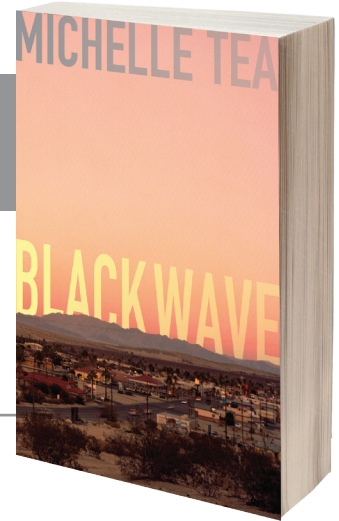


# READING GROUP GUIDE

## **BLACK WAVE** Michelle Tea

978-1-55861-939-5 paper, \$18.95 | 978-1-55861-946-3 ebook, \$18.99



1. In San Francisco, Michelle is largely defined by routine—the bagel shop around the corner, drunk nights out with friends, and failed romances at the same dive bar. What are potential gains and losses when it comes to habitual behavior? How does habit help Michelle, and how does it hurt her?
2. Addiction appears most obviously through Michelle’s drug and alcohol abuse, but how else do addictions manifest themselves in the narrative? Do different addictions affect Michelle similarly? Is every addiction different?
3. When Michelle moves from San Francisco to Los Angeles, she feels she is making a life-changing decision. Does the change in setting truly change her life? Have you ever moved locations, expecting it to also result in other changes? Did that happen? Why or why not?
4. In *Black Wave*, characters respond differently to the apocalypse. If it were the end of the world, where would you want to be, what would you like to do, who would you like to spend the end with, and so on?
5. In Los Angeles, the second part of the novel takes on an eerie, fantastical element. How does this affect the reader’s relationship with the novel? Does it feel more or less real than the first half? More or less personal?
6. In certain parts of the book, Tea disregards linear narrative, instead stepping out of a present moment to allude to the future or the past. Why do you think the author chose to do this? How does a non-chronological narrative affect assumed narratives of addiction and sobriety?
7. Michelle’s end-of-the-world dreams often feature love interests who are much younger than her—some even as young as thirteen. Why does Michelle dream about such younger lovers? What does this say about Michelle, and about Michelle’s state of mind?
8. One of Michelle’s struggles during the book is to write a “universal story”. What do you think of her attempts to do so? What do you think makes a “universal story”? Is there such a thing?



**MICHELLE TEA** is the author of five memoirs, including *Valencia*, *Rent Girl*, and *How to Grow Up*. Her novels include *Rose of No Man's Land* and a trilogy of young-adult fantasy novels. Tea has also edited anthologies on class, fashion, queerness, and first-person narratives. A prolific literary organizer in queer and feminist communities, she cocreated the long-running performance tour Sister Spit and founded the literary nonprofit RADAR Productions. Tea is the former editor of City Lights/Sister Spit and the series editor of Amethyst Editions for the Feminist Press. She lives in Los Angeles.