

Bossypants Study Guide

Bossypants by Tina Fey

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Summary

Bossypants is a memoir by Tina Fey which recounts episodes from her life in conjunction with her career as a comedian and writer for *Saturday Night Live* and *30 Rock*. Tina welcomes readers and explains that everyone will find something of relevance in her book. She also explains that her book is about the child growing into an adult who still wants to be a child. Born in 1970 in a suburb of Philadelphia to two loving parents, Jeanne and Don, Tina remembers enjoying her childhood. Among the reasons is having such a strong presence by way of her father, who was firm but loving in raising Tina.

As a teenager, Tina was exposed to acting while working at a local summer theater camp. There, she helped sabotage another girl's acting in order to get revenge on her for stealing Tina's boyfriend. Tina explains that this sort of behavior—of females hurting females—is unacceptable. Tina also relates her difficulties in finding dates or feeling like she truly fit in through college, as blonde girls were the “in-thing.” Following college and having earned a degree in drama, Tina moved to Chicago where she took work at the local YMCA before being signed on with the *Second City*, a well-known improv and comedy group theater. It is through the *Second City* that Tina realized just how much she loved the art of improv, because it forces people to use their intelligence, to be creative, and to work without a script, props, or anything else. She also came to love the *Second City* because it is where she met her future husband, Jeff.

As Tina writes, she frequently interrupts her narrative with aside chapters, ranging on everything from the use of Photoshop (which she believes is relatively harmless) to weight (which she believes everyone, thin or fat, should leave everyone alone about) before returning to the arc of her life. From the *Second City*, Tina was hired to write for *Saturday Night Live* in 1997. She came to work alongside her good friend, Amy Poehler, who taught Tina that it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks about what someone is doing, advice which Tina then conveys to the reader. She also notes that appearances of sexism might not always be so, such as when the men involved with SNL worried over filming a mock maxi pad ad, not because they were sexist, but because they knew next to nothing about maxi pads. With advice and inspiration from a colleague, Tina pitched the idea for *30 Rock* to NBC, and was given the green light.

Tina was later thrilled to have her own daughter, Alice, and did her best to balance a career of writing for SNL, overseeing *30 Rock*, and having a home life. Things took a dramatic turn for her in 2008 when she portrayed Sarah Palin throughout that season of SNL. She received rave reviews from some, and strong criticism and hate mail from others. Tina insists that most people misunderstood the portrayal of Palin, especially the first one where Tina's Palin appeared with a mock Hillary Clinton, because the portrayal was meant as a stand against sexism regardless as to which side Palin and Clinton were on politically. Tina concludes her memoir by describing her struggle over whether or not to have a second child—something which she does not provide an answer to as the memoir ends.



Introduction – “That’s Don Fey”

Summary

Introduction – Tina Fey directly welcomes the reader to her book, and says that no matter why the book is being read—from women wanting to make it in male-dominated workplaces to parents wanting to raise achievement-oriented kids to even fans of Sarah Palin, and so on—everyone may find something. Tina explains that for her, the book is about relating her experiences as a child growing into an adult who still wants to be a child.

“Origin Story” – Tina Fey was an unexpected but welcome surprise born to her mother at age forty in 1970, eight years after her parents welcomed her brother into the world. Tina recalls meeting a Greek boy before kindergarten started who ripped her drawing in half, introducing her to the real world. Tina relates briefly that the scar on her face came from being slashed in an alley behind her house. The person was never caught and to this day Tina hates being asked about the scar, though as a child, she enjoyed the celebrity it brought her. Only later does Tina say she realized people were compensating her with attention for the scar, but at the time she dreamt of winning Golden Globes.

“Growing Up and Liking It” – When Tina was ten and began to grow hair on her legs, her mother gave her a “My First Period” kit, including the information her mother was supposed to read but made Tina read instead. The kit made Tina anxious so she hid it in her closet. While singing in chorus at a concert a short time later, Tina had her first period and told her mother about it because Tina did not understand it at the time. Many years later, while writing *Mean Girls*, Tina drew inspiration from the nonfiction book *Queen Bees and Wannabes* by Rosalind Wiseman, who conducted self-esteem and bullying workshops. Tina attended one. Rosalind asked the women assembled when they first believed they were women. Most answered that it was when some guy did or said something sexually nasty to them. Tina relates that her own first such experience was at thirteen, when a guy drove by and yelled that she had nice tits, to which she told him to suck her dick to vent her anger. Tina then jumps in time to when she was twenty-three, and passed out from a Pap smear exam because the speculum being used hit her cervix, meaning that she has a short vagina.

“All Girls Must Be Everything” – When Tina was thirteen, she spent a weekend with her teenage cousins, Janet and Lori, at the beach in Wildwood, New Jersey. There, based on the way her cousins critiqued other girls and women walking by, she saw that there can be an infinite number of things considered wrong with the female body. This was a time when blonde girls with big boobs and no butts were in. Years later, Tina’s own daughter at age three preferred the blonde *Sleeping Beauty* to the brunette *Snow White*. Not until Jennifer Lopez and Beyonce were large butts and thick legs considered fashionable, which only adds to the number of things girls are expected to have, laments Tina. Tina goes on to say that daughters and gay sons must be taught that they



are good enough regardless, and must focus on their good qualities and attributes with their parents leading by example.

“Delaware County Summer Showtime!” – It was 1976 When Larry Wentzler, a young Catholic and family man, began a youth theater program called Summer Showtime for teens and young adults. Over the years the program became a haven for gay kids. Tina took work as the night box office manager at the program when she was seventeen in 1987. She befriended two gay brothers named Tim and Tristan who trash-talked the blonde who stole Tina’s boyfriend. Tina also befriended two twenty-five year-old lesbians named Karen and Sharon, who once dated but are now only friends. By the end of the summer, Tina had gotten over her ex-boyfriend. In health class at school, Tina was stunned when the teacher, Mr. Garth, delivered a lecture on how to spot and avoid homosexuals. New Year’s Eve 1987 rolled around. Tina attended a party thrown by a Summer Showtime friend, Brendan. It turned out the party was set up so that Brendan could come out to everyone, but two drunk girls kissing upstaged him, all before his mother returned home and threw everyone out.

The following summer, Tina returned to work at Summer Showtime again and was promoted to be one of the Children’s Theater assistant directors. She was assigned to work on the murder mystery musical Something’s Afoot with visiting director Sean Kenny, the older brother of Sharon. There, Tina effectively argued the case that the blonde who stole her boyfriend should not be cast in Something’s Afoot. Only later did Tina realize this was girl-on-girl sabotage. Sean hit on a gay guy named Richard, which Tina did her best to prevent by speaking down about Richard. Tina explains this is because, although she enjoyed having entertaining gay friends at the time, she didn’t want to be privy to their actual lives. Tina has since realized the error of her ways, coming to believe that gay people are made that way by God, and that Summer Showtime was a successful implementation of Christianity.

“That’s Don Fey” – Tina explains that an important element for raising a successful adult is a strong father figure, and fear of that figure. Tina’s father, Don, resembled Clint Eastwood, looked stern but was kind, and dressed well. He was also a Korean War veteran, a watercolorist, a writer, taught himself Greek, and was a conservative Republican. Little things, such as spelling and grammar, mattered immensely to Don. To Don, anything which does not work was either defective or inexcusable—such as the time he attempted to spend a Saturday in 1979 shampooing the carpets at home and was unable to do so. Tina explains that years later, she now appreciates the fear of getting in trouble given to her by her father, as well as the knowledge that while she is loved, she is not above the law—something more kids need. Tina relates that it was Don who drove her to the hospital when her face was slashed, calmly comforting her the entire way, and that in the present day, everyone is always impressed when meeting her father.



