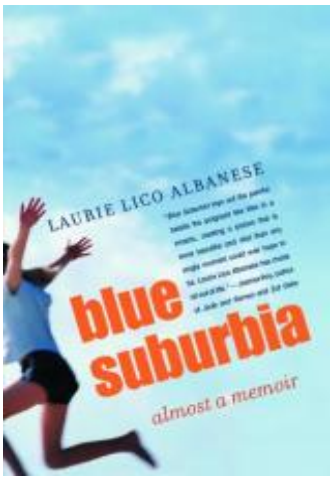
Blue Suburbia: Almost a Memoir

by Laurie Albanese



About the Book

The critically acclaimed author of **Lynelle by the Sea** now shines a light on the darkness of her past and her quest for happiness in . Told in the snapshot form of poems, Laurie Lico Albanese's unique autobiography quickly pulls readers into the compelling slideshow of her life.

In "Blue Suburbia, Aerial View" we are introduced to her childhood and family. What at first seems ordinary in this blue-collar Long Island setting -- her mother cooking, father assembling a bike, sister sleeping -- soon becomes bleak. Her mother's quiet curse, "you are too damn smart for your own good," echoes throughout the book and sets the stage for the author's life-long journey to finding self worth. "The Story of My Life" continues the introduction by unveiling the physical abuse she suffered from her father: "because I was stubborn he says, the belt was a mercy, if I'd used my hands I would have broken your bones."

Although written entirely in verse, **Blue Suburbia** is a page-turner that traces the history of this talented, haunted, and painfully honest author. She reflects on the physical and mental abuse of her childhood, her rebellious spirit in adolescence, her desperation to find true love, and her need for expression. We follow her from college ("Life Lessons") to her first job in publishing ("The Test"), from an unwanted pregnancy ("Pregnant") to raising a family ("Lies We Tell Our Children"), from the edge of madness ("Endurance") to the final acceptance of the flawed individuals that created her ("Moon Over New York").

Intimate and fast moving, Albanese has cupped her hand around the reader's ear and whispered the secrets of her world into this breathtaking memoir.

Discussion Guide

1. Did you enjoy reading this memoir? Were you attracted to, or put off by, the format? Do you think it is important to

read this book cover to cover, or could you pick it up at intervals and skip around? Would it lose it meaning or overall impact?

2. Laurie's father abused her as a child. By the end of the book, has she forgiven him? Have you?

3. What do you think happened to Laurie in "219 Maple Street? Are there other poems reflect on that incident?

4. The author tells us about the "jailhouse right across from my school." What significance does this have for her family? Do you think this had a traumatic effect on them?

5. In "Second Thing," what do you think Laurie is referring to with "forty pounds of flesh"?

6. As a child, Laurie seemed unable to win her mother's love. Before her mother dies, is this issue resolved for Laurie? If so, when? Do you have sympathy for her mother?

7. Who is Laurie's literary hero? Do you think it was important to her to identify with someone in that way?

8. In "I Wish," the author lies to the reader. Explain.

9. Who do you think "I Hid" is about?

10. Since this memoir is written in poems, did you feel there were any gaps in her history? Do you think her past experiences are amplified or diminished?

11. What are Laurie's fears? What does she always seem to be running from? Will she be able to confront her problems? Are people able to surmount their pasts or will they always be haunted by them?

12. Who do you see as the bully in Laurie's family? Her father? Her mother? Herself?

13. Discuss the author's sickness that she writes about in the section "Losing My Way"?

14. How did the poem "Once" make you feel toward the author? Can you relate to her feelings?

15. "Oh Boy" is about the author's son. What do you think he suffers from?

16. The author struggles with her own happiness throughout the book. Review "Ordinary" and "The Sirens" and discuss whether you think the author is satisfied with her life. Do her expectations prevent her from being happy?

Author Bio

Laurie Lico Albanese has written a novel, **Lynelle By the Sea**, and her poetry has appeared in *Mothering* magazine, the literary magazine *Emergency IV*, and in the anthology *Our Bundle of Joy*. She has written for other publications, such as the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*. She teaches creative writing to children in the Montclair, New Jersey, school

system and was awarded a 1997-98 New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship in fiction

Laura Morowitz is a professor of art history and coauthor of *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France*. They both live in New Jersey with their families. .

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