



Andre Perry

Some of Us Are Very Hungry Now

Essays

Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. The essays in this collection are broken up into three sections — Coastland, Heartland, Heart. What effect does this sectioning have on the collection as a whole? Why do you think the author chose this structure?
2. In many of his essays, Perry explores how racism in the U.S. overtly continues to plague his daily life, as well as how it suddenly courses through even the most unexpected of situations. Which of the author's personal experiences of feeling the effects of racism resonated with you the most?
3. The author uses experimental formats in some of the essays. What about this technique do you think is effective, or not?
4. In the title essay, "Some of Us Are Very Hungry Now," Andre Perry braids two experiences together: a trip to Hong Kong to study abroad and to cover the local underground music scene, and the ending days of a failed romantic relationship in Iowa City. Why do you think the author chose to intertwine these two stories? What was the effect on you of having his experiences juxtaposed this way?
5. A common theme running through many of the essays in this collection is the violence of language. What are some ways that you've witnessed language used as a weapon?
6. Many of the essays use music as a starting point to then discuss thornier subjects, whether it be a Kendrick Lamar concert in Iowa City, or Elvis Costello's infamous dismissal of Ray Charles. What do you feel is effective or not about taking something as subjective and universal as music to then grapple with hard truths?



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7. In following the author through his formative years, *Some of Us Are Very Hungry Now* seems to be an essay collection on a quest for identity, both individual, and national. Do you feel as though this is a constant question we're asking ourselves in a society, or is identity something more essential now in our emotionally and politically charged present situation?
8. While following the author from his childhood in D.C., to the arts scene in San Francisco, to grad school in Iowa City, many of the essays don't always reflect the author in a flattering light. What do you feel is essential about this sometimes unflinching honesty in the process of telling a coming-of-age story?
9. The ending section is made up of a set of letters written to a woman who was not introduced in any of the preceding essays. Why do you think the author made this choice? What conclusions did you draw from the section, and from it being the ending of the collection as a whole?
10. After reading *Some of Us Are Very Hungry Now*, have your views on topics touched upon in the essays changed at all? If so, how?