Analysis

From the very beginning of Tina Fey's memoir, Tina encourages readers to be comfortable with who they are. She leads by example, saying that her memoir is about a kid who turned into an adult who still wants to be a kid. Tina is very comfortable with who she is as a person now, but this was not always the case. She relates several times how she, as a brunette, was not the in-style kind of girl growing up. Girls with blonde hair, big boobs, and no butts were the in-thing, and Tina relates her struggles with boys who did not want to date her because of this. At the same time, Tina's experiences at summer camp also reveal her observation of how gay kids were struggling to be comfortable with who they were—and how even she had difficulty completely accepting them at first.

Tina's experiences working at summer theater camp also taught her something invaluable much later on. Although she was acting from a place of revenge against the girl who stole her boyfriend by sabotaging the girl's chances at acting in a specific play, Tina later comes to realize that such girl-on-girl sabotage is incredibly hurtful and detrimental to women at large. It is through this critical self-examination of herself that Tina is able to draw important lessons about her own life and use them not only in the future in her own life, but to present these lessons to readers. Tina goes on to say that she took such lessons about girl-on-girl sabotage, and accepting people as who they are, to heart.

Interestingly enough, Tina explains that contemporary ideas about female beauty—from Jennifer Lopez's butt to Beyonce's legs—do not help more girls become accepting of who they are, but instead give them yet another ideal to have to live up to. Because of this, more girls will be uncomfortable with who they are because of what is considered to be mainstream beauty. It is through the evaluation of pop standards of beauty that Tina comes to tell the readers that they must be comfortable with who they are, and that they must teach their children the same. Not everyone is going to be the same, but being accepting of oneself is crucial. To do this, parents must lead by example—something which Tina is doing through the use of her book.

Tina credits much of the way she turned out by noting what a strong presence her father had in her life. Tina's father, very traditional and very firm, was also loving and reassuring. He had no concerns about who he was as a person, and had no concerns about letting Tina know what he expected of her. As such, Tina never settled for second-best, and always sought to follow her dreams, realizing that who she was as a person was more than good enough. This is translated into Tina's earlier sentiments that people must be comfortable with who they are.

Vocabulary

fool's errand, technically, self-esteem, ideal, notorious, incredulous, monologue, immersed, sabotage, meritocracy, nonchalantly



“Climbing Old Rag Mountain” – “The Secrets of Mommy’s Beauty”

Summary

“Climbing Old Rag Mountain” – In 1988, Tina attended the University of Virginia, where she was assumed to be Mexican given her dark hair and Greek tan. Tina had a thing for white boys, but knew that no white boys had a thing for her. Tina finally began seeing an older kid she nicknamed a Handsome Robert Wuhl, who did architecture and theater. One night, together with a bro Tina refers to as Jess-Chris because she cannot remember his name, they decided to climb Old Rag Mountain. At the top, Robert explained he once brought a girl named Gretchen up there, who only wanted half-a-stick of gum because she was too feminine and perfect to handle a full piece. It was then that Tina realized things with Robert were going nowhere. She went to bed hoping Robert would marry Gretchen, and that Gretchen had a cavernous vagina.

“Young Men’s Christian Association” – In 1992, Tina took a job at the YMCA in Evanston, Illinois, after she moved to Chicago. The YMCA is a combination fitness facility, a community resource for families, and a home for disenfranchised men. Tina was to see to the needs of residents and to keep strangers and visitors out. Tina worked alongside a married woman named Donna, who was very to-the-point with her conversations and used as few words as possible. From this job, Tina learned how to be a good friend and coworker, covering the phones for Donna when she had to use the bathroom and not being a tattletale. Tina came to befriend many of the residents and many of the young people who came to use the gym. Tina came to feel badly for the residents who had their version of Christmas dinner over the holidays, and began to pocket some of the gym fees from patrons who visited the YMCA each day. At the same time, she began taking improv classes at night. Tina then got a promotion at the YMCA over Donna, which she only had for a year until she got a job with the Second City Touring Company.

“The Windy City, Full of Meat” – Tina went to work for the Second City, an improvisation and sketch comedy theater in Chicago, founded in 1959. There is also a Second City theater in Toronto, and between the two, a number of people have risen to stardom including John Belushi, Steve Martin, Gilda Radner, Chris Farley, Amy Sedaris, and Stephen Colbert. Tina, who had formally studied acting, now came to love improv because it puts people on a stage with nothing—not even a script. She was paid a \$25-per-diem, and \$75-per-show. Years later, reflecting on the experience, Tina says it changed her worldview, set her on a career path toward Saturday Night Live, and was where she met her husband. Tina then presents several rules of improv, saying that you must always agree and say yes to whatever your partner is saying or doing; that you must always add something of your own to the agreement; that you must make statements in addition to asking questions; and that there are no mistakes in improv. Tina also explains that the Second City is the only place she has experienced



institutionalized sexism, such as when the theater initially opposed gender-number equality in casts (going to a three-woman, three-man cast from a four-man, two-woman cast). Tina explains that gender should never dictate success, but that actual merit should regardless as to gender.

“My Honeymoon, or A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” – Tina’s soon-to-be husband, Jeff Richmond, hated flying, so after a bad trip to Austria where Jeff was given the opportunity to direct a sketch comedy show for an English-language theater, Tina promised never to make him fly anywhere again. When they married a few years later, they decided to go on a cruise for their honeymoon. A fire broke out in the engine room, and people were sent to the muster stations. Everyone began thinking of Titanic. Fortunately, the fire was put out but the boat headed to Bermuda, meaning the passengers would be forced to fly home. Jeff immediately began to dread this, but Tina came to find the plane trip home amusing because everyone was on edge from the ship incident. A week after arriving home, letters of apology were received along with an offer for a free cruise of an equal or lesser value.

“The Secrets of Mommy’s Beauty” – Tina Fey says she knows why readers have purchased her book, and this is to learn the secret beauty regimen she will now share. This regimen includes forming good beauty habits early, such as not using Prell shampoo; wearing the right undergarments; the importance of properly treating eyes (such as when Tina showed Monica Lewinsky how to properly pat on eye cream while trying to convince her to appear on SNL); finding a trusted hairstylist or learning how to properly do one’s own hair; to stick with fashion that works; and most importantly regarding rules of beauty, who cares?

Analysis

Tina’s time at college, much like her teenage years, continue to see Tina struggling with who she is as a person. Much of this comes by way of the still in-style blonde ideal, but also because so few men actually wanted to date Tina. One such date—the climbing of a mountain—resulted not in romance, but in Tina’s date remembering an ex-girlfriend and the way she chewed gum. It is easy to see why Tina had such difficulty accepting herself between pop culture and experiences like Old Rag Mountain. Yet, Tina’s time after college is when she truly began to make strides in both her life and in her career. Tina’s time spent working at the YMCA gave her important experience about working with others and in dealing with all different kinds of people. This was important experience that she would carry on with her through her life.

