



Finding Fish

By Antwone Q. Fisher
ISBN: 9780060007782

An Introduction

Finding Fish relates the gripping story of one person's personal triumph over considerable adversity. Antwone Quenton Fisher's challenges begin before he is born, when his father is killed by a girlfriend in a tragic accident. Born in prison to the single mother who has no means to care for him, Fisher is sent to live with a foster family, where he endures near-constant verbal and physical abuse by those who shelter him. Fisher chronicles his experiences from personal memory and incorporates into his story accounts from the many caseworkers who tracked his progress and decline in the foster care system.

In his mid-teens Fisher leaves his foster family and enters George Junior Republic, a private institution where he begins to turn his life around. Not long after, as an emancipated minor, Fisher winds up homeless and survives on the streets by his wits and an affiliation with Butch, a criminal who uses Fisher's status as a minor to his own advantage.

In order to avoid the dangers and uncertainties of life on the street, Fisher enlists in the navy, and he becomes a man of the world. During the course of his naval career, Fisher finally acknowledges the pain that his childhood has caused him, and he begins to deal with some of the rage that he has suppressed for many years. Fisher creates a family for himself out of his comrades in the navy, and he explores his own growing fascination with language and writing.

Finding Fish shows how, out of this unlikely mix of deprivation and hope, an artist was born == first as the child who painted the feelings his words dared not speak, then as a poet and storyteller who would eventually become one of Hollywood's most sought-after screenwriters. A tumultuous and ultimately gratifying tale of self-discovery written in Fisher's gritty yet melodic literary voice, *Finding Fish* is an unforgettable reading experience.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Fisher opens his memoir with the story of his father, Eddie Elkins, a man that he never met? What are some of the challenges Fisher faces immediately from birth?
2. Did you find Fisher's use of caseworkers' reports effective? Did reading these reports give you a clearer sense of the experience of "Baby Boy Fisher" in the foster system? Did you think that Fisher's caseworkers were sympathetic to his special needs as a foster child?
3. How would you describe Fisher's experience at the Pickett home? How does his relationship with Dwight help to define his character? What events during his time with the Picketts reveal the complicated nature of his relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Pickett, his foster parents, and their natural children?
4. How does Fisher describe his visits with his birth mother, Eva "Mae Mae" Fisher during his childhood? How do they compare to his encounter with her as an adult?
5. Who is Butch? How does he emerge as a person who can protect Fisher? Were you surprised by Fisher's involvement in Butch's criminal enterprises? What motivates Fisher to get out of "the game"?
6. How does Fisher's experience in the Navy define him? What role does Lieutenant Commander Williams play in his emotional development? How does Fisher's love for writing transpire at this time?
7. Antwone survives by seeing himself as a poet, sometimes literally, but also as someone who believes that having an artistic spirit will help him emerge triumphantly from his childhood experiences. Do you believe this is true? What is the best illustration of this in Fisher's life? Do you think people in general need a creative outlet to help them surmount certain obstacles?
8. In your opinion, how does the life of Antwone Quenton Fisher relate to the phrase, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger"? What kinds of adversity does Fisher overcome in order to accomplish achievements in his personal life and career?
9. Are there any aspects in the life of Antwone Quenton Fisher that you found especially troubling, inspiring, or unusual? What were they? Could you relate to any of his experiences? Which ones?

About the Author:

Antwone Quenton Fisher is the author of the memoir and New York Times bestseller *Finding Fish*, and a collection of poetry, *Who Will Cry for the Little Boy?* He is also the screenwriter of the film *Antwone Fisher*, which was based on his life and directed by Academy Award winner Denzel Washington. Fisher lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two daughters.