



Hunger (Gay) - Discussion Questions

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Discussion Questions

We'll add publisher questions if and when they're available; in the meantime, use our LitLovers talking points to help start a discussion for Hunger...then take off on your own:

1. Probably the best place to begin a discussion for Roxane Gay's *Hunger* is to talk about your own battle with body image: weight gains and losses, sense of shame, and whatever other emotional rollercoasters you've found yourself on.
2. Next up: In what ways does this book resonate with you? Think back to your early life, your upbringing, and how those years might have set you on the path you're on today.
3. Gay was the victim of rape when she was younger. How does that trauma play into her overeating?
4. Consider the views of other people. As Gay writes, "People see bodies like mine and make their assumptions. They think they know the why of my body. They do not."

What assumptions do you make of overweight people? What assumptions do you think people make (or might make) of you?
5. Talk about the paradox Gay points to: wanting acceptance for her body shape...yet wanting to change it. Can that tension ever be resolved — not just for overweight people but for anyone who doesn't fit the image of physical perfection our society worships?
6. Speaking of society: in what way does our cultural obsession with body shape contribute to Gay's (or, really, almost anyone's) sense of shame regarding the body?
7. Gay writes: "I do not know why I turned to food. Or I do" and "I do not have an answer to that question, or I do." What does Gay know...or not know about why she eats? What about you? Do you have answers for your own body weight?
8. Why does Gay denounce shows like *The Biggest Loser* and *Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition*?
9. Care to tackle this passage from the book?

When you're overweight, your body becomes a matter of public record in many respects. Your body is constantly and prominently on display.... Fat, much like skin color, is something you cannot hide, no matter how dark the clothing you wear, or how diligently you avoid horizontal stripes.... People are quick to offer statistics and information about the dangers of obesity, as if you are not only fat but incredibly stupid, unaware, and delusional about your body and a world that is vigorously inhospitable to that body.... You are your body, nothing more, and your body should damn well become less.

10. How familiar are you with the latest science regarding body weight, particularly the part that genetics and "hunger hormones" (Ghrelin and Leptin) play? If some bodies are hard-wired to gain weight ...well, then what?

11. If Roxane Gay were sitting with you right now, what you you say to her?

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