

# BOOK CLUB

# READING GUIDE

## About the Book

*Nonwhite and Woman: 131 Micro Essays on Being in the World*, edited by Darien Hsu Gee and Carla Crujido, is a collection of true stories made up of 300 words or less, written by women of color. This guide is designed to help foster thoughtful questions and responses for your book club.

## Discussion Questions

1. Which essay(s) feels most aligned with your own experiences? Which piece diverges the most?
2. Which essay(s) make you feel uncomfortable? Can you share why?
3. The book's title was taken from a poem by Lucille Clifton. How well does it work with the essays contained within? How do you feel about the term "nonwhite?"
4. Were any of the pieces surprising? How so?
5. Is there an essay you can't stop thinking about? What does it bring up for you? Are there one or two sentences in the essay that stay with you?
6. What's your response to the micro essay form? How might this anthology feel different if the pieces had been longer?
7. Much like negative space in art, there are powerful storytelling gaps left in micro prose. Jane Wong intentionally makes use of these gaps in her piece "MAD." What effect does the "unsaid" have on you as a reader?
8. Liza Sparks writes "Driving to Work, I Think, What If I Were a White Man" entirely in questions, while Theresa Falk writes "In Answer to Your Questions as You Pass Our Family on the Street" as answers. What effect do each of these forms have on you as a reader? What do these two essays say about the sorts of questions faced by women of color in particular?
9. In "Whose Skin Is My Skin?," Saheli Khastagir shares a story about family and self-perception. What thoughts does this piece evoke as you reflect about the role that family plays in identity formation?
10. As you read Theresa Falk's "To My Daughter Reading Tolkien," what thoughts do you have about the role of storytelling in intergenerational relationships?

11. Specific objects are often strongly tied to childhood memories. In “Collector’s Item,” Alyssa Jocson Porter remembers a Filipina Barbie given to her by her mother. As you read her essay, what resonates with you? What objects evoke memories for you?
12. In “Watch Out, There Might Be Spies in the Room,” Jeanne Tanaka writes, “We had around three months while they built the camps to sell or get rid of everything we owned except for what we were able to carry.” If you were forced to leave your home, what would you pack into a single suitcase to take with you into your new life?
13. In “Self-Portrait with No Flag,” Safia Elhillo offers her reflections on how she has decided to pledge allegiance to her loved ones, rather than a country. How do you claim a place of belonging? Where do you pledge your allegiance?
14. Margarita Cruz (“Are You Sure That Isn’t Your Drinking Name?”) and Lorelee Abercrombie (“Name”) reflect on the way others perceive them based on their name. How would you describe your relationship to your name, and when has it been a challenge for you?

## Bite-Sized Memories

Food is a source of comfort in Lavonne Leong’s “Heat” and Daleelah Saleh’s “Ramadan.” What personal memories do you have that are linked to food? Consider asking everyone in your book club to bring a small appetizer they associate with a fond memory.

## What to Read Next?

If your book club enjoyed *Nonwhite and Woman*, continue the conversation with some of the following titles for your next book club read. A full list of recommended reading is available at the back of the book (pp. 251 -256).

### Lucille Clifton

- YouTube video of Lucille Clifton reading *won’t you celebrate with me*:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q\\_DUK5wU&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q_DUK5wU&t=1s)
- *Blessing the Boats: New and Collected Poems 1988-2000* by Lucille Clifton
- *Generations: A Memoir* by Lucille Clifton

### Selected Fiction Titles by *Nonwhite and Woman* Contributors

- *The Arsonist’s City* by Hala Alyan
- *A Calm & Normal Heart* by Chelsea T. Hicks
- *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones
- *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies* by Deesha Philyaw

Selected Poetry Titles by *Nonwhite and Woman* Contributors

- *Forget It* by Anastacia-Reneé
- *Girls That Never Die* by Safia Elhillo
- *Letters from the Interior* by Lena Khalaf Tuffaha

Selected Memoir Titles by *Nonwhite and Woman* Contributors

- *Carry* by Toni Jensen
- *We Are Bridges: A Memoir* by Cassandra Lane

## Book Information

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