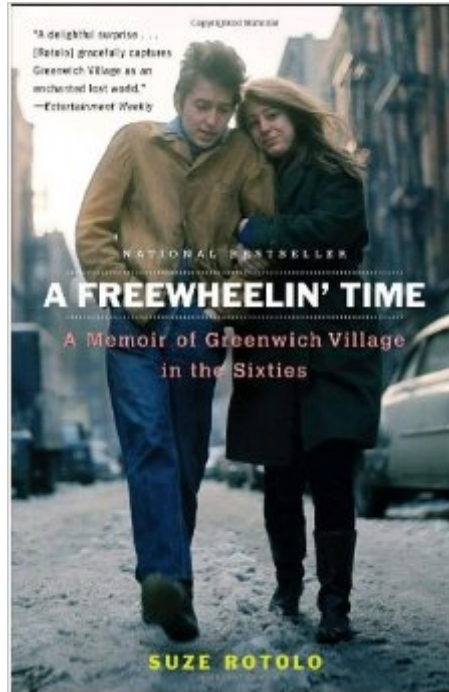


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# A Freewheelin' Time: A Memoir Of Greenwich Village In The Sixties



## Synopsis

A great read for fans of the Coen brothers' film, *INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS* *Freewheelin' Time* is Suze Rotolo's firsthand, eyewitness, participant-observer account of the immensely creative and fertile years of the 1960s, just before the circus was in full swing and Bob Dylan became the anointed ringmaster. It chronicles the back-story of Greenwich Village in the early days of the folk music explosion, when Dylan was honing his skills and she was in the ring with him. A shy girl from Queens, Suze Rotolo was the daughter of Italian working-class Communists. Growing up at the start of the Cold War and during McCarthyism, she inevitably became an outsider in her neighborhood and at school. Her childhood was turbulent, but Suze found solace in poetry, art, and music. In Washington Square Park, in Greenwich Village, she encountered like-minded friends who were also politically active. Then one hot day in July 1961, Suze met Bob Dylan, a rising young musician, at a folk concert at Riverside Church. She was seventeen, he was twenty; they were young, curious, and inseparable. During the years they were together, Dylan was transformed from an obscure folk singer into an uneasy spokesperson for a generation. Suze Rotolo's story is rich in character and setting, filled with vivid memories of those tumultuous years of dramatic change and poignantly rising expectations when art, culture, and politics all seemed to be conspiring to bring our country a better, freer, richer, and more equitable life. She writes of her involvement with the civil rights movement and describes the sometimes frustrating experience of being a woman in a male-dominated culture, before women's liberation changed the rules for the better. And she tells the wonderfully romantic story of her sweet but sometimes wrenching love affair and its eventual collapse under the pressures of growing fame. *Freewheelin' Time* is a vibrant, moving memoir of a hopeful time and place and of a vital subculture at its most creative. It communicates the excitement of youth, the heartbreak of young love, and the struggles for a brighter future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Like almost all the reviewers so far I loved this book, and like some I was also in the same neighborhood as the events recorded in this wonderful book. In every instance where I knew someone or hung out at a place mentioned, the version here coincides exactly with what I remember but there is so much more I didn't know and so many people I only knew about second hand. This is a generous and kind book but also a starkly honest one. If you want to know what it was like then in Greenwich village in the 60s, then this is the best source I know of. Bob Dylan's persona in various documentaries comes off to many as arrogant but you will gain a new appreciation for him both as an artist and as a person from one who was closer to him than any other in his first years as an artist (1961 to 1964), when most of the events in the book take place. You will also understand what attracted him to Suze Rotolo. My memory of her was of a radiant smile and personality, but you will understand clearly from this book, as did Bob Dylan, that there was solid substance behind her wonderful smile. I also want to recommend this book to today's generation, those under the age of 25 or so. There is a new spirit of idealism and creativity and I think you would find it profitable to read an account of an earlier era that also was pregnant with that kind of promise that had yet to come to fruition. As Suze Rotolo makes clear, it was a time when the exploding creativity and freedom of the sixties was still living within the husk of an older and much darker world. The old ways affected everyone, even the most bohemian denizens of Greenwich Village. There is great wisdom here about the conflicts and struggles that come when a young woman instinctively knows that conventional ways are limiting and stunting her as a person but there is no vocabulary and not yet the support of the nascent women's movement to help her. If you have any interest at all in Bob Dylan, in Greenwich Village in the sixties, in the folk music revival of that period, in the struggles of politically and socially conscious young women in the immediate pre-feminist period or if you just want to enjoy yourself or learn some lessons for the present from experiences of the past you owe it to yourself to read this terrific book.

I have followed Dylan since 1964 and his music. This book is a refreshing, vulnerable essay of Suze's life with Bob Dylan for 4 years. It is intimate, respectful, sensitive [she speaks of tears

listening even to this day of his early records as she was there and says today they accurately portray Dylan] and includes much never-before-read material that is helpful in getting to know the man Dylan. She gives us keen insight into her feelings about their relationship, friends and her family, with extensive history of her family as well as her life before and after Bob Dylan. She is as important in this book as Bob is. It is understandably obvious she still has emotions and maybe even wounds about this relationship. After reading this book (and I have read others on Dylan) I had feelings of nostalgia, and then feelings of satisfaction as the book concluded with a sense of completion. If I ever meet Dylan I feel for the first time I could relate to him as a man and not relate to him as a myth or icon. I just returned from the Village in NYC and Suze's description of it is completely accurate. I was there in the 70s and it is a completely different place today. I believe this book is vulnerable and complete enough to be the final word on Dylan as a person from the early years by someone who knew him better than anyone else.

I really enjoyed this book. I was born in '63 and can only hope to get a feel through bios and countless viewings of Woodstock, Dont look Back and others. I was emotionally slammed by this book as it shows Suze to be a strong, intelligent, progressive and sensitive woman waaay ahead of her time. The relationship with Bob now makes perfect sense based on their sensibilities and sensitivities. The info shared is deeply personal without being excessive or embarrassing. Dylan's character and emotional state is revealed while the progression of Suze and Bob's relationship brought me close to tears several times. The non-linear time format kept things lively and interesting. One of the gifts for me was Suze's attitude that Greenwich Village is essentially a state of mind and that we can recreate it in the present if the desire and creative elements are there. The book also offered me insight into my own parents struggles in this country as second generation European immigrants. I blasted through this book and as a result have had to cleanse my mental palate a bit (happily). Thank you Suze Rotolo for sharing after all these years and for some good advice for the present.

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