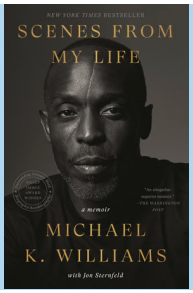
Discussion Guide



Scenes From My Life
Micheal K Williams

Crown
2022
288 pages
ISBN: 978-593240373

Substance Use Disorder

Summary

Michael K Williams died on September 6, 2021 of a drug overdose. At the time of his death, Williams had nearly finished a memoir that tells the story of his past while looking to the future, a book that merges his life and his life's work. Mike, as his friends knew him, was so much more than an actor. In *Scenes from My Life*, he traces his life in whole, from his childhood in East Flatbush and his early years as a dancer to his battles with addiction and the bar fight that left his face with his distinguishing scar.

Questions

1. Why do you think Michael K. Williams wanted to write this book? Do you feel like he achieved what he set out to do?
2. As mentioned in the co-writer's note, Michael talked about "not having the liberty" of leaving out embarrassing stories about his addiction. What did he mean by this? Do you agree that he had a duty to be completely honest in the writing of this book?
3. Did knowing Michael K. Williams passed away around the time of finishing this book affect the way you read it? How did it change or influence the experience of reading it?
4. The book opens with a young man asking the adult Michael if he is happy. The question has a real impact on him, one that surprises him. Why do you think this was?
5. How do the arts (dance, music, and acting) impact Michael in a positive way in different phases of his life? In what ways does he have to "sacrifice" to do those things?
6. Michael's addiction as a young man confuses his mother, who doesn't understand what is going on with him. In what ways is she helpful? In what ways does her behavior make things worse?
7. Michael talks about how he had to unlearn certain ideas about masculinity as he grew up. What ideas about "being a man" was he taught? How does he try to upend them?
8. Michael talks a lot in the book about looking for acceptance and validation. In what ways did he do this?
9. According to Michael, he first got into drugs (marijuana) at 12 or 13. What were his reasons for first getting into the drug? How does that idea carry over later into his life?
10. What was Michael's experience like upstate during his first rehab (pg. 87-91)? What about it was healthy for him? What about it was not?

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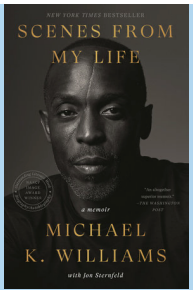

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11. The night of Nov. 21, 1991 was a seminal event for Michael K. Williams. The scars he received nearly killed him but also changed his life. How did Michael first react to having a scar on his face? How did people's reaction to the scar change?

12. Michael wrote that even if he had years of being clean, he still considered himself an addict. Why does he think this? Do you agree?

13. How does Michael K. William's role as Omar in *The Wire* impact his life?

14. Michael writes, "A director calling "Cut" doesn't erase what you're feeling…It comes home with you." (pg. 155) What are examples of how this is true for Michael?

15. Michael writes about how being invited to the White House to meet with President Obama made him feel unworthy. What was his reason for this feeling?

16. At the White House, Michael Skolnik tells Michael that "those that are closest to the problem are closest to the solution." Do you agree with this idea? Why or why not?

17. How does the experience of making "Raised in the System" influence Michael? What does he learn about the juvenile justice system and the kids in it?

18. What takeaways do you have from reading *Scenes from My Life*? What would you ask Michael K. Williams about it if you could?

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