Tina went to work for the Second City from the YMCA. There, Tina truly came into her own as she came to revel in comedy, especially improv. Tina loves improv because it forces people to be creative and to use their intelligence on their feet without scripts or props. Doing this requires a certain level of self-confidence and being comfortable with who one is. This furthers Tina’s thematic argument that people must be comfortable with who they are. Tina explains she truly came into her own in improv, and for reasons other than her personal interests or future career. She is also happy to have spent time at the



Second City because it allowed her to meet the man who would become her future husband.

Tina's achievement-oriented nature can be traced back to her father and his example, while the nature of Tina's achievements—not hurting other girls along the way to get where she is—is indicative of the lessons she has learned and the good person that she has become. Tina's decision not to hurt any other girls (or anyone else, period) is further evidence of her thematic argument that girls must not hurt one another, and must stop competing with one another as though other girls were the only competition. Everyone is competition, she explains. She further notes that the idea of basing anything on gender is ridiculous, because merit—not gender—is critical in determining real success.

As Tina writes, the reader notices that she takes entire chapters to use as asides to reflect or elaborate on certain parts or aspects of her life. In the chapter “The Secrets of Mommy's Beauty,” Tina addresses her own beauty regimen. Often she does so in a self-deprecatingly humorous way, but her points in this section of her memoir are clear. She further advances her thematic argument that people must be comfortable with who they are. This includes both a woman's beauty and the fashion that she chooses. When Tina boils it all down, she says that the most important rule regarding such things is the acceptance of the question, who cares?

Vocabulary

feminine, instinctively, disenfranchised, catatonic, enigma, improvisation, comedy sketch, lucrative, scuttlebutt, enigmatic



“Remembrances of Being Very Very Skinny” – “Dear Internet”

Summary

“Remembrances of Being Very Very Skinny” – Around the year 2000, Tina was very, very thin. She was cold all the time and hated the men who finally noticed her. She says that if natural or done healthily, there is nothing wrong with being thin. Tina explains that people should be left alone regarding their body weight.

“Remembrances of Being a Little Bit Fat” – Around the year 2000, Tina Fey was also overweight. She had bigger boobs, loved getting McDonalds and Burger King, and hated the men who did not want to date her. Tina explains that there is nothing wrong about being chubby for a while, and that people should be left alone about their weight.

“A Childhood Dream, Realized (Not the One Where I’m Being Chased by Count Chocula)” – In this chapter, Tina jumps back in time. In 1997, Tina Fey traveled to New York to interview with Lorne Michaels for a writing job at Saturday Night Live because SNL was looking to diversify. Tina learned many things from Lorne Michaels, including the fact that producing is about discouraging creativity that is too wild or inappropriate. It is also about listening to concerns of those involved. Over thinking is costly, and television is a visual medium that requires people and things to look their best. Additionally, Tina learned that one should never tell a crazy person they are crazy for reasons of tact and goodwill. Tina uses herself as an example. In October 2001, an envelope suspected of containing anthrax was found at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. Tina headed home believing she would die. She was called up later by Lorne and invited back for dinner and to keep working—a gentle way of telling her she had overreacted.

“Peeing in Jars With Boys” – Tina jumps back in time to September 27, 1997, during her first show as a writer for SNL, guest-hosted by Sylvester Stallone. A sketch where Stallone was to play Rocky required his wife, Adrian, to be present. SNL refused to use Cheri Oteri in favor of Chris Kattan in drag. Within ten years, Tina explains as an aside, such a thing would never happen again as the women run things, now. Tina also says the one question she is asked repeatedly is if men and women find different things funny. She explains there is some overlap and some difference—but the biggest difference in work is that several of the men she works with are too lazy to go to the bathroom so they urinate in jars they keep in their offices.

Tina also believes women gravitate toward comedy because it is a socially acceptable way of breaking rules and escaping daily life. Tina then returns to her narrative to go on to recount her proudest moment at SNL, when it came time to writing mock commercials. Tina came to favor a script for Kotex Classic mocking the “classic” trend in advertising by using maxi pads that hook to belts, written by Paula Pell. They were told the script would be too difficult to produce. Tina realized this had nothing to do with



sexism, but that the men opposing the idea simply had no clue what it was like to wear a maxi pad that hooks to a belt. Tina pressed again for the script, and was greenlighted. Tina found this an important moment because she and Paula had been heard.

“I Don’t Care If You Like It (One in a Series of Love Letters to Amy Poehler)” – When Tina’s friend, Amy Poehler came to work at SNL, Tina overheard Jimmy Fallon telling Amy in a joking way he did not like some unladylike comedic bit she was doing. Amy actually became angry and told Jimmy that she did not care, taking him as being serious. It made Tina happy. Tina here directly addresses the reader, saying she hates it when people say they don’t find women funny, or when someone tries to say they don’t like something, it implies it is not good in general. Tina says women don’t fucking care if anyone likes it. She urges women to do what they want and not to care if someone doesn’t like it.

“Amazing, Gorgeous, Not Like That” – While work should always be the focus, Tina explains, photo shoots are fun. She especially enjoys having makeup professionally applied, because she has so little time during a typical day to apply any to herself at all. The photographers themselves are always different. Some plan out every detail of a shot, while others wing things. The entire shoot process seems luxurious compared to daily life. Tina goes on to talk about the use of Photoshop in magazine pictures, and states that it is something only women excessively obsess over. Tina thinks the entire argument is relatively pointless because she says Photoshop is just like makeup, and that it is relatively harmless. Photoshop itself is not a bad thing, Tina goes on to explain, and there are more important things to worry about.

“Dear Internet” – Tina uses this chapter to answer some comments posted by people on various websites. For example, one commenter wants to know when Tina will do something about her scar, to which Tina asks the commenter if she is a physician who has some knowledge about the human body and scars, and that she would love some advice. Another commenter says Tina Fey has had plastic surgery and was never as beautiful as Sarah Palin is now. Tina responds by revealing a long list of fake surgical procedures she has done, such as having rat poison injected into her face because she is allergic to Botox.

Analysis

As Tina has argued consistently throughout her memoir so far, people need to be comfortable with who they are. A large part of the controversy over acceptance of oneself has to do with body weight. As Tina has briefly alluded to previously by way of the 1970s ideal (thin blondes with big boobs and no butts) and by contemporary ideals (the 2000s and on, with Beyonce legs and Jennifer Lopez butts), people need to stop obsessing over weight. People especially need to stop harassing one another about their weight, thin or fat. Tina, leading by example, reveals she has been both thin and fat in her life. She says there is nothing wrong with being thin so long as it is done healthily; and that there is nothing wrong with being temporarily fat so long as it does not harm one’s health.



Through her experiences at the Second City, Tina's self-confidence grew tremendously. She became more and more comfortable with who she is as a person, and far more confident in her abilities. She came to apply for work as a writer at Saturday Night Live and was hired. This underscores Tina's consistent point that one must be comfortable with who one is, including women. The idea that women should not sabotage one another is also given important emphasis, as Tina and other women came to work together to help one another during their time at SNL. While Tina makes it clear that there is no institutional sexism at SNL, she does say that misunderstandings or simple, innocent ignorance can sometimes make it seem that way—such as with the Kotex Classic mock ad. This comes not from sexism, but from men simply knowing next to nothing about maxi pads. Tina worked together with Paula in order to make the maxi pad skit happen.

