

Permanent Marker: A Memoir **Reading Group Guide**

“To exist means to suffer. And to live through that suffering, we find meaning in our lives.”

— **Aimee Ross**, *Permanent Marker*

Book Summary

Aimee Ross was living a perfectly normal life raising three kids, married to her high school sweetheart, and teaching at her high school alma mater.

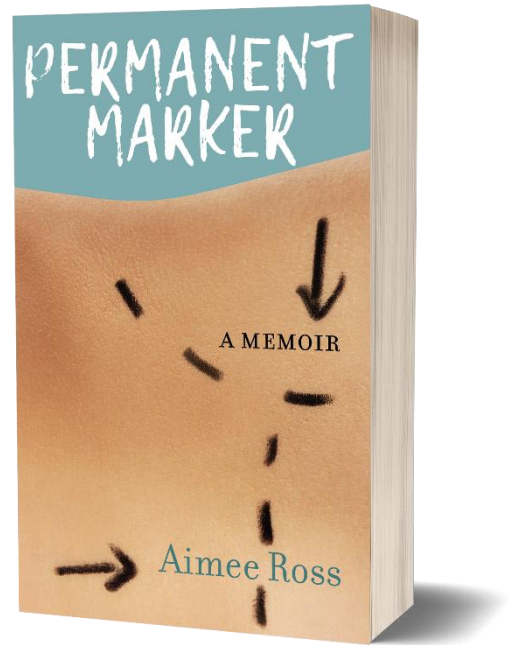
Life was perfect—right until it wasn’t.

Unhappy in her marriage, Aimee asked for a divorce. Three days later, she suffered a heart attack at age forty-one. Five months after that, she survived a near-fatal car crash caused by an intoxicated driver.

Her physical recovery took months and left her body marked by scars. The emotional recovery, though, would take longer, as Aimee sought to forgive the man who almost killed her—and to forgive herself for tearing apart her family.

Aimee Ross writes with candor, wit, and humor as she finds the power in her story and chronicles her transformation into the woman she was always meant to be.

Permanent Marker takes readers on a journey of healing, proving that from darkness can come new light, new love, and a renewed purpose for life.



AIMEE ROSS is a nationally award-winning educator who’s been teaching high school English at her alma mater in Loudonville, Ohio, for the past twenty-six years. *Permanent Marker: A Memoir* is her first book (KiCam Projects, March 2018). Aimee also has had her writing published on NextAvenue.org, lifein10minutes.com, and SixHens.Com, as well as in *Beauty around the World: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (ABC-Clio, 2017); *Scars: An Anthology* (Et Alia Press, 2015); *Today I Made a Difference: A Collection of Inspirational Stories from America’s Top Educators* (Adams Media, 2009); and *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. Learn more about Aimee at theaimeeross.com.



Discussion Questions

1. What coping mechanisms do you see present in Aimee's recovery through "The Trifecta of Shit"?
2. Why do you think Aimee intentionally leaves out information regarding the demise of her first marriage? Does it matter to her story?
3. Aimee finds out as she heals from the accident that not only was she resuscitated that night, but she also suffered a traumatic brain injury. Does this make her more or less of a reliable narrator?
4. Do you think Aimee would have reacted differently to what happened to her in the car accident if the other driver had not had any drugs in his system? Explain.
5. Aimee doesn't follow through with psychotherapy, even after she is diagnosed several times with PTSD. Instead, she turns to writing. How might her story have been different if she'd have stuck with therapy? How might her story have been different if she had decided not to return to teaching?
6. What makes Aimee's classroom the perfect environment for mental and emotional healing to occur? Would it have been possible in any other work-related setting?
7. When do you think Aimee realizes that she is living the life she never knew she needed? What do you think Aimee found out about herself as she processed her own story? How can you relate?
8. What struggles does Aimee face on her journey through "The Trifecta of Shit" that you can relate to in your own life? Do we have a choice in how the events of our lives shape and mold us?
9. If you could ask Aimee any question about the experiences recounted in her book, what would it be?
10. How did the cover and title of the book influence your reading when you first started? During? After? Discuss the literal and figurative meanings of the memoir's title, *Permanent Marker*.
11. Discuss the epigraphs Aimee uses to introduce sections of the book.
12. A memoirist can tell her story many different ways in terms of structure, point of view, and verb tense. What do you specifically notice about the structure of *Permanent Marker*, and does it enhance or take away from Aimee's story? Explain. Do you think Aimee's story would have been served being written in present tense, rather than past? Explain.

To order additional copies of *Permanent Marker*, please visit KiCamProjects.com or Amazon.com.