



ELLE

Philippe Djian, translated from the French by Michael Katims

Michèle seems indestructible. Head of a leading video game company, she brings the same ruthless attitude to her love life as to business, but when she is attacked in her home by an unknown assailant, her life changes forever. Her determination to resist the label of 'victim' leads her to take increasingly drastic measures, as she struggles to keep her life on track. Now a major motion picture, adapted by the award-winning Paul Verhoeven, *Elle* is a fascinating psychological thriller that challenges notions of masculinity and femininity. The following questions are designed to enhance your discussion of this novel.

Questions for Discussion

1. What effect does the book's cold open have?
2. *Elle* was adapted into a highly successful film. Does reading the book make you interested in seeing the film, or vice versa? How do the two versions of this story compare?
3. What do you think about Michèle's reaction to her attack?
4. Is there any relationship in the book you would describe as healthy?
5. What effect does the lack of chapter or paragraph breaks have?
6. Michèle's son remains largely reliant on her. How does this impact her decisions throughout the book?
7. Some reviewers have referred to *Elle* as a comedy, or at least made mention of its dark humour. Do you think it's right to call *Elle* a comedy? What do you think about the way humour is used to tell the story?
8. To what degree is Michèle's life defined by her parents' past?
9. Why does Michèle refuse to report her attacks to the police?
10. How does the behaviour of the male and female characters in *Elle* differ, or do they behave in similar ways? Do you think the behaviour of either men or women is challenged in the

novel, and if yes, how effective do you find this challenge?

11. What do you think Isabelle Huppert means when she describes Michèle as a 'post-feminist heroine'?