It was while working at SNL that Tina experienced the exchange between Amy Poehler and Jimmy Fallon. Though Jimmy was only joking around, Amy took him seriously and snapped at him about what could be considered appropriate and ladylike for comedy. Amy Poehler's contention that she did not care what Jimmy thought, or what anyone else thought, is returned directly to the reader by way of Tina. Tina tells readers that they should not care what anyone thinks about anything in their lives. This is as true of comedy as it is of life in general. Once again, Tina has critically examined her own life and her experiences—such with Amy—and has drawn important lessons about being comfortable with who one is. This is something which Tina continues to argue—that people must be comfortable with who they are as people.

Vocabulary

diversify, extrapolated, overcompensate, enunciate, empirically, incontrovertible



“30 Rock: An Experiment to Confuse Your Grandparents”

Summary

Tina Fey jumps back in time to her eighth season at SNL. She was ready for the next phase of her life. Lorne suggested working with NBC to write a sitcom. Kevin Reilly suggested writing something about which Tina knows personally, such as working at SNL. Tina agreed to give it a shot, thinking she could easily incorporate Alec Baldwin and Tracy Morgan into it. A pilot was made and NBC picked up the series, even though Alec Baldwin had not officially signed on beyond the pilot. Eventually, Alec did.

Tina goes on to compliment the writers she worked with, including Jack Donaghy, Kay Cannon, Dave Finkel, Brett Baer, Matt Hubbard, Dave Gardner, John Riggi, Donald Glover, and Robert Carlock. When 30 Rock premiered, it was not a hit, but Tina and her team carried on. Tina came to learn much about acting from Alec Baldwin, whom she describes as a phenomenal actor. The production schedule wore heavily on Tina, but she was glad for the work and the opportunity. Tina then commits to answering FAQs about 30 Rock, such as if Alec Baldwin were really leaving show business, to which she responded that if he did, she would use his brother, Billy, to replace him in slightly out-of-focus shots.

“Sarah, Oprah, and Captain Hook, or How to Succeed by Sort of Looking Like Someone” – Tina Fey ended up acting on SNL because Michael Lorne enjoys promoting from within the ranks. She began with a screen test, and was hired on to do SNL Weekend Updates. Tina came to play a number of people, but it is Sarah Palin that she bears a striking resemblance to, and came to play on SNL. At the same time, Oprah expressed interest in appearing on 30 Rock, all while Tina was planning a birthday party for her daughter, Alice. On Saturday morning, September 13, Tina filmed 30 Rock scenes with Oprah and then spent the afternoon and evening preparing for SNL. Tina includes the Sarah Palin-Hillary Clinton sketch script in the following pages, which Tina explains was less a statement about politics and more a statement about the sexism both Palin and Clinton had to deal with. Tina went on to play Sarah Palin several times over the course of the 2008 presidential campaign.

Tina does admit to taking things too far, such as when her character of Palin was given the line that she is only one cancerous mole away from being president should John McCain be elected. Tina learned that her parents, both Republicans originally charmed with the sketches, felt the sketches were becoming too much. When Sarah Palin asked to be on the show, Tina didn't like the idea. She felt as if it would be seen to be an endorsement of her, and she didn't want Palin to feel as if she were being set up by the liberal audience of SNL. Lorne insisted the show be done. Tina consented but worried that Palin would be booed. She found Sarah Palin, her daughter, and her campaign staff to be warm and friendly. Tina surprised herself by being condescending to Palin, asking



her to tell everyone she enjoyed her time on SNL when the show was over. Palin graciously took it in stride. Just before the election, John McCain appeared on SNL as well. Tina performed once more as Sarah Palin opposite McCain, and gained popularity as well as hate mail and criticism for her performances.

Analysis

Perhaps the part of Tina's life for which she became especially famous (or infamous, depending on one's viewpoint) has to do not only with her creation and overseeing of *30 Rock*, but of her portrayal of Sarah Palin. Naturally, the two events—in conjunction with her home life—take up a significant portion of her memoir. Tina explains that some came to hate her portrayal of Palin while others loved it. Even her own parents, both Republicans who originally enjoyed the portrayal of Palin, eventually came to find it to be too much. Tina explains that, at least initially, the Palin-Clinton skit was less about politics and more about combating sexism. Women must stop sabotaging other women, Tina demonstrates through the skit, and sexism must be called out wherever it is found no matter who it is being directed towards.

Tina also turns a critical eye toward herself during this time, and draws important lessons about her work. For example, the cancer joke relating to John McCain was something she acknowledged went too far and that even the liberal audience of SNL did not find funny. Tina also comes to realize that the real Sarah Palin's appearance on SNL allowed her to see that Palin and her campaign staff were warm and friendly, and Tina chastises herself in the memoir for speaking down to Palin after the show. Tina demonstrates once again, leading by example, that she is not afraid to be critical of herself—and neither should readers.

As Tina continues to consistently argue, people must be comfortable with who they are—even drawing on self-criticism. Likewise, Tina's ability to strive to be a mother and a career-oriented woman demonstrate her continued work to be comfortable with herself as a person. Consider, for example, her ability to spend the morning filming scenes for *30 Rock* with Oprah Winfrey, then spending the afternoon and evening playing Sarah Palin, while the following day having a birthday party for Alice. (Tina will delve into more detail about this in coming chapters.) Tina does not say this is an easy thing to do—balancing Oprah, SNL, and Alice—but that it is worth it.

Vocabulary

begrudgingly, mundane, blithe, impervious, ad hominem, virtuosity



“There’s a Drunk Midget in My House” – “What Should I Do With My Last Five Minutes?”

Summary

“There’s a Drunk Midget in My House” – Tina explains that baby formula was first developed in the mid-1800s for orphans and underweight babies, but that in the present age, mothers really should breastfeed. Tina explains that her own decision to breastfeed was a very gratifying thing. Tina recommends mothers breastfeed for as long as it suits them. Tina explains she has many nicknames for her daughter, including Midge (Midget) because her daughter was born a week early and slightly underweight. Eventually, Midge switched to an all-formula diet, but Tina still dealt with nursing mothers who believe in breastfeeding up into childhood and criticize those who do not. She calls them “Teat Nazis,” and notes their highest places of infestation are Hollywood and Brooklyn.

“A Celebrity’s Guide to Celebrating the Birth of Jesus” – Each year at Christmas, Tina and her family spend the holiday with both sets of in-laws. Jeff drives because Tina does not have a license. Tina loves her in-laws, who she says are lovely people. One year, Tina invited her in-laws to New York for a city Christmas, which was a bad decision. Her father-in-law tripped on the sidewalk and dislocated his shoulder, the rush of the city wore the in-laws down, and things such as the large tree at Rockefeller Center were unimpressive since there are so many similar trees at home. The following year, they met each other halfway in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where they stayed at a motel, ate out, and used the Christmas tree in the lobby to do gifts. Tina was thrilled that the experience went so well.

“Juggle This” – Alice came home from school with a library book called *My Working Mom* written by two men. The story is about a witch who spends much time away from home on business, which her daughter doesn’t like. Tina explains the question she hates receiving most is how she manages to juggle it all. Tina explains that she is pretty much like anyone else, except that she has her dream job. While Tina loves work, she loves spending time with her daughter, and sometimes thinks about quitting in order to spend more time with her daughter. She envies the time the nanny has with Alice. She also considers how to approach the nanny for routinely cutting Alice’s fingernails too short, but then just decides to do it herself before leaving for work. Half the time, Tina ends up cutting the nails too short as well. Tina tells five year-old Alice that the *My Working Mom* book makes her sad. Alice says she can’t read yet, and thought the book was about Halloween.

