

**Not a Still Life**  
**A film by Roberta Cantow**

**Post-Viewing Questions by Theme**  
(To serve as an alternate approach to the Questions by Chapter format in  
Academic-Clinical document)

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## **Post-Viewing Questions by Theme**

### **• Identity**

How might Steve's childhood experiences have led to his emphasis on being "unconventional?" How does his pushing back against convention serve him? What does he sacrifice?

What is the significance of the loss of Flint in relation to Steve's identity (emotionally, interpersonally, and spiritually)?

What kinds of challenges and opportunities is Steve faced with in assuming a business-focused identity?

Steve declares that loving and being loved is "the meaning of life," yet that is what appears to be missing in his life. He provides reasons for being "alone and isolated". Do these reasons explain an objective reality or does he set himself apart? What are some ways that one could counsel Steve to see his circumstances differently or be able to consider other possible reasons for his loneliness?

Steve identifies as gay, Jewish, and aging, but also as "recovering," "entrepreneur," and "Jungian." He seems to imply that his complexity drives potential partners away. What is your opinion?

### **• Sexuality**

How does Steve seem to understand the integration of his spiritual and sexual identity? What contradictions, if any, are present??

Steve responds to the filmmaker's encouragement about the possibility of transformation by saying, "Do they have gay butterflies?" There could be multiple ways to interpret this response. How do you understand it?

### **• Aging and Grief**

Does Steve accept his own aging?

Steve describes his determination to hold onto his home in order to keep the memory of Flint alive. In what ways does this determination either alleviate or sustain his grief?

How does Steve appear to respond to the potential threat of further loss in his life?

- **Religion**

How does Steve's reconnection with his family's religious heritage and cultural background influence his identity?

How is the integration of ritual within a spiritual community important at this particular stage of Steve's life? Consider the particular importance of Steve's bar mitzvah.

Steve doesn't see a contradiction between his spiritual and sexual identities. Do you?

What do you think of Steve's response to the filmmaker's question about how he reconciles his sexual and spiritual (Jewish) identities?

In what ways do you believe Steve's Jewish identity helps him with his struggles?

- **Psychological Development**

What is the importance of Steve's kindergarten story? How is the importance of this story emphasized in the film?

To what extent do you think Steve is aware that his version of life with Flint is an idealized one?

What is your understanding of the cultural context of the 1950's and how it influenced Steve's development?

How do you imagine Steve's childhood experiences might have led to his personal emphasis on being "unconventional?" How does his pushing back against convention serve him? What does he sacrifice??

What is the significance of the loss of Flint in relation to Steve's development (emotionally, interpersonally, and spiritually)

Steve was hurt by exclusion from Roman's will. How do you feel about his reaction?

Discuss the tension between insecurity and confidence that Steve exhibits. What might be some of the experiences that contribute to this tension?

Discuss the tension between humor and rage. How does humor serve Steve?

- **Concluding Questions**

Has your understanding of the person you were introduced to in the beginning of the film shifted in the course of watching it?

Some viewers have responded negatively to Steve. What do you imagine has provoked them?

In many ways, the paradoxical is an important feature of who Steve is. While some people are not comfortable with what they perceive as his self centeredness, others point out his advocacy for animal rights, vegetarianism, and concern for the environment as evidence to the contrary. Where do you stand?

Some people are inclined to perceive Steve as living the good life or of his situation having no relationship to other men of his age who might be facing more dire circumstances, such as being uninsured, living on a fixed income, etc. Do you agree or disagree? How might this be both true and not true?

What do you most appreciate or admire about Steve's story and Steve Stone? Do you consider him to be a nice person, a troubled person, a survivor? Is he open and accepting of himself and others? Do you find inspiration in his story?

What do you think will happen in Steve's life from this point forward?

In what ways you find Steve's story either empowering? Disempowering?

There is something intensely personal in Steve's story, but there are also things about it that are universal. Explore the relationship between the two.