



808s & Otherworlds

***Memories, Remixes,
& Mythologies***

SEAN AVERY MEDLIN

.....
Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion
.....

1. The author chose to subtitle this collection: “Memories, Remixes, & Mythologies”? What do you think is fitting about those three specific descriptors?
2. This collection moves freely from poetry to prose essays and back again: what effect did this have on you as a reader? Why do you think the author chose this format for their work?
3. “Paradox,” on page 54, opens with a reference to the James Baldwin quote, “To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost, almost all of the time...” How does this collection reckon with America’s brutal enslavement, ongoing suppression, exploitation, and theft from/of its Black citizens?
4. How does the author balance those same feelings of rage that Baldwin described, with feelings of joy and hope?
5. Mis-representation of Black diversity, Black culture, and Black masculinity, in all media formats, are evaluated throughout the poems and essays. What are some examples of this?
6. Arizona is a recurring backdrop throughout the collection. What are some of the author’s views of the state? How does the author weave in historical facts about the area’s Indigenous peoples as well as its history with Black residents of the state?
7. Avondale, the Phoenix suburb where the author was raised, is also a frequent subject and setting in the collection. What effect did it have on the author being a young Black person living in an overwhelmingly nonBlack area? How did the author feel about themselves? How do they remember being treated by their school peers?

8. In several places, the author talks about their complicated attraction to and relationship with white beauty standards. What do you think were the driving forces behind this attraction? How does the author grapple with this relationship/attraction throughout the collection, and how does the author's opinion of beauty change over time?
9. How influential were certain Hip-Hop artists and their music during the author's coming-of-age years? Who were some of them? In what ways did specific lyrics and artists inform the author's understanding of their own identity at a young age?
10. As the author grew older and became more aware of the complexities of gender and sexuality, how did their relationship with the Hip-Hop music they loved evolve?
11. Consider the pitfalls that the author discovers of holding up celebrities as idols. Think about your own experiences with this situation and discuss how your adoration of famous individuals has changed over time, or not, and why.
12. The author frequently writes about members of their family: Speak about the influence each has had in shaping the author's life. As a group, discuss the power of family influence, compared to that of media influence; how do you think the two forces are balanced in children and young adults?
13. Superheroes, anime characters, and pop culture references such as *Star Wars* are used throughout the collection as a lens through which to investigate and interrogate major societal issues such as racism, gender, government policies: talk about what some of these instances are, and how considering them this way affected you.
14. The contrapuntal poems in the collection—each comprised of two distinct and different poems that are meant to be in conversation with each other—can be read in different ways. Consider revisiting pages 22 (“THUGLIFE Contrapuntal”) and 79 (“On Sight Contrapuntal”) to try reading their poems separately and then together as a unified text, left to right. What effects do the different ways of reading the contrapuntals have on you?