“The Mother’s Prayer for Its Daughter” – In this chapter, Tina presents a prayer to God on behalf of her daughter. She implores God to prevent her daughter from getting tattoos, to allow her to be beautiful but not damaged, and to stay away from drugs. She



asks God to always protect her daughter, for her to have a job that is intellectually fulfilling and is something she loves to do, and that should her daughter have kids, her daughter will appreciate Tina for her own mothering.

“What Turning Forty Means to Me” – Tina says turning forty means taking off her pants as soon as she gets home, something she never used to have to do.

“What Should I Do With My Last Five Minutes?” – In this final chapter, Tina explains to readers that this is the end of her book, and she wonders how she should spend the last five minutes of it. Tina reveals that in New York, large families are in style again and Alice is the only only-child in her class. Tina wonders about her next steps in life, considering expanding in the movie world. Tina notes that, as women get older—especially female comedians—they are referred to as crazy, while men are still celebrated. Tina believes the world of acting must diversify to include more women of all ages. In addition to all of this, Tina agonizes over whether or not to have a second baby. Whatever Tina decides to do, she knows everything will work out in the end.

Analysis

Through the final chapters of her memoir, Tina addresses a number of different concerns and issues. She notes that there are many things which people obsess over that should not be obsessed over. Among these is breastfeeding. Tina is genuinely surprised by how some women who breastfeed tear other women down who do not, or who do not do it for long. This once again returns the focus to Tina’s point that women should not be tearing other women down, but also underscores the point that people must be comfortable with who they are. Tina’s decision not to breastfeed for long is her own decision, and no one else’s. Yet, the vitriolic debate over breastfeeding has turned it into something almost political rather than something personal, intimate, and heartwarming.

Tina spends much of the rest of the book speaking about family life and motherhood. She demonstrates her happiness with being a mother, and her accepting of who she is as a mother. She notes some of the daily struggles of motherhood—such as making sure Alice is well-cared for and dealing with the kind of reading material that Alice brings home that Alice can’t read. Tina’s love of motherhood is also noted by her including a prayer to God for the life of Alice that forms the extent of an entire chapter.

As Tina’s memoir comes to a close, she renews her consistent argument that people must be comfortable with who they are. Tina admits to having struggles with this, still, as she balances work and home—and notes that she hates being asked about how she does it all. Tina explains she is just like anyone else, except that she has her dream job. Interestingly enough, even though Tina is very comfortable with who she is as a person, and with her work-home life balance, she agonizes over whether or not she wants to have a second child. She considers this in light of the home-work balance in her life, but ultimately comes to accept that whatever she decides, everything will work out all right in the end.

Vocabulary

unsolicited, immunities, supplementing, arduously, affinity, stymied, reverie, invective,

Important People

Tina Fey

Tina Fey is the author of *Bossypants*. Born unexpectedly in 1970, Tina had a good, stable upbringing thanks to her parents. She was especially influenced by her father and his example, and through the course of the memoir becomes comfortable with herself to the point that she is easily able to criticize herself and draw important lessons from her experiences—such as why females should not sabotage other females, and that merit, not gender, makes the real difference.

Tina came to fall in love with theater, studied drama in college, and moved to Chicago. There, she worked at the YMCA where she learned how to work with others, and then she was hired on to act in the Second City where she fell in love with comedy improv. From there, Tina was hired on to work at SNL and later came to create and produce the show *30 Rock*. At the same time, Tina married a man named Jeff and had a daughter named Alice. Tina does her best to balance home and work, and loves both her family and her work. In 2008, Tina came to portray Sarah Palin for SNL, for which she became especially famous and infamous depending on one's viewpoint. As Tina's memoir ends, she comes to discuss her confusion over whether or not to have a second child—but does not say what her decision is.

Don Fey

Don Fey is the father of Tina Fey, and the husband of Jeanne. Don is held up as an example of the sort of strong, masculine, father figure women need in their lives, as he was very comfortable with himself and who he was as a person. Don, resembling Clint Eastwood, was a military veteran, a watercolorist, a writer, and a conservative Republican. As a father, he was firm but loving, and let his expectations of Tina be known. As a result, Tina never settled for second-best, always sought to follow her dreams, and became more confident in who she is as a person.

Alice Richmond

Alice Richmond is the daughter of Tina Fey and Jeff Richmond. Alice is about five when the memoir ends and much of Tina's exposition on her home life deals with striving to be a good mother for Alice. Tina relates amusing anecdotes about Alice, such as when Alice brought home an anti-feminist book she had mistaken for a book about Halloween due to its illustration of witches.



Jeanne Fey

Jeanne Fey is the mother of Tina Fey, and the wife of Don. Though not much is said about Jeanne in the memoir, what is said is very important and very powerful. Jeanne is a loving mother who, of a different generation, had difficulty speaking to Tina about things like menstruation. As a result, Jeanne gave her daughter a My First Period kit to learn about menstruation instead.

Jeff Richmond

Jeff Richmond is Tina Fey's husband. Having first met at the Second City, Jeff and Tina were later married. Jeff is demonstrated to be a loving and devoted husband, but is noted to have a serious fear of flying.

Lorne Michaels

Lorne Michaels is the producer of Saturday Night Live, and is considered a legend. It is Lorne who first hired Tina to SNL, and it is Lorne who taught Tina many gentle lessons about producing which would later come to benefit her in 30 Rock. Among these are that producers must curtail inappropriate creativity, and that they must never tell people they are being crazy.

Amy Poehler

Amy Poehler is a good friend of Tina's, and a fellow actor who appeared in the Second City. Amy Poehler receives a chapter dedicated to her in which Tina expresses her thanks to Amy for not taking guff from anyone for any reason. Tina uses Amy's example as a lesson for all readers to do what they want and not care what anyone thinks.

Sarah Palin

Sarah Palin was the 2008 Republican Vice Presidential nominee on a ticket with John McCain for President, as well as former governor of Alaska. Tina Fey came to portray Sarah Palin on SNL, for which she received both praise and criticism. When Sarah Palin herself appeared on SNL, Tina found Sarah to be warm and friendly, but Tina ended up speaking down to Palin, something which she chastises herself for in the memoir.

Alec Baldwin

Alec Baldwin is an actor and played one of the prominent roles on the show 30 Rock. When Tina began to detail the aspects of the show for 30 Rock, she knew Alex would be an invaluable asset. Alec's refusal to immediately sign on with 30 Rock put the show's future in jeopardy. While NBC was worried about committing to the show without



Alec, they ultimately decided to sign on for the show. Alec ultimately did, however, sign on to 30 Rock.

Tracy Morgan

Tracy Morgan is an actor and played one of the prominent roles on the show 30 Rock. Tracy is a kind and hysterical comedian who was one of the selling points of 30 Rock when Tina pitched it to NBC. It is in part because of Tracy's initial signing onto the show that NBC gave the green light to 30 Rock, even though Alec Baldwin belatedly signed on.



Objects/Places

Scar

The scar that runs across Tina's face is one of the things that Tina most hates being asked about, and which Tina explains has no symbolism. Tina says that being asked about the scar says more about the person asking than about Tina herself, because everyone who asks tries to read something into it that it is not. The scar is the result of a random stranger slashing Tina's face in the alley behind her house one night, for which her father rushed her to the hospital to be treated.

