



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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UCF Alumni Book Club

Skye Falling by Mia McKenzie

Book Discussion Guide

Book Description

When she was twenty-six and broke, Skye didn't think twice before selling her eggs and happily pocketing the cash. Now approaching forty, Skye still moves through life entirely—and unrepentantly—on her own terms, living out of a suitcase and avoiding all manner of serious relationships. Maybe her junior high classmates weren't wrong when they voted her “Most Likely to Be Single” instead of “Most Ride-or-Die Homie,” but at least she's always been free to do as she pleases.

Then a twelve-year-old girl tracks Skye down during one of her brief visits to her hometown of Philadelphia and informs Skye that she's “her egg.” Skye's life is thrown into sharp relief and she decides that it might be time to actually try to have a meaningful relationship with another human being. Spoiler alert: It's not easy.

Things get even more complicated when Skye realizes that the woman she tried and failed to pick up the other day is the girl's aunt, and now it's awkward. All the while, her brother is trying to get in touch, her mother is being bewilderingly kind, and the West Philly pool halls and hoagie shops of her youth have been replaced by hipster cafés.

On June 11, 2022, *Skye Falling* was awarded a Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction.

About the Author

Mia McKenzie is the award-winning author of *The Summer We Got Free* and the creator of BGD, a popular media website that amplifies the voices of queer and trans people of color, and Black Girl Dangerous Media, an independent media and education project that centers queer black women and girls.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Mia studied writing at the University of Pittsburgh, where she also was first exposed to black literature and feminism. In 2009, she won the Astraea Foundation Writers Fund Award and, in 2011, the Leeway Foundation Transformation Award.

In 2012, she created Black Girl Dangerous (now BGD), a blog that quickly grew into a phenomenon, publishing over 300 queer and trans writers of color and reaching millions of readers all over the globe.

Her first novel, *The Summer We Got Free*, **won of the 2013 Lambda Literary Award for debut fiction** and has been described by the Lambda Literary Review as “simultaneously critical social commentary, ghost story, murder mystery, and queer love story...the craft of the writing is deceptively plain, and in that simplicity, achingly poignant, laser-like in its facility and effect... layers on discovery, insularity and secrets with a deft touch.”

Her short stories have appeared in *McSweeney’s Quarterly Concern* (Issue 51, 2017), *The Kenyon Review* (Spring 2013) and *make/shift* (Spring 2013), the latter earning her a Pushcart Prize nomination.

She has been featured in Bitch Magazine, Elixher Magazine, GO Magazine’s 100 Women We Love, Autostraddle’s Hot 100, Examiner’s 10 Top Blogging Feminists Not To Miss, For Harriet’s 17 Black Women Bloggers To Know, and the Huffington Post’s 5 Bloggers Who Are Blogging Better Than You (And Me).

She’s presented talks and keynotes at colleges and universities around the country, including Brown University; HBGC LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Conference at Harvard University; Amherst College; Wellesley College; Michigan State University; University of Illinois; University of Michigan; University of Wisconsin; Portland State University; University of California at Berkeley; Penn State; Oberlin College; Reed College; Lawrence University; UC Santa Barbara; University of Washington; and many more.

She lives with her family on the east coast, where she is currently working on a new novel.

Learn more about Mia McKenzie on her website:

<https://www.blackgirldangerous.com/about/>

General Questions

- What were your overall thoughts of the book?
- What were your favorite/least favorite parts of the novel?
- Was there a scene that stood out to you the most?
- How did the setting impact the story?
- Did the plot proceed in a way that felt natural?
- Who were your favorite characters?
- If you'd heard of the book before, did it meet your expectations?
- Have you read any other novels by this author?

Book-Specific Questions

From the PRH Book Club Kit

https://issuu.com/prhlibrary/docs/mckenzie_skyefalling_hc_bookclubkit_final

- What is Skye's responsibility to Vicky when they first meet?
 - What initially motivates Skye to pursue a relationship?
 - How does this change over time?
- Skye seems to have a love-hate relationship with Philadelphia. What complicates her feelings?
- How does gentrification affect the characters in the novel?
- "Chosen families," or groups of friends who fill the family role for each other, are important for many queer people—and for anyone who has felt unsupported (or worse) by their biological family.
 - Who is in Skye's chosen family at the beginning of the novel? What about at the end?
- In a conversation with Viva about who would take care of her if she got sick, Skye says, "People take care of their parents, partners, and kids and that's it."
 - Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- What are the roots of Skye's issues with her mother?
 - Do you think her mother deserves forgiveness?
- How does Vicky help Skye come to terms with her past?

- Skye spent much of her past (and spends some of her present) “testing” people to see whether they truly care about her.
 - What makes her do this, even unconsciously?
 - How does she finally come to understand this?
- Although Viva can see Skye’s shortcomings as a friend, she sticks by her. Tasha and Skye, on the other hand, are no longer friends.
 - How do you know when it’s time to walk away from a friendship?
 - How do you know when you need to stay?
- Viva tells Skye, “Nostalgia is good for us.” Do you agree? How do we balance appreciating the past and living in it or dwelling on it?
- How do Skye’s friends and family help fill gaps in her memories of the past? How have your friends and family helped remind you of things you’ve forgotten?
- A major theme of *Skye Falling* is the importance of community. Discuss the different communities in the novel, and how the members support each other.
 - Do you think people need community to survive?
- Do you think it was Skye’s responsibility to tell Faye about Nick? If so, when do you think she should have done it?
- How has each character changed by the end of the novel?

Additional Questions

- Share your thoughts on the end of the novel. Do you think it wrapped up nicely, or left too many loose ends?
- Do you think that Skye started to build a relationship with Vicky for the right reasons?
- Skye avoids human attachment because “people can’t be counted on when it matters.”, and her solution is to simply leave the situation every time. Share your thoughts on that and what that says about her character.
- Share your thoughts on the writing style of the novel, and how it ties humor into serious situations. Also, the all caps in certain situations when Skye is narrating, lists, etc. is that something you liked or disliked?
- Do you think the author tries to cover too much in this novel?

Resources

Penguin Random House Book Club Kit

https://issuu.com/prhlibrary/docs/mckenzie_skyefalling_hc_bookclubkit_final

Author Website

<https://www.blackgirldangerous.com/about/>

New York Times Book Review

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/22/books/review/skye-falling-mia-mckenzie.html>

Additional Book Club Questions

<https://www.oprahdaily.com/entertainment/a31047508/book-club-questions/>

Audiobook Excerpt

<https://soundcloud.com/penguin-audio/skye-falling-by-mia-mckenzie?fbclid=IwAR0YRCjVWaBAQt0H5SOndJJk3aeO1gVVGzzVMkwVcd5MUju1FJ4fSt483s>