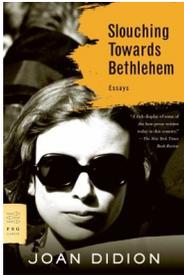


Books by the Stack



Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays by Joan Didion

This collection captures the unique time and place of Didion's focus, exploring subjects such as John Wayne and Howard Hughes, growing up in California, the nature of good and evil in a Death Valley motel room, and, especially, the essence of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, the heart of the counterculture..

Why you'll like it: *1960s California, a motley crew, mainstream- and counter-culture.*

About the Author: Born in Sacramento, California, on December 5, 1934, Joan Didion received a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1956. She wrote for *Vogue* from 1956 to 1963, and was visiting regent's lecturer in English at the University of California, Berkeley in 1976. Didion also published novels, short stories, social commentary, and essays. Her work often comments on social disorder. Didion wrote for years on her native California; from there her perspective broadened and turned to the countries of Central America and Southeast Asia. Her novels include *Democracy* (1984) and *The Last Thing He Wanted* (1996). Well known nonfiction titles include *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968), *The White Album* (1979), *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005) and *Blue Nights* (2011). In 1971 Joan Didion was nominated for the National Book Award in fiction for *Play It As It Lays*. In 1981 she received the American Book Award in nonfiction, and was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Prize in nonfiction for *The White Album*. Didion has received a great deal of recognition for *The Year of Magical Thinking*, which was awarded the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2005. In 2007, Didion received the National Book Foundation's annual Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. In 2009, Didion was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree by Harvard University. On July 3, 2013 the White House announced Didion was one of the recipients of the National Medals of Arts and Humanities presented by President Barack Obama. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Who is Lucille Miller? Why does Didion feel it is important to tell her story?
2. What does Didion think caused Mrs. Miller to find herself on trial for murder? Do you as the reader get the impression that Didion believes Mrs. Miller is guilty? Why or why not?
3. What is the impact of John Wayne on Didion's life? What is the impact of John Wayne's struggle with cancer on Didion? How do you, as the reader, feel Didion feels about John Wayne when she has dinner with him at the end of the essay? Why?
4. Discuss the social movement of the Haight-Ashbury district. What is Didion's overall impression of the people living in this area? Why does Didion believe these people have congregated here? Does Didion think their motives are noble? Why or why not?

5. What does Didion think about as she explores the island (from Part 3, Seven Places of the Mind: Rock of Ages)? How does she feel about being on the island?
6. What does Didion think Las Vegas weddings make a mockery of? How do you feel about Las Vegas weddings?
7. What type of people meet at The Center? The Center's members feel they have substantial influence on what aspect of life?
8. What does Didion feel the difference is between a diary and a notebook? What uses does Didion have for a notebook?
9. Who is the protagonist?
10. How does Didion use imagery in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*?



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