Summer Showtime Theatre

Summer Showtime Theatre was a local theatre program for kids, teens, and young adults founded in 1976 by Larry Wentzler, a young Catholic family man. Summer Showtime is described as a successful implementation of Christianity, for the program involved kids of all kinds, and especially became a refuge for gay kids. Tina spent her teenage years working at Summer Showtime, and there came to love acting and learned important lessons, such as that girls should never sabotage other girls.

Strong father figure

A strong father figure is something Tina Fey believes all women need, because it helps women to become more capable and confident in themselves. Tina's strong father figure is her own father, Don Fey, a confident man who was firm but loving and made sure his expectations of Tina were known. As a result, Tina is more confident in who she is, and has become an achievement-oriented adult.

Saturday Night Live

A strong father figure is something Tina Fey believes all women need, because it helps women to become more capable and confident in themselves. Tina's strong father figure is her own father, Don Fey, a confident man who was firm but loving and made sure his expectations of Tina were known. As a result, Tina is more confident in who she is, and has become an achievement-oriented adult.

30 Rock

30 Rock was a mock comedy show which satirized NBC and was produced by Tina Fey. The show featured Tina Fey, Alec Baldwin, Tracy Morgan, and other actors and actresses. The show is notable for not only its satirical humor, but guest stars such as



Oprah Winfrey. Tina uses all of the lessons she has learned in life—from working with others to producing—to great effect on the show itself.

Palin-Clinton sketch

The Palin-Clinton Sketch of September 13, 2008, marks the first time that Tina Fey portrayed Sarah Palin on Saturday Night Live. It was a performance that was well-received by some and heavily criticized by others. Tina notes that most people missed the point of the sketch, which was to criticize the sexism being hurled against both Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton.

Upper Darby

Upper Darby is a suburb of Philadelphia, and is the hometown of Tina Fey. Tina spent her childhood and teenage years in Upper Darby, and she recalls childhood as a good time. She reflects fondly on her family life as a child, and on her parents. Yet, she also recalls the occasional negative memory, such as when she was slashed across the face by a knife-wielding stranger behind her house.

Chicago

Chicago, Illinois, is the city to which Tina moved after college. There, she worked at a branch of the YMCA and learned how to work with all different kinds of people. It was in Chicago that Tina took on her first work in acting with the Second City, and is where Tina not only fell in love with comedy improv, but first met her future husband, Jeff Richmond.

New York

New York is the city to which Tina moved when she was hired on at Saturday Night Live, first as a writer, and then later as an actor. Not only is New York also where the headquarters of NBC is located, but it was also the setting for Tina's show 30 Rock, which satirized the New York City-based company. New York is also where Tina began to raise a family with the birth of Alice, and where she endeavors to balance home and work. Tina also notes that New York is not a good place to invite relatives to who are not used to cities.

Williamsport

Williamsport, Pennsylvania, home of the Little League World Series, is the place to which Tina, her family, and her in-laws agreed to meet for Christmas rather than dragging everyone either to Ohio or to New York. Tina describes Christmas in

Williamsport as immensely successful, and something they would repeat because nobody had to go too far out of their way for the other.



Themes

Being comfortable with oneself

Tina Fey argues that you must be comfortable with who you are in *Bossypants*. Tina's book consists of a number of situations in which pop culture, social expectations, and other people seek to tear one another down or provide ideals that become standard practice, but to which not everyone aspires or measures up to. It is no use obsessing over or being brought down by such things—and Tina uses herself as an example of this.

When Tina was a teenager, the in-style girl was blonde, had large boobs, and had no butt. Tina did not measure up to this standard, but did not let it bother her too much. Tina had a difficult time getting dates sometimes because of this, but she did not let it discourage her from dating. By the 2000s, when big butts and strong legs were in style, Tina still did not measure up—but did not despair. Likewise, Tina has been both thin and temporarily fat, and says that there is nothing wrong with these, either, so long as they are healthy. Additionally, Tina notes her own struggles with accepting gay kids for who they really are at first, though she later comes to accept them completely.

Much of being comfortable with who one is comes by way of role models. All women, Tina says, need a strong father figure in their lives. Tina's own father, Don, was firm but loving, and made sure Tina knew what he expected of her. As a result, Tina became more confident of herself, and has become achievement-oriented as an adult. From Amy Poehler, Tina learned—and relates—that no one should allow others to dictate who they are and what they do. From Lorne Michaels, Tina learned about confident management in producing, and applied these lessons to her work on *30 Rock*. These sorts of lessons must also be passed down from parents to children.

The expectations of some people also weigh down heavily as a challenge to being comfortable with oneself. One of the questions Tina hates most is when people ask her how she balances her work and home life. Tina works hard for both her family and her career, and is happy and confident with the results. Tina must explain she is just like anyone else, except she happens to have her dream job. Likewise, she was fiercely criticized for her lack of breastfeeding by a subset of moms who believe breastfeeding should always occur. However, Tina knew what is good for her and her baby, and so did not allow herself to be bothered by the expectations of others because she knows who she is and is confident in herself.

The need to end girl sabotage

Girls must stop sabotaging one another, Tina Fey argues in *Bossypants*. Tina explains that oftentimes, the fiercest opponents of women are other women—and as a teenager, Tina was no exception to this. Tina explains that women must work together, and must not allow gender to be used against them, or to work for them.



As teenager, Tina was heartbroken when a blonde girl at theater camp stole her boyfriend. The following year, Tina helped to deny the girl a wanted role as a matter of revenge. Tina came to regret this immensely, and realizes in her adult life that such things are horrible because women end up being their own greatest enemy. Tina notes that, at work, women are often deliberately played against one another on the sole basis of their gender and because of their competitive ways against one another. Tina argues that such things must stop.

Tina provides some of her own experiences relating to helping, rather than hurting other girls. One such example involves helping Paula Pell advance an SNL mock commercial which satirized the “classic” trend in advertising and products by way of maxi pads. The men at SNL were wary about producing the skit—not because of sexism, as it might first appear—but because they genuinely knew nothing about maxi pads. Rather than turning against Paul, Tina worked on her behalf to ensure the skit was produced.

Another point which Tina makes through her arguments against girl-on-girl sabotage is that women should not rely on their gender to achieve or advance in their work or anywhere in life. Tina explains that merit, not gender, should be the reason for success. Just because someone is a man does not mean they are necessarily funny, and just because someone is a woman does not mean they deserve a chance for that reason alone. Rather, such success must be earned. In comedy, merit is key: the funniest comedian, regardless as to gender, will get the most laughs.

People should be left alone regarding physical appearance

Tina suggests that people should be left alone about their physical appearance. In large effect, Tina’s considerations of body weight and physicality throughout the course of her memoir have to do with accepting oneself for who one is (see the theme “Being comfortable with oneself”). Tina uses herself as an example relating to body weight and physical appearance.

When she was a teenager, Tina relates that blondes with big boobs and no butts were very much in style, while girls like her were not. This made dating difficult sometimes, but Tina did not give up trying. However, the changing times do not make things any easier for women, as Beyonce’s legs and Jennifer Lopez’s butt become mainstream standards to which many women aspire. Tina counters that it doesn’t matter what one’s physical appearance is like so long as one is confident in oneself and so long as one is healthy.

This remains especially true when it comes to body weight. Tina relates how, around the year 2000, she went through a period when she was thin, attracted lots of guys, and was cold all the time. She explains there is nothing wrong with being thin so long as it is done healthily. Tina also relates a brief period of time when she was temporarily overweight, and says there is nothing wrong with this so long as one strives to be



healthy. In both situations, thin or fat, people need to stop attacking one another for their weight. Indeed, Tina believes people need to be left alone about their weight altogether.

