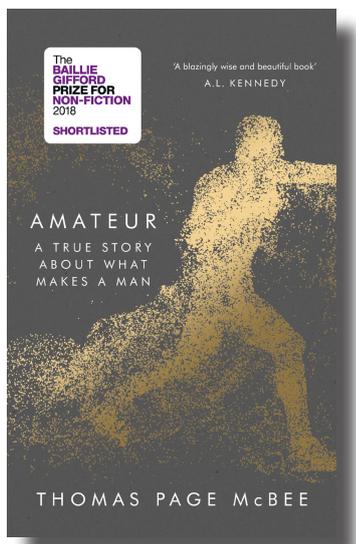


Wellcome Book Prize 2019 Reading Group Guide

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Wellcome Book Prize rewards exceptional works of literature that illuminate the many ways that health, medicine and illness touch our lives.



Amateur by Thomas Page McBee Canongate

About the author

Thomas Page McBee was masculinity expert for Vice and the first trans man ever to box at Madison Square Garden. His essays and reportage have appeared in the New York Times, Playboy, Glamour and Salon.

About the book

In this ground-breaking new book, Thomas Page McBee, a trans man, trains to fight in a charity match at Madison Square Garden while struggling to untangle the vexed relationship between masculinity and violence. Through his experience of boxing – learning to get hit, and to hit back; wrestling with the camaraderie of the gym; confronting the betrayals and strength of his own body – McBee examines the weight of male violence, the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and the limitations of conventional masculinity. A wide-ranging exploration of gender in our society, *Amateur* is ultimately a story of hope, as McBee traces a way forward: a new masculinity, inside the ring and out of it.

wellcomebookprize.org
readinggroups.org

read – The Reading Agency Ltd • Registered number:
3904882 (England & Wales)

wellcome
bookprize

THE
READING
AGENCY

Questions and discussion points

1. McBee talks about the way that people treat him differently after transitioning, in particular that men kept trying to fight him. Was there anything he mentioned about being treated or seen differently that you found surprising?
2. He struggles to find good examples of masculinity to follow, and his girlfriend advises him to look inwards at himself rather than at others. Why do you think he finds it so difficult to find positive role models?
3. In recent years, toxic masculinity and gender roles have been increasingly talked about in the news. Do you think the image of a “real man” in today’s world is changing?
4. He finds that although boxing is about violence and confrontation, it also allows men to have a sense of intimacy with each other. Why does this cover of physical strength allow men to have these relationships?

Suggested reading

Man Alive: A True Story of Violence, Forgiveness and Becoming a Man by Thomas Page McBee

Man Up: Surviving Modern Masculinity by Jack Urwin

The Gender Games by Juno Dawson

Unbound: Transgender Men and the Remaking of Identity by Arlene Stein

More suggestions can be found at the end of the book

Useful links

[Amateur by Thomas Page McBee review – a trans boxer’s life lessons](#)

[Thomas Page McBee interview: The first trans man to box at Madison Square Garden talks gender anxiety, transitioning and toxic masculinity](#)

[Review: Amateur by Thomas Page McBee](#)

[How Beating People Up Helped Me Find a Less Toxic Way of Being a Man](#)

[My fight to be a man: the story of a life-changing boxing match](#)