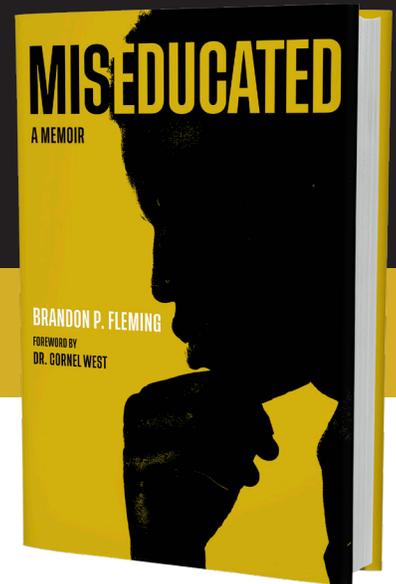


MISEDUCATED

By Brandon P. Fleming

Official Reading Group Guide



1. Consider the many different painful voices in Fleming’s head just before he ends up in the hospital. What various forces—personal, social, existential—were bearing down on him?
2. What might begin to explain the evil, “relentless cruelty” that Lucas inflicted upon Fleming and his siblings? Why was Fleming’s mother unwilling or unable to even believe her children’s claims of abuse, let alone protect them from it? What long-term effects did the abuse have on each of the children?
3. What was valuable but also challenging about Fleming’s father and paternal grandparents? In what ways did their important commitment to “social propriety” limit their ability to help Fleming?
4. What does Fleming mean when he explains that the abuse by his babysitter Renae marked “the end of my boyhood”? How did this experience affect his understanding of and behavior toward sex, women, and romantic relationships?
5. What was the effect of the exposure to adult media, including “grown television,” on the young Fleming and his siblings?
6. What did Fleming learn about masculinity from his cousins in the kitchen “school” of his maternal grandmother’s house in the Bronx? How did this false dilemma about manhood affect many of his choices? Why might the misogynistic messages about women and hard focus on making money have appealed to Fleming at the time?
7. What effects did moving to the DMV have on Fleming and his siblings? How did playing basketball begin to influence Fleming’s life at this time? Beyond his elite skill set, what about Fleming’s approach to basketball would serve him later in his life?
8. What was Mrs. Pearson’s profound influence on Fleming? How was she able to accomplish this at a time when so many adults had given up on him?
9. What did Fleming’s knee injury and the resulting end to his basketball career force him to confront about himself? In what ways did being at the very conservative Liberty University make the dawning of his political awareness difficult and dangerous?



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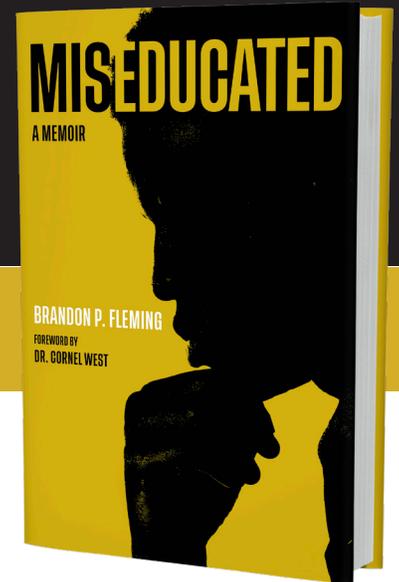


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10. What is an excuse? Why does Fleming believe them to be dangerous and destructive? How might one acknowledge the necessary truth of personal experience without using it as a limiting excuse? What's the difference between explaining and justifying?

11. How does Fleming define and understand the term “renaissance”? Why were the historical, cultural transformations so powerfully compelling to him? What was particularly important about the Harlem Renaissance? What was the nature of Fleming’s personal renaissance?

12. Why were the writings of Frederick Douglass and Malcom X particularly important to Fleming at the beginning of his intellectual transformation? Consider the many other intellectual and spiritual leaders that inspired and taught Fleming throughout his studies. What did each of them offer him? Who are some leaders that have transformed your ways of thinking?

13. Why did Fleming struggle so with the complex skill of competitive debate despite his hard work and genuine passion? What does it mean to think critically? What is essential about inquiry, about asking good questions?

14. What of great importance and effect does Fleming realize about how to reach and teach young people who have been left to fend for themselves? What is the important difference between “being uninterested and being disengaged”? What does Fleming mean when he says he had to begin “learning their language”?

15. What was it about the Saturday Scholars Program that developed not only the students’ thinking and rhetorical skills but also their sense of their powerful selves?

16. Why is Fleming drawn to the discipline of philosophy coupled with the complex activity of debate? How do philosophy and debate serve as powerful pedagogical tools?

17. Consider the brilliant experience and success of the students at the Harvard Debate Council competitions. What does it mean that they “found their voice”? What of profound importance do they add to the landscape of education theory and practice in America? How is Langston Hughes’ powerful poem relevant to this historic experience?



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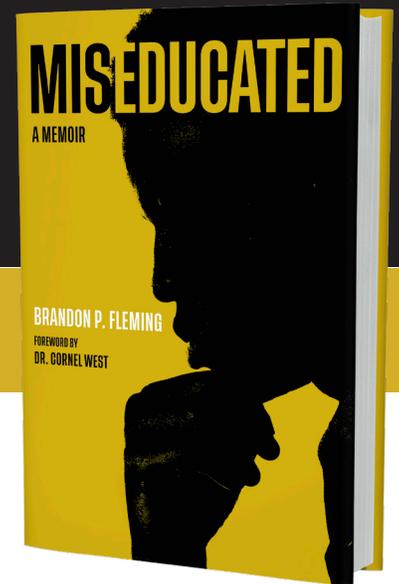


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18. Fleming describes two of his philosophies of education: 1. Love first, teach second, and 2. Learning is not transactional, it's experiential. What do these mean in theory and practice. Reflecting on your own educational journey, how have you seen, or not seen, this demonstrated?

19. We see how Fleming stumbles into teaching and social entrepreneurship. Why do you think he describes both a teacher and a leader being 'born'? What does that mean?

20. What does it mean to fail forward? How do we see this in Fleming's academic and professional journey? How have you failed forward in your own life?



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