

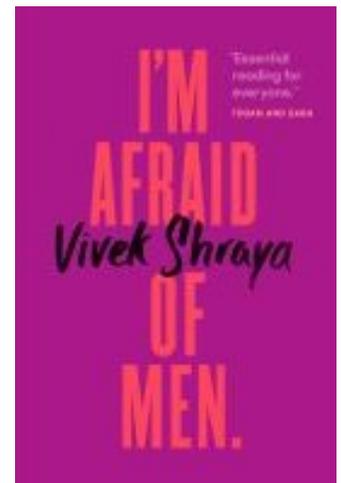


I'm Afraid of Men

Vivek Shraya

Discussion Questions

1. How do you understand the term 'toxic masculinity' and how do you see this represented in this book?
2. How does *I'm Afraid of Men* point to the forms of toxic masculinity you see or have experienced in society? Do you think the book offers a potential solution to the problem of toxic masculinity? Provide examples, both from the book and your own experience, and discuss the potential impact of these ideas.
3. How does Shraya's identity and experience as a trans girl provide additional insight into the manifestations of toxic masculinity in society? What passages and anecdotes from the book provide examples of this unique insight and viewpoint?
4. Shraya has argued that "there is an urgent need to reimagine traditional ideas about gender." In your opinion, is this something that is underway in contemporary culture? If so, how? If not, how so?
5. In addition to being afraid of men, Shraya writes "I'm also afraid of women." What is the source of this fear? And why does she believe that she "can't fully rely upon other women for sisterhood, allyship, or protection from men? (page 82) What does this fear tell us about the relationship of women to the trans community? Does this fear confront the prospect of internalized misogyny?
6. Discuss the nature of fear in relation to gender-nonconformity. What does this fear stem from? How do we overcome this fear of difference and learn to celebrate it? How does Shraya suggest we can start making this transition, this "surrender to sublime possibility"?





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7. On pages 59-61, Shraya describes her experiences as facilitator for anti-transphobia and anti-homophobia workshops. She notes her discomfort with “the reality that often the only way to capture someone’s attention and to encourage them to recognize their own internal biases (and to work to alter them) is to confront them with sensational stories of suffering.” Why is it so difficult, for so many people, to confront their own prejudice in the absence of violence and suffering? Why, as Shraya asks us, is her “humanity only seen or cared about” when she shares the ways in which she’s been “victimized and violated?”
8. Before coming out as trans, Shraya goes to significant personal lengths in pursuit of ‘masculinity,’ from attempting to change her body through exercise and diet to changing her gait and modulating the tone of her voice. What do these efforts tell us about the pervasiveness of particular notions of masculinity in society? What do these efforts tell us about the costs—personal and societal—of feeling compelled to conform to these forms of masculinity?

About the Author

VIVEK SHRAYA is an artist whose body of work crosses the boundaries of music, poetry, fiction, visual art, and film. A Publishing Triangle Award winner, her books include *even this page is white*, *The Boy & the Bindi*, and *She of the Mountains*. Shraya is one half of the music duo Too Attached and founder of the publishing imprint VS. Books. She teaches creative writing at the University of Calgary.

This book is available for download as an eBook and an eAudiobook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.

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