

Book Club Discussion Guide



Finding Me by Viola Davis, Page 1 (September 2022)

Finding Me

By Viola Davis

About the author:

Viola Davis is a critically revered actress of film, television, and theater and has won rave reviews for her multitude of substantial and intriguingly diverse roles. Audiences across the United States and internationally have admired her for her work- including her celebrated, Oscar-nominated performances in *The Help* (2011), *Doubt* (2008), and her Oscar winning performance in *Fences* (2016). In 2015, Davis won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series for her work in ABC's *How To Get Away With Murder*, making her the first black woman in history to take home the award. In addition to acting, Viola currently produces alongside her husband and producing partner, Julius Tennon, through their JuVee Productions banner. Together they have produced award-garnering productions across theater, television, and film.

Source: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0205626/bio>

About this book:

In my book, you will meet a little girl named Viola who ran from her past until she made a life-changing decision to stop running forever.

This is my story, from a crumbling apartment in Central Falls, Rhode Island, to the stage in New York City, and beyond. This is the path I took to finding my purpose but also my voice in a world that didn't always see me.

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As I wrote *Finding Me*, my eyes were open to the truth of how our stories are often not given close examination. We are forced to reinvent them to fit into a crazy, competitive, judgmental world. So I wrote this for anyone running through life untethered, desperate and clawing their way through murky memories, trying to get to some form of self-love. For anyone who needs reminding that a life worth living can only be born from radical honesty and the courage to shed facades and be . . . you.

Finding Me is a deep reflection, a promise, and a love letter of sorts to self. My hope is that my story will inspire you to light up your own life with creative expression and rediscover who you were before the world put a label on you.

Source: <https://harperone.com/9780063037328/finding-me/>

Discussion Questions:

1. Memoirs are often written so that the subject can take ownership and "tell their own story". Do you think it is a smart move to reveal experiences and secrets to control the narrative?
2. For many years Viola saw herself as that 8-year-old girl constantly fleeing for her life. Are there moments in your life that have defined you; moments that continuously replay in your mind? How do you process those memories? What have you learned from them, if anything?
3. How does sharing her trauma help Viola take back the power from those situations where she felt powerless?
4. What do you think kept Viola going even in the darkest times?
5. A central element of Viola's story is colorism: "When you are a dark-skinned girl," she writes, "no one simply adores you." She recalls grappling with feeling ugly and

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- unseen, and later to acknowledge the role it played in her pain. How important do you feel this thinking/trauma played in her overall life story?
6. Viola found acting to be an outlet and coping mechanism at an early age. Why do you think this particular activity allowed her to claw her way out of her everyday life?
 7. In the memoir, Davis calls out her “warrior fuel”—something inside her that kept her from giving in to defeat. Is there anything in your life that you consider your warrior fuel?
 8. How did her parents' relationship shape Viola's relationships and thoughts on parenting?
 9. Viola had 3 ceremonies with her husband Julius. What role do you think he and their love story played in her life?
 10. At several points the memoir Viola discusses her desire/need to help her family out financially (when she finally got to a place where she was making "a little money"). “I thought I could save them. I thought my money and success could save all of them. I learned the hard way that when there are underlying issues, money does nothing. In fact, money exacerbates the problem because it takes away the individual’s ability to be held accountable.” How do you think she handled boundaries and her family's financial issues?
 11. Viola’s story reminds us that it’s never too late for a new beginning. (Chapter 16 - "My biggest discovery was that you can literally re-create your life. You can redefine it. You don't have to live in the past.") Have you ever re-created your life?
 12. What are your thoughts on Viola’s trip to Africa? What did this experience do to her? Do for her?

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13. One of the quotes Viola called out several times after her trip was a Mandinka Ritual Song. What do you think is meant by "I did not come here for food. My stomach is full. I did not come here for food. I came here for much more than that."
14. What was your favorite chapter or story?
15. What was your biggest takeaway(s) from reading Viola's story?
16. Viola's story of shifting from running away from her abusers to standing up to them is metaphoric of dealing with the problems that confront us. Do you run away or stand up to your problems? Is there a specific experience where you did either? How did it change you?
17. Do you consider yourself worthy? If yes, why? If not, what do you have to do to be worthy?
18. What about Viola Davis owning her story inspires you to own yours?
19. Who are YOU?

Source: <https://www.blissbooksandwine.com>