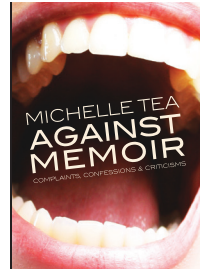


## READING GROUP GUIDE

### **AGAINST MEMOIR by Michelle Tea**

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1. Much of Michelle's past work has centered on her life, through either fictionalization or direct memoir. How does this work diverge from that pattern? How does Michelle demonstrate her character through places she's lived, bands she's loved, feminists she's admired, queer communities she's participated in, and more?
2. Michelle's essays show us which people and experiences have mattered to her throughout her life. If you were to write a similar text about your own life, what would you choose?
3. Many of Michelle's idols are unconventional folks who are underrepresented in mainstream society. How does this work give voice to marginalized heroes and reframe controversial cultural icons like Valerie Solanas?
4. *Against Memoir* is separated into three sections: Art & Music, Love & Queerness, and Writing & Life. What themes and ideas tie the pieces in each section together? What ties the different sections into a whole text?
5. The essays in this collection originally date from between 2003 and 2017. What impression do they give of Michelle's development over time?
6. Michelle discusses both what she has held onto over time and what she has decided to leave behind—for instance, an album from her past in the essay "Minor Threat." What can we learn from what Michelle doesn't take with her?
7. These essays are collected from a range of sources, including performances, lectures, websites, and print media. How do the essays vary in form, style, and language based on where they were initially published or performed?
8. The theme of self-determination and self-salvation stretches across these essays. How do Michelle's subjects create space for themselves as marginalized people? How does Michelle portray acting out, coming out, writing poetry, and getting sober as ways of saving oneself?
9. In "Pigeon Manifesto," Michelle begins by saying that "The revolution will not begin in your backyard because you do not have a backyard" (237). How does Michelle, in this piece and others, offer a blueprint for revolutions that "begin at your curb, in the shallow pool of shade that is your gutter?" (237).
10. How does Michelle both embrace feminism and queerness on the one hand, and question the normative discourses pertaining to them on the other? In what ways does she challenge the status quo of intellectual, upper-class feminism?

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