



The stories in Tobias Carroll's *Transitory* sneak up on you. They wear their inventions lightly, casually exploring an impressive range of styles and effects. Filled with haunting mysteries, sly humor, and tender melancholy, these companionable tales promise to lodge themselves in your memory. You'll want to revisit them again and again, right down to the liner notes."

- JEFF JACKSON, author of *Mira Corpora*

TEACHING GUIDE

TRANSITORY

by Tobias Carroll

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Recommended Classes:

- Creative Writing
- American / Contemporary Literature Writing
- Short Fiction / Fiction

Keywords:

Fiction / Short Story / Cross-genre / Metaliterary / Postmodernism / Geography / Coming of Age/ Masculinity / Family / Perspective / Point of View / Pop Culture / Conceptual Writing / Liminal Spaces / Weird Fiction / Surrealism / Transit

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you find to be the overarching themes of the stories in this collection? What themes tie the stories together?
2. How do the references to familial bonds and obligations in several of these stories work as a connective tissue for the collection? How did this make you feel?
3. Many of the stories in *Transitory* are set in spaces having to do with transit or transportation. How do these stories reckon with concepts of motion or escape? How do you read the title in relation to the book?
4. What are some of the different ways that the title *Transitory* could be used to describe the works in this book?
5. How do these fictional stories build relationships with real-life building and other physical spaces?

6. Certain stories in this collection operate in a realistic vein, while others contain overtly fantastical elements; some occupy a more surreal and ambiguous place. How do you find these progressions through varying levels of realism?

7. Music plays a significant role in many of these stories—whether as an element or, as the “Liner Notes + Credits” section describes, as an inspiration. What are some of the potential difficulties in translating one artistic medium to another?

8. How do these stories address questions of memory, guilt, and regret? How do the narrative structures of the stories, tone, and language address these themes?

9. Fictional works of media – a television show, an independent film, and a cult movie – play a part in the stories in this collection. Did you find the works plausible as they were described here?

10. How do liminal spaces operate in this book? How do these spaces relate to some of the collection’s larger themes and title?

Possible Assignments:

- Write a short story inspired in some way by a song. It could be the song’s structure, a theme or lyric, or the very act of listening to it.
- Imagine a fictional work of media – a television show, podcast, or movie, for example. Then create a story that incorporates it in some way.
- Envision a space that you’re familiar with. Then alter one crucial detail about it, and use the altered location as the setting of a story.