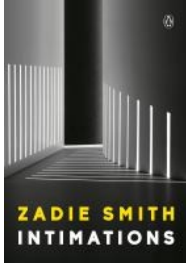


Books by the Stack



Intimations: Six Essays by Zadie Smith

Written during the early months of the lockdown, *Intimations* explores ideas and questions by an unprecedented situation. It is a slim, suggestive volume with a wide scope, in which Zadie Smith clears a generous space for thought, open enough for each reader to reflect on what has happened – and what should come next.

Why you'll like it: *Issue-oriented. Society and culture. Impassioned. Incisive.*

About the Author: Zadie Smith is a novelist, essayist and short story writer. As of 2012, she has published four novels, *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), and *NW* (2012), all of which have received critical praise. In 2003, she was included on *Granta's* list of 20 best young authors and Smith won the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2006. Her novel *White Teeth* was included in *Time* magazine's TIME 100 Best English-language. Smith joined NYU's Creative Writing Program as a tenured professor in 2010. Smith attended Hampstead Comprehensive School, and King's College, Cambridge University where she studied English literature. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. In the foreword, Smith says, "Talking to yourself can be useful. And writing means being overheard." (p. xii) Is this book, published just halfway through 2020, a useful contribution to the ongoing discussion of the pandemic? Why or why not?
2. In "Peonies," Smith contrasts the facts of her life against the way she'd like her life to be. How does the way we tell our own stories, especially on social media, shape our real lives?
3. For most, the COVID-19 pandemic meant fewer social interactions. In "Something to Do," Smith wonders, "Do we know how to stop?" (p. 23) when we don't have work or social activities to occupy our time. How did your concept of "free time" change during the course of the pandemic?
4. In "Suffering Like Mel Gibson," Smith describes an instance (p. 32) she says everyone has experienced, when she thought she could easily identify with the outrage of two women she overheard in line. Instead, she was embarrassed to learn that she misunderstood the discussion because she had privilege and they did not. Has this happened to you or have you been the source of someone's realization?
5. Smith writes about the lives of the people who exist on the edges of her life in "Screengrabs," including her masseuse and a houseless person she has portrayed in one of her previous works. Who are some of the people on the edge of your life who have made an impact on you?
6. Smith claims that one of the most powerful viruses is contempt (p. 73-83). If we can't eradicate it with knowledge, how do we cure this illness?

7. Smith closes out the book with lessons she's learned from the people in her life to whom she feels she owes a debt. Who or what would be on your own Debts and Lessons list?



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