

LEANNE  
BETASAMOSAKE  
SIMPSON

*Author of As We Have Always Done*

NOOPIMING

THE CURE FOR WHITE LADIES



# A BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

for *NOOPIMING: The Cure for White Ladies*

by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“The prose hums with a lovingness that moved me to tears and with a humor that felt plucked right out of my rez adolescence. The chorus of thinkers, dreamers, revolutionaries, poets, and misfits that Simpson conjures here feels like a miracle. My heart ached and swelled for all of them.”

—**BILLY-RAY BELCOURT**, award-winning author of *This Wound Is a World* and *NDN Coping Mechanisms*

“This book is poem, novel, prophecy, handbook, and side-eyed critique all at once. This book doesn’t only present characters you will love and never want to leave, it doesn’t only transform the function of character and plot into a visibly collective dynamic energy field (and hallelujah), but it also cultivates character in the reader, that we might remember what we first knew. Which is that what seems separate was never separate. What feels impossible is already happening.”

—**ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS**, author of *Dub: Finding Ceremony*

“*Noopiming* is a rare parcel of beauty and power, at once a creator and destroyer of forms. All of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s myriad literary gifts shine here—her scalpel-sharp humor, her eye for the smallest human details, the prodigious scope of her imaginative and poetic generosity. The result is a book at once fierce, uproarious, heartbreaking, and, throughout and above all else, rooted in love.”

—**OMAR EL AKKAD**, bestselling author of *American War*

“The tenderness and sly wit of these snippets coalesce into a beautiful image of Native resilience and a piercing, original novel.”

—**PUBLISHERS WEEKLY**

“Simpson’s skill as creator allows those outside Indigenous traditions to apprehend a complexity of meaning-making whose fluidity challenges Western reliance on notions of fixed boundaries and discrete categories of being and nonbeing.”

—*STAR TRIBUNE*

“Probably unlike anything you’ve ever read, this remarkable novel is written in prose and fragments and is an alarmingly beautiful tale of decolonial resistance and the uncovering of a world of natural abundance, connection and compassion.”

—*MS. MAGAZINE*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Leanne Betasamosake Simpson** is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer, scholar, and musician.

A member of Alderville First Nation in Ontario, she is the author of several books, including *As We Have Always Done* (Minnesota, 2016) and *This Accident of Being Lost*. Her latest album is *The Theory of Ice*.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

In fierce prose and poetic fragments, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s *Noopiming* braids together humor, piercing detail, and a deep, abiding commitment to Anishinaabe life to tell stories of resistance, love, and joy.

Mashkawaji (they/them) lies frozen in the ice, remembering the sharpness of unmuted feeling from long ago, finding freedom and solace in isolated suspension. They introduce the seven characters: Akiwenzii, the old man who represents the narrator’s will; Ninaatig, the maple tree who represents their lungs; Mindimooyenh, the old woman, their conscience; Sabe, a gentle giant, their marrow; Adik, the caribou, their nervous system; and Asin and Lucy, the humans who represent their eyes, ears, and brain.

Simpson's book *As We Have Always Done* argued for the central place of storytelling in imagining radical futures. *Noopiming* (Anishinaabemowin for "in the bush") enacts these ideas. The novel's characters emerge from deep within Abinhinaabeg thought to commune beyond an unnatural urban-settler world littered with SpongeBob Band-Aids, Ziploc baggies, and Fjällräven Kånken backpacks. A bold literary act of decolonization and resistance, *Noopiming* offers a breaking open of the self to a world alive with people, animals, ancestors, and spirits—and the daily work of healing.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The seven main characters in *Noopiming*, in addition to Maskawaji, use they/them pronouns. How does this impact the reader's experience of gender in the book?
2. *Noopiming* takes place in the present. The characters in the novel often shatter contemporary stereotypes and portrayal of Native American and Indigenous peoples. How does this book break open the idea of a novel and how Indigenous stories can be told?
3. Simpson uses satire and humor throughout the book to critique contemporary life. What are some examples of this from the text and how does this enhance the reader's experience?
4. *Noopiming* challenges the reader's idea of linear time and the demarcations of past/present/future in many ways. What is Simpson doing with western ideas of time?
5. Simpson challenges the borders between rural and urban space by setting the story in cities, on reserves, in parks, and in the bush. How does this emphasize the idea that all land is Indigenous land?
6. The cover image is by Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore and is entitled "Fringe." How do you think this image relates to the themes of the novel?
7. The music video "Solidification" ([z.umn.edu/solidification](http://z.umn.edu/solidification)) is a musical and visual interpretation of the beginning of the novel, from Simpson's album *Noopiming Sessions* ([z.umn.edu/noopimingsessions](http://z.umn.edu/noopimingsessions)). How do these artistic projects help *Noopiming* to travel? Does "Solidification" deepen your understanding of the novel?

- 8.** Simpson uses her language Nishnaabemowin throughout the book, and doesn't translate the words into English, instead directing readers to an online Ojibwe dictionary. Why do you think she made this decision?
- 9.** Canadian writers Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields have both written works related to Susanna Moodie and *Roughing It in the Bush*. How does Simpson's novel relate to this historic work and what do you think she is trying to say about this relationship?
- 10.** Tragedy and trauma exist on the margins of this story. What meaning do you think Simpson is trying to convey to readers by writing adjacent to trauma rather than centering it?

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## MORE INFO

*Reviews, press, and more:*

[z.umn.edu/noopiming](http://z.umn.edu/noopiming)