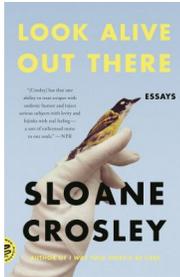


Books by the Stack



Look Alive Out There: Essays by Sloane Crosley

A collection of essays shares the author's trademark observations on subjects ranging from scaling active volcanoes and crashing shivas to assisted fertility and playing herself on "Gossip Girl."

Why you'll like it: *Humor writing. Society and culture. Sardonic. Witty.*

About the Author: Sloane Crosley is the author of the novel, *The Clasp*, and two New York Times bestselling books of personal essays, *I Was Told There'd Be Cake*, a finalist for The Thurber Prize for American Humor, and *How Did You Get This Number*. A contributing editor and books columnist for *Vanity Fair*, she lives in Manhattan.

Questions for Discussion

1. "Outside Voices" is ostensibly about the challenges of living in New York and learning to cope with the outfall of one of the most densely populated cities in the country. But what really bothers Crosley about the teenage boy who lives next door? Is it the frequent noise that disturbs her personal space ... or something else?
2. In "If You Take the Canoe Out," what surprised you most about the pot-growing swingers the author stumbles into?
3. How does Crosley view her vertigo in "Cinema of the Confined"? She says "This was not some exotic destination that I would one day leave and report back on. This was my home now." What does she mean by that ... and what are the emotional implications of her illness?
4. Is there a unifying thematic concern that link the 16 essays in Crosley's collection?
5. Make note of the author's narrative strategy in a number (if not all) of her essays: the essay opens with one particular topic/idea but gradually morphs into something different, often taking a completely unexpected direction. Talk about how that narrative tactic plays out in some of your favorite pieces.
6. In "The Doctor is a Woman," Crosley writes about her frozen eggs: "They are just floating fractions of an idea," she writes, "I know that. But I had never seen a part of my body exist outside my body before. I felt such gratitude." Care to unpack that observation?
7. Crosley is a self-effacing writer. Give some examples of how her jokes (many, if not most) are mostly at her own expense. Do you appreciate her self-deprecation, finding it refreshing and honest? Or do you tire of it, finding it overdone?
8. How do you view Crosley's essays? Do they point to deeper meanings: serious epiphanies about today's culture or about her own personal failings? Or do you see them as ironically humorous commentaries about the idiosyncrasies of living in the 21st century? Perhaps, the essays do both.

9. How would you describe Sloane Crosley? Is she someone with whom you could be friends? Do you admire her? If so, why? Or if not ... why?

10. Consider the book's title ... and the arresting cover photo with its finch perched on a white-gloved finger. Why?

(Questions provided by LitLovers)



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