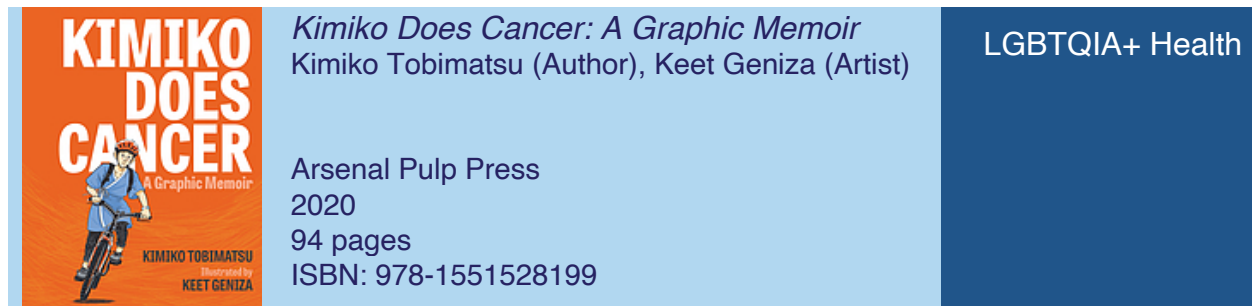


Discussion Guide



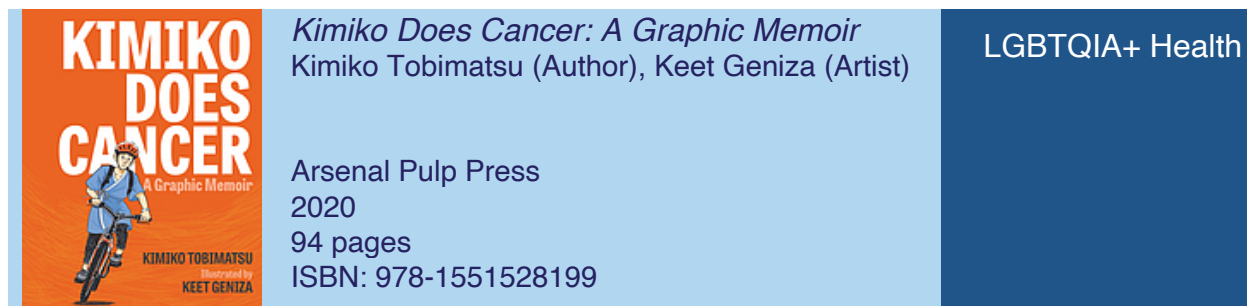
Summary

"At the age of twenty-five, Kimiko Tobimatsu was a young, queer, mixed-race woman with no history of health problems whose world was turned upside down when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. In an instant, she became immersed in a new and complicated life of endless appointments, evaluations, and treatments, and difficult conversations with her partner and parents. Kimiko knew that this wasn't what being twenty-five was supposed to be like ... but then, she didn't have a choice. With tender illustrations by Keet Geniza, *Kimiko Does Cancer* is a graphic memoir that upends the traditional cancer narrative from a young woman's perspective, confronting issues such as dating while in menopause, navigating work and treatment, and talking to well-meaning friends, health care professionals, and other cancer survivors with viewpoints different from her own. Not one for pink ribbons or runs for the cure, Kimiko seeks connection within the cancer community while also critiquing the mainstream cancer experience. Honest and poignant, *Kimiko Does Cancer* is about finding one's own way out of a health crisis."-- Provided by publisher

Questions

1. How did reading this book expand your image of who a cancer patient is?
2. When you think about cancer, do you usually think about the stories of people who lived through it, or do you think about those who died? Does this affect how you view cancer patients?
3. How would Kimiko's experience look different if she was white? If she was straight? If she was older?
4. Kimiko feels like she doesn't fit in with the cancer community. Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in with a group? How did it make you feel?
5. After reading the book, do you think the queer community is treated differently by the medical system? Can you think of other situations not shown in the book?
6. Kimiko discusses the assumption that women all want to birth biological kids. Have you ever experienced people making assumptions about your health or your fertility/family based on societal norms and expectations that didn't fit you? Can you relate to Kimiko?

Discussion Guide



7. Kimiko explores mainstream narratives of breast cancer: that it affects women who are white, heteronormative, feminized, and apolitical. They are also most often success stories and don't share about feelings of failure or of experiencing ongoing disability. Why do you think this is? What do you think about the use of optimistic language, such as "fighter, survivor, or warrior?" Is it helpful or hurtful?
8. Did reading this book help you see another side of cancer or of other medical hurdles faced by the LGBTQIA+ community?
9. Throughout *Kimiko Does Cancer*, Kimiko learns to better listen to her body and to ask for and accept help from loved ones. Have you struggled with accepting yourself and accepting help from others?
10. Do you think the graphic novel format was more effective or less effective for this story? Which panel of images had the greatest effect on you?
11. The book states that, "[l]eaving the room to grieve can be as important as maintaining hope" (42). Do you feel like you have been allowed to grieve in your life? Has unrealistic optimism like that from Stacy, Macy, and Lacy ever harmed you?
12. Reproductive cancers force us to look at how gender expression and sexuality affect health care. How do medical assumptions about these issues silence the voices of those who don't fit gender stereotypes?