Tina goes on to talk about her own beauty regimen, as well as her appearances in photo shoots. Tina's advice regarding beauty and fashion is ultimately, who cares? Essentially, whatever works for one person may not work for someone else. The key is to find what works for someone and go with that while applying the rule, who cares what anyone else has to say about it. When it comes to photo shoots, Tina enjoys the luxury treatment she receives, and notes that Photoshop is often employed afterwards. Tina says that Photoshop is nothing more than digital makeup and that people spend too much time obsessing over it because Photoshopping is relatively harmless.

Over-obsessions on unimportant things

People become obsessed with things that should not be obsessed over, argues Tina Fey. Not only do people become obsessed with unimportant things, but they become antagonistic and downright cruel about them—and help no one in the process. In the grand scheme of things, such over-obsessions are pointless, and Tina Fey presents three such over-obsessions.

Physical appearance and weight are constant sources of contention. Many overweight people criticize many thin people, while many thin people criticize overweight people. Tina, using herself as an example, explains she was once thin and was once temporarily overweight. She explains that there is nothing wrong with either so long as the person is healthy. Likewise, just because pop culture may value a certain kind of girl—for example, blonde girls with big boobs and no butts during Tina's teenage years—that doesn't mean other girls, like Tina, are worthless. Rather, it means people should stop harping on each other's physical appearances and weight altogether.

Photoshop is another area of over-obsession that Tina takes to task. Many argue that Photoshopping helps create unrealistic and unattainable ideals for women, making them feel inferior and hopeless. Tina, who has been Photoshopped herself, says that Photoshop is here to stay, and that essentially, it is nothing more than digital makeup. It is relatively harmless, and her favorite Photoshopped photo shoot came through a feminist magazine, *Bust*. In the present day and age, Photoshopping is easily recognized, and practiced even by people who upload pictures to social media. In the grand scheme of things, there are more important things to worry about.

Tina relates that breastfeeding is yet another such area of over-obsession. A group of moms who breastfeed their babies well into childhood condemn all other mothers who do not breastfeed their kids as long, or who do not breastfeed at all. Tina refers to them as "Teat Nazis" because they are so cruel and condescending in their efforts. Tina's advice on breastfeeding is for moms to do what works for them and their babies, and not to worry about other moms. There are more important things in life to worry about, Tina explains, and something personal like breastfeeding is not one of them.



Self criticism leads to understanding

Tina Fey argues that one should not be afraid to be critical of one's own life in order to better understand it. Tina uses her book not only as a means to talk about her own life and relevant topics, but as a way to demonstrate her own mistakes, flaws, and shortcomings. She uses such experience to draw lessons that she in turn later applies in her own life, and urges the readers to consider as well.

One of Tina's prominent lessons is to be fully accepting of who one is as a person. This is something she learns in part from her father, but also in part from gay friends through her experiences at theatre camp. Tina came to realize that, while she has enjoyed having gay friends and has nothing against them, she didn't want to see them as being romantically involved with anyone. She realized she was not accepting them for who they are, and later came around to fully accept them for everything they are. She realizes that they, like her, are people deserving of respect and acceptance.

Tina also learned another invaluable lesson at theater camp, one which carried on with her through the course of her life. Her sabotaging of the girl who stole her boyfriend comes to be a source of regret for Tina later. It makes her realize that girls cannot consider other girls the enemy simply because they are girls, but notes that everyone, regardless of gender, is competition. Women should not dedicate themselves to tearing one another down, but to helping to build one another up. This is true, for example, of the time Tina spent at SNL where she helped a fellow female writer to see a script through to production. It is through that particular script appearance that Tina learned that what might seem at first like sexism may not actually be sexism at all—but mere, innocent ignorance of something. Assumptions are poor things.

Tina came to struggle again with assumptions and girl-on-girl sabotage when she portrayed Sarah Palin at SNL in 2008. At first, Tina explains her portrayal of Sarah Palin was to bring awareness to sexism. As her portrayals of Sarah Palin continued, even Tina's supportive Republican parents let her know that she was going too far. When Tina met Sarah Palin in person, she came to see that Sarah and her campaign staff were all good, warm, and friendly people. After Sarah Palin herself appeared on the show, Tina was surprised to find herself being condescending to Palin, reminding her to tell everyone she had a good time in New York as though Palin was a child. Tina chastises herself in writing in the book for this.

Styles

Structure

Tina Fey divides her memoir *Bossypants* into unnumbered, titled chapters which span the course of her life from her birth in 1970 until the book's publishing in 2011. The title of each chapter directly reflects or relates to the contents of that chapter (for example, "That's Don Fey" deals with Tina's relationship and perception of her father, Don Fey). The chapters are arranged achronologically and asymmetrically, though they generally follow the arc of Tina's life. At various points through the novel, Tina will jump back and forth in time between chapters, and sometimes within single chapters themselves. The gradual arc of Tina's life chapters are often interspersed with chapters on relevant subjects, such as beauty and weight. Tina also includes a chapter-length prayer to God on behalf of her daughter, Alice. The memoir itself is populated with photographs of Tina, her work, and those she loves—such as her father and stills of performed sketches she wrote.

Perspective

Tina Fey writes her memoir *Bossypants* in the first-person reflective omniscient narrative mode, from her own point of view with her as narrator. Because the book is a memoir being written by Tina Fey about her own life, it is only natural that Tina writes in the first-person because the experiences of her life are the things in life which she herself experienced. She is the best person to relate these events to readers. The reflective aspect of the narration comes from the fact that Tina is writing about the events of the book after they have happened, and in some cases, decades after they have happened. As a result, she not only relates events but offers frequent asides and reflections on them with contemporary perspective. The narration also assumes an omniscient aspect, wherein both narrator and reader know everything going on as it happens because Tina is writing years after the events when facts and context are properly known, and can properly be included in the narrative.

Tone

Tina Fey writes her memoir in language that is casual and informal. This is so for a few different reasons. First, Tina has a humble and average upbringing, and spends the majority of her life among regular, everyday people. As such, her language is reflective of her upbringing—without fancy words or pretense at being something she is not. Second, Tina's work as a comedian and writer has allowed her to be able to communicate humor and enlightenment to people in a very simple, easy-to-understand way. Casual, everyday language that appeals to and is understood by a broad spectrum of viewers is critical in doing this. Third, Tina's work on SNL and 30 Rock means that straightforward humor, in simple and quick-to-understand language given time slot

limits, is critical. Tina's use of such language in her memoir allows the reader to briskly move along, while Tina is able to make light of certain situations, and present humor along the way.



Quotes

Welcome Friend, Congratulations on your purchase of this American-made genuine book. Each component of this book was selected to provide you with maximum book performance, whatever your reading needs may be.

-- Tina Fey (Introduction paragraph n/a)

Importance: Tina Fey welcomes readers to her book. She lays out that no matter who the reader might be, and what the reader might be seeking, everyone may find something. Tina explains that her book is mostly an account of how she grew up into an adult who still wants to be a kid.

This was how I found out that there are an infinite number of things that can be 'incorrect' on a woman's body.

