

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

Where Did You Sleep Last Night by Lynn Crosbie

1. *Where Did You Sleep Last Night* explores the connection between desire and trauma, and between longing and loss. How, ultimately, do these related emotions drive the story?
2. Lynn Crosbie says that she initially envisioned *Where Did You Sleep Last Night* as young adult novel, which quickly morphed into something more adult. Does the book still feel like a YA novel in some ways? What other genres of writing (or entertainment) does it draw on?
3. There is a powerful tension in the way that the central characters are fixated on, but also deeply ambivalent about, memory and nostalgia. They alternate between trying to forget the past, “Drugs and sheer will eventually pummelled my memories into submission,” and attempting to preserve every detail, “He was trying to turn memory into matter” (pp. 108, 299). What, ultimately, do they learn about the power of memories?
4. Although Celine Black is Kurt Cobain, there are huge differences between the two stars’ respective eras of celebrity, most notably that the media and technology landscapes have changed immeasurably between the nineties and today. How do these elements of contemporary celebrity shape Evelyn and Celine’s story?
5. In a conversation about Evelyn’s absent father, her mother tells her that love dies and that’s it. There’s no fixing it when it happens and it’s no one’s fault. How does her mother’s perspective on love compare to Evelyn’s, and how do these shape each of their lives?
6. What begins as a sort of teenage superstition develops into full-blown magic as Evelyn literally wills her idol back into being. As the novel progresses, their magical pairing takes on religious overtones. What sources does Crosbie draw on to create this sense of magical realism? How does her use of the sacred and the magical drive the narrative forward?
7. As their self-destructive relationship and ascendant careers play out, adulation for Celine grows while Evelyn is increasingly ostracized. At one point Mercury calls her a “weaponized Yoko,” echoing a sentiment often directed at Courtney Love in the wake of Kurt Cobain’s suicide (p. 72). Does Evelyn deserve the scorn directed at her? Why do you think this narrative of the woman who is man’s undoing is so persistent?

8. Crosbie says that the story was inspired in part by a lyric from the Hole song “Malibu,” released after Kurt’s suicide: “Oh come on be alive again. Don’t lay down and die.” How does this sentiment motivate the story’s characters and action? What does “being alive” mean for Evelyn? What does it mean for Celine?
9. At one point, Celine tells Evelyn, “I think a lot of people would be happy if you didn’t take up so much room” (p. 266). In this one sentence, he gets to the heart of one of the novel’s main themes. How does the book interrogate the idea of the space that women take up?
10. The story of Evelyn and Celine’s manic courtship and ascendance to fame would be compelling even without the bizarre psychodrama that plays out in the background, echoing the lyrics of the titular song, and the even more bizarre dramatic climax. What do they contribute to the narrative?
11. In addition to the novel’s overarching sense of surrealism, an absurd sense of humour runs through *Where Did You Sleep Last Night*. How does this streak of humour interact with the more emotionally overwrought elements of the book? What effect does it have on your reading experience?
12. Crosbie’s novel coincides with the release of a new documentary on Kurt Cobain and, perhaps more interestingly, with Kim Gordon’s memoir, *Girl in a Band*, which details her experiences in a male-dominated music industry over three decades with Sonic Youth. Does *Where Did You Sleep Last Night*, despite being fiction, function on some level as documentary or memoir? And why is this genre of “behind-the-music” stories so compelling?
13. Although their destructive path keeps them hurtling forward, there is an undeniable sense that the central characters can’t escape the past — a past defined by trauma and loss but also by youthful, nostalgic longing. Are Evelyn and Celine/Kurt able to break free from the past, or are they destined to repeat it? Do the central characters change or grow over the course of the novel?