



HIV/AIDS Graphic Medicine Discussion Guide:

Pedro & Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned by Judd Winick

From the publisher... “Pedro Zamora changed lives. When the HIV-positive AIDS educator appeared on MTV’s *The Real World: San Francisco*, he taught millions of viewers about being gay and living with AIDS. Pedro’s roommate on the show was Judd Winick, a cartoonist from Long Island, and the two soon became close friends. Judd created *Pedro and Me* to honor Pedro Zamora, his friend and teacher, and most of all, an unforgettable human being.”

Why a Graphic Novel?

- Research suggests that we are better at understanding and absorbing information presented in visual forms, such as comics.
- Stories are more engaging than factual information alone. How much easier is it to remember and empathize with something a friend experienced versus hard statistics alone?
- Coined by Ian Williams, a physician in the UK, Graphic Medicine “is the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare.”
 - Graphic medicine, then, combines visual storytelling and medicine, creating a unique opportunity for readers to experience and learn about healthcare experiences through comics.

To Learn More...

- www.graphicmedicine.org – The home base for all things graphic medicine.
- *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto* by MK Czerwiec et al. Available from Penn State University Press.



Created by Matthew Noe as part of the NLM Region 7 Graphic Medicine Initiative.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Pedro & Me* emerged out of a friendship formed during MTV's *The Real World* – a reality show whose zenith was in the 1990's. If you watched the show, do you remember much of this cast? Did it impact how you read the story? If you didn't watch the show, do you feel you were missing out on any vital information?
2. Did you appreciate the visual aspects of this book? Do you think the format of a graphic novel is more or less effective for a memoir than for a fictional account? How is it different than a memoir written in prose?
3. Does the book remind you of an aspect of your own life? A particular event? A person – like a friend, family member, co-worker, etc.?
4. Can you point to specific passages/panels that struck you personally? Why?
5. Did *Pedro & Me* change your perception of AIDS and/or of people living with it?
6. *Pedro & Me* is ultimately a story about friendship and the importance of relationships during the hardest of times. Do you think Winick's illustrations captured that friendship?
7. While a personal story about an individual, *Pedro & Me* also provides a look into the world of the AIDS crisis. What were you able to glean about the crisis from this story? Was it anything you weren't already aware of?
8. Written long before graphic medicine was a coined term, *Pedro & Me* follows the spirit of the field by including a list of organizations to reach out to for help should it be needed. Did you see the list? Did you check out any of the groups? Do you think this is a helpful tool?
9. Have you read other memoirs or stories about HIV or AIDS? How does *Pedro & Me* compare to them?
10. Reading *Pedro & Me* at least two decades after the events took place gives this personal memoir a historical turn – important for such a devastating era. Do you think it is important to learn about the history of the AIDS crisis? Does *Pedro & Me* contribute something valuable to that history?
11. Would you share *Pedro & Me* with people in your life? Why or why not?

Remember: These are just suggested questions and there could be many, many more. Don't feel tethered to these – let the conversation flow naturally and use these questions as starting points when conversation stalls.