target audience. This would only enforce the belief that it is a woman’s responsibility to cook and clean for her husband and family.

Another aspect to examine when analyzing the source is the types of recipes included in the book. Essentially every recipe is very “traditional.” There are no ethnic foods included, which says something about what the school system is teaching children. We know that many Canadian students were not necessarily white and of Anglo-Saxon descent, and yet this textbook includes only dishes such as “broiled meat

¹ *Recipes for young adults*. 4th ed. Lethbridge, Alta.: Canadian Sugar Factories Limited, 1967., p. 92

² *Recipes for young adults*. 4th ed. Lethbridge, Alta.: Canadian Sugar Factories Limited, 1967, p. 42

patties” and “custard sauce.” This show that even in the late 1960s, ethnic people were still viewed as the “other.”

Overall, I do not believe that the author of this book intended to ostracize men and discourage them from learning to cook or clean. In fact, since it is published by a Canadian sugar factory, perhaps its intent was to promote cooking to all Canadians, to promote its sales. It does a remarkable job of providing step-by-step instructions on how to make a number of recipes, in addition to teaching the reader about a number of household chores, including laundry and stain removal and preserving food. The book itself is likely a product of its time, in the sense that it is inadvertently geared more towards girls and women because that is who was predominantly cooking and cleaning in British Columbia during this time period.