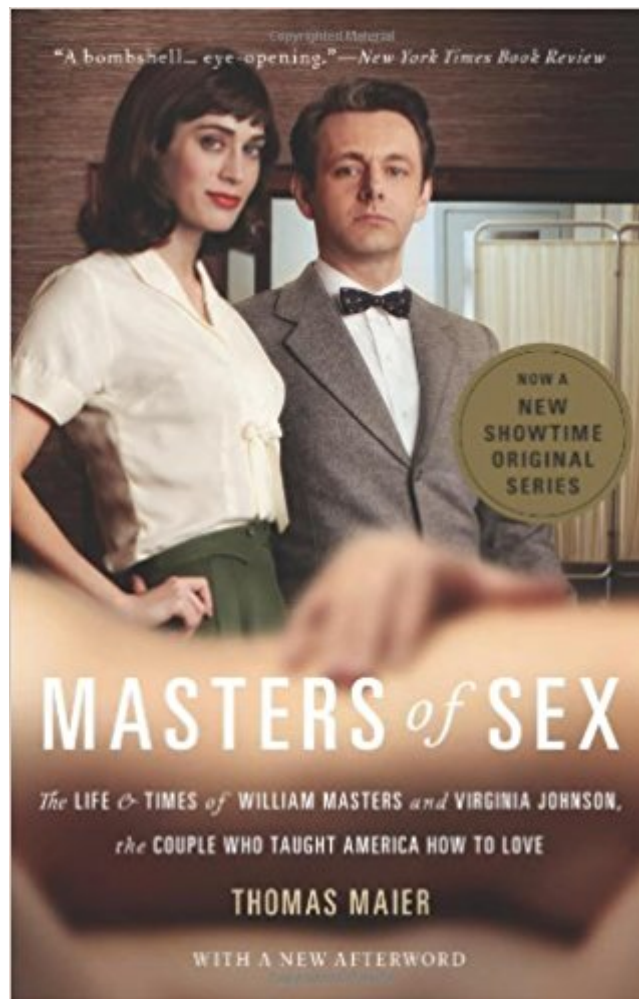


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# Masters Of Sex: The Life And Times Of William Masters And Virginia Johnson, The Couple Who Taught America How To Love



## Synopsis

Now a New Showtime Original Series Showtime's dramatic series *Masters of Sex*, starring Michael Sheen and Lizzy Caplan, is based on this real-life story of sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson. Before *Sex and the City* and *Viagra*™, America relied on Masters and Johnson to teach us everything we needed to know about what goes on in the bedroom. Convincing hundreds of men and women to shed their clothes and copulate, the pair were the nation's top experts on love and intimacy. Highlighting interviews with the notoriously private Masters and the ambitious Johnson, critically acclaimed biographer Thomas Maier shows how this unusual team changed the way we all thought about, talked about, and engaged in sex while they simultaneously tried to make sense of their own relationship. Entertaining, revealing, and beautifully told, *Masters of Sex* sheds light on the eternal mysteries of desire, intimacy, and the American psyche.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While a graduate student at Ohio State, I was pursuing the path of becoming a sex therapist. As part of that, I attended a workshop sponsored by Masters and Johnson in Chicago. Prior to the workshop in Chicago, I met them at Ohio State. I was profoundly impressed with their insight and therapeutic skills. Within the literature, there have been so many false conjectures regarding their work; it is difficult to sort out reality from false rumor. Because of a series of letters I have in my files, I have concluded that the major events described in this biography are accurate. The biography is packed with two profound paradoxes that should have a major impact on the development, testing

and construction of social science theory - but probably won't - we tend to make the same mistakes in our history rather than learning from our errors. First, in my academic background I found theory construction to be too paradoxical. In theory construction, we learned that devotion to a theory produces a blinder that can prohibit the researcher from identifying more meaningful explanations. In quantitative research, we are taught to begin with a hypothesis that emerges from a theory to avoid "type I errors." Masters was trained in traditional quantitative science and his world view was contaminated by theory (particularly Freudian theory). Because of her lack of formal education, Johnson (probably with greater innate intelligence than Masters) had NO academic world view. Her vision of sexology has no theoretical limitations. She was able to envision sexuality in a manner that was theoretically unparalleled. She, with the assistance of Masters's knowledge of science, was able to institute a major paradigm shift in sexology.

Let me start off by saying that I don't have any problem with the sexual content of this book. But some of the heavy breathing feels so overdone, it's just really silly. Some of the depictions of sex, like the description of when Johnson loses her virginity, are also a little creepy. But more importantly, I was really hoping for a critical examination of the lives and work of Masters and Johnson. What I got was just overwrought gossip and all surface. To me, it felt like the book was mostly just a string of interviews the author conducted and had only started to make sense of. There is so much in here that does not require direct quoting and where the full quote was overkill, or only serves to repeat an idea that has already been drilled into our heads: Masters was distant, Johnson was independent, yeah, yeah, we got it. A bunch of random doctors and colleagues talking about the speculation going around the office about whether or not Masters and Johnson were having sex with each other. The narrative is driven by this collection of quotes, rather than the other way around. That only works if the people being quoted have anything interesting to say, which is rarely the case here. It's pretty vapid stuff - Wow, Bill Masters liked football! And he sometimes annoyed his friend (a former pro turned coach) with his chatter - not exactly riveting. You could condense this entire book to less than 100 pages without losing any substance and without really losing too many details, either. Additionally, the dramas here aren't dramas, but the real dramas are ignored. For example, Johnson's looking up of an old boyfriend near the end of her life and feeling sad when she heard he'd died does not qualify as a drama in my book, but a normal human response.

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