-- Tina Fey (All Girls Must Be Everything paragraph n/a)

Importance: When Tina was thirteen, she went to the beach with her two teenage cousins, Lori and Janet. The girls critiqued all the other girls and women who walked by. Here, Tina learned about all the things that can be wrong or right with a girl's body, especially depending on the times and changing tastes of mainstream pop culture. Tina uses this as a point to argue that parents must lead by example to demonstrate a love of who they are.

Obviously, as an adult I realize this girl-on-girl sabotage is the worst kind of female behavior...

-- Tina Fey (Delaware County Summer Showtime! paragraph n/a)

Importance: Still unhappy about the loss of her boyfriend to an attractive blonde, Tina sabotaged the blonde's chances of acting in a musical on which she was serving as an assistant director. Tina successfully prevented the girl from getting the part, but later came to regret her cattiness. She explains that this is the worst kind of girl-on-girl hatred, and that it does nothing to advance the cause of women.

Another key element is 'Strong Father Figure/Fear Thereof.'

-- Tina Fey (That's Don Fey paragraph n/a)

Importance: Here, Tina Fey reflects on what makes a successful adult. Tina spends a chapter talking about her father, a good and decent man who was kind and strong, loving but stern when needed. From him, Tina learned a fear of getting in trouble while knowing that even though she is loved, she is not above the law.

I love the idea of two actors on the stage with nothing... The rules of improvisation appealed to me not only as a way of creating comedy, but as a worldview. Studying improvisation literally changed my life.

-- Tina Fey (The Windy City, Full of Meat paragraph n/a)



Importance: Tina, through improv classes and working with the Second City, came to fall in love with improvisation. She enjoys it because what happens, just like in life, is usually unexpected. She also enjoys it because it challenges the mind and challenges creativity, because with nothing to go on, both intelligence and creativity are required.

This is what I tell young women who ask me for career advice. People are going to try to trick you. To make you feel that you are in competition with one another. 'You're up for a promotion. If they go with a woman, it'll be between you and Barbara.' Don't be fooled. You're not in competition with other women. You're in competition with everyone.
-- Tina Fey (The Windy City, Full of Meat paragraph n/a)

Importance: Tina explains here that gender should be irrelevant when it comes to success—and that merit alone should be the determining factor. Gender can be used as a way to create competition or change the game to favor someone, but this should be recognized by the person being considered. Women especially should not feel in competition with each other as women, because they are really in competition with everyone through merit.

I know why you bought this book... You want to know my secret beauty regimen.
-- Tina Fey (The Secrets of Mommy's Beauty paragraph n/a)

Importance: Here, Tina takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of her beauty regimen, which is designed to poke fun at her own attempts at beauty. It is also primarily designed to allow Tina to tell the reader that it doesn't really matter in the end. People have to be comfortable with who they are.

We should leave people alone about their weight.
-- Tina Fey (Remembrances of Being Very Very Skinny paragraph n/a)

Importance: In both chapters "Remembrances of Being Very Very Skinny" and "Remembrances of Being a Little Bit Fat," Tina explains there is nothing wrong at all with being thin so long as it isn't unhealthy, and that there is nothing wrong with being temporarily overweight. She argues that people need to be left alone about their body weight, and that people should focus on themselves. She uses herself as an example of being thin and being overweight, and how both were learning experiences.

Maybe we women gravitate toward comedy because it is a socially acceptable way to break rules and a release from our daily life.
-- Tina Fey (Peeing in Jars with Boys paragraph n/a)

Importance: Tina explains that there is some difference between how men and women approach comedy, and there is some overlap. Tina explains that there may even be a reason why women approach comedy—and this is because comedy is way not only to escape daily life, but to break rules in a socially acceptable form. In comedy, the intention is to entertain and sometimes enlighten, making light of simple daily situations and current events among other things.



We don't fucking care if you like it.

-- Tina Fey (I Don't Care If You Like It (One in a Series of Love Letters to Amy Poehler) paragraph n/a)

Importance: When Tina's friend Amy Poehler came to work at SNL, Tina overheard Jimmy Fallon jokingly say that something Amy was doing comedically was unladylike. Amy took him seriously, saying she didn't care. Tina then uses Amy's model as something all women should use in their daily lives and work: they should do what they want, and not care if men or anyone else don't like it.

Give it up. Retouching is here to stay. Technology doesn't move backward. Which is why the economic collapse of China is going to be the death of us all. Never mind that. Let's keep being up in arms about this Photoshop business!

-- Tina Fey (Amazing, Gorgeous, Not Like That paragraph n/a)

Importance: During a section on photoshoots, Tina takes women to task over their disapproval of the use of Photoshop. Tina explains that Photoshop is relatively harmless, is similar to makeup, and that there are more important things to be worried about. Likewise, the use of Photoshop will never go away—it is even used by feminists in publications such as Bust.

This sketch could easily have been a dumb catfight between two female candidates. What Seth and Amy wrote, however, was two women speaking out together against sexism in the campaign. In real life these women experienced different sides of the same sexism coin.... People attempted to marginalize these women based on their gender.

-- Tina Fey (Sarah, Oprah, and Captain Hook, or How to Succeed by Sort of Looking Like Someone paragraph n/a)

Importance: Here, Tina speaks to her role as Sarah Palin on Saturday Night Live, a performance which became synonymous with her name. Tina does not believe the piece is necessarily political. She does believe the piece is necessarily opposed to sexism, for it challenges the media and the public to put aside sexist assumptions about both Palin and Clinton, and to regard them as people rather than only as women.



Topics for Discussion

Comfort with oneself

Tina Fey grew up in the 1970s when a specific type of girl was considered fashionable, and continued to deal with a new type of girl that was fashionable into the 2000s. How does Tina reflect on these times? Is she troubled greatly by mainstream ideals of women? Why or why not? What important lessons does Tina draw from these experiences? Why?

Comfort with oneself

How did Tina arrive at a place of being confident in herself and comfortable with who she is as a person? What are the roots of this confidence and comfortability, and how did this change over time based on her experiences? Why is this so?

Girl sabotage

What is girl-on-girl sabotage? How has Tina committed girl-on-girl sabotage? Why does Tina argue that such sabotage must stop? How can this happen?

Girl sabotage

Tina Fey argues that girls should not sabotage one another based on their gender, and that they should not tolerate discrimination, nor expect any favors as a result of, their gender. Instead, she argues that merit should be key to success and achievement. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Physical appearance

Tina Fey argues in her book that people should leave other people alone regarding their body weight. Do you agree or disagree with this argument? Explain.

Physical appearance

When it comes to weight, beauty, fashion, and style, Tina explains that such things really do not matter and that people must do what is comfortable for them and no one else. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Do you believe that people have a right to criticize others for such choices? Why or why not?



Over-obsessions

Tina Fey argues in her memoir that things like breastfeeding, weight and appearance, and Photoshop are things which people obsess over that should not be obsessed over. Do you agree or disagree with her stance on this? Why or why not?

Over-obsessions

What are Tina Fey's thoughts when it comes to over-obsessions about things like breastfeeding and Photoshop? Why does she take these positions? Do you agree with her positions on these specific issues? Why or why not?

Self-criticism

Although Tina Fey argues that people should do what is right for them, and not for others, she also argues that people should not be afraid to be self-critical. Why? How does Tina lead by example on this topic?

Self-criticism

Tina Fey's argues that people should not be afraid to be self-critical and to draw lessons from their own failures, mistakes, and flaws. What mistakes does Tina describe having made in the memoir? How does she recognize these as mistakes, and what lessons did she learn from them? How does she apply these lessons in her own life?