

AMERICANAH

BOOK CLUB READING GUIDE



Parts 1 & 2



Media &
Entertainment
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The Center for the Professional Education of Teachers

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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Ways to use the

BOOK CLUB

READING GUIDE

One Book, One New York is the largest community reading program in the country, bringing together book-loving New Yorkers to read the same book at the same time. The Center for the Professional Education of Teachers, Teachers College, Columbia has put together this reading guide, specifically focused for Book Clubs.

For each chapter of Americanah, you will find a set of **Invitations** and a set of **Discussion Prompts**. Between the invitations and the prompts, you have rich resource which you can use whether you are a facilitator or participating reader in a book club. Some ways you can use the guide:

- **While reading:** Following each chapter, or chapters you find most interesting, review the invitations and choose one or more to respond to, whether to Connect, Question, Contemplate, or Create.
- **In preparation for your book club gathering:** prepare a response to one invitation and bring with you -or- read discussion questions in advance to get your mind (re)engaged with the material.
- **During book club:** Facilitators can choose a few of the discussion prompts as starting points for conversation. The goal is to share, to listen and to be heard, during the meeting, so there's no need to stick to the questions once the conversation gets going. Use the questions you like and skip the ones that don't work for you and your group.
- **Following book club:** Consider an Invitation to Create from one of the chapters – perhaps after a rich conversation, you and your group want to make something in response to the reading and discussion. Bring it to the next meeting to share!

Whatever ways you find work best for you and your group, enjoy the flexibility of the guide. Whether reading, reflecting, or discussing, questions and invitations await to increase your enjoyment of reading and connecting with the text. Be sure to let us know how it's going using Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or emailing us directly cpet_admin@tc.columbia.edu with questions or comments. Visit our [One Book One New York](#) page for more resources.

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AMERICANAH • PART 1 • CHAPTER 1



INVITATIONS

Connect: In chapter 1, we see how the main character is caught between two lives. Have you ever felt divided between two cultures? How so?

Question: Share a question about chapter 1. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "Will you be able to cope? ... the suggestion that she was somehow irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin." (p. 20)

Create: Ifemelu feels divided between two different lives. Imagine what this feels like, looks like? Represent a divided life in a drawing, painting, poem, or ...

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. On page 1, Ifemelu describes the distinct smells of several American cities: Philadelphia, New Haven, Baltimore and Brooklyn. Is there a smell to New York City that you can talk about? What words would you use to describe your specific neighborhood's smell?
2. "Princeton smelled of nothing . . . it was this, the lack of smell, that most appealed to her." What most appeals to you about New York City? About your neighborhood?
3. What connections do you have with Ifemelu?
4. Aisha, from Senegal, shares with Ifemelu that two Igbo men have refused to marry her because, "Igbo marry Igbo, always." What are some of the "rules" of your culture, family, tribe, or community?
5. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 1 • CHAPTER 2



INVITATIONS

Connect: Why is it so hard to follow the advice, just be yourself? What are we really afraid of?

Question: Share a question about chapter 2. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "He felt a hollow space between himself and the person he was supposed to be." (p. 33)

Create: Obinze does not feel like his true self, like there's a gap between who is actually is, and how he acts. What fears live in the gap between how he acts and who he is? Make a mini-poster representing fears and the gap between how you act and who you are.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Obinze is struck by that Ifemelu calls him "Ceiling" in her email. He mentions that in her last email she had called him "Obinze." What is the difference between these two names for Obinze? What names do you have? What do they mean to you? To those who use your name(s)?
2. What do you make of Obinze's relationship with Chief? What do you predict will happen in the chapters ahead?
3. What connections do you have with Obinze?
4. Chapter 1 introduces us to Ifemelu, Chapter 2 to Obinze. What conclusions do you draw about each character? About their relationship? How do you know?
5. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 3



INVITATIONS

Connect: Ifemelu's father describes her as being "recalcitrant, mutinous, intransigent..." What words has a family member used to describe you? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Question: Share a question about chapter 3. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: Ifemelu had grown up in the shadow of her mother's hair. It was black-black, so thick it drank two containers of relaxer at the salon, so full it took hours under the hooded dryer, and when finally released from pink rollers, sprang free and full, flowing down her back like a celebration. (p. 49)

Create: What does it mean to be a "country starved of hope"? Respond with drawing, painting, poem, song, video, poster, photograph or other creative response.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. In the hair salon, Ifemelu has brought healthy and organic snacks to eat. Why do you think Mariama thinks these snacks are not food? What does this portray about a Western and African understanding of what food is?
2. Ifemelu has been told by hair braiders that her hair "cut them like a knife". How does this comment offer a starting point to commentary around ethnic hair and how thicker, coarser hair cannot be perceived as beautiful by Western standards?
3. Ifemelu's mom fasts and prays to purge her spirit. Have you ever done, or still practice, rituals to affect your spirit? What are they and what started you off on these practices?
4. When Ifemelu's dad loses his job because he would not call his new boss "mommy", it hurts the whole family. What are your thoughts on what he should have done differently, if anything? How does the losing of a job influence not only that person but also those closest and dearest to them?
5. Aunty Uju tells Ifemelu that she doesn't have to **SAY** everything? What does she mean by this? What are your thoughts on this advice from Aunty Uju?
6. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 4



INVITATIONS

Connect: "Sometimes she worried that she was too happy... and her joy would become a restless thing, flapping its wings inside her, as though looking for an opening to fly away." (p.76) Even as Ifemelu is full of bliss, the fear of loss creeps into her consciousness and steals some of her shine. What metaphor would you use to describe this phenomenon?

Question: Share a question about chapter 3. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "She had caramel skin and wavy hair that, when unbraided, fell down to her neck instead of standing Afro-like. Each year, she was voted Prettiest Girl in their form." (p.67)

Create: "She said she should not have been slapped because she is a full human being ... some of her female students went a printed Full Human Being on T-shirts." (p.71) Design a t-shirt that features a concise, expressive quote and protests an injustice.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Obinze's mother takes a break from the university over a dispute. How do her actions empower others? Whose actions have empowered you?
2. When Ifemelu meets Obinze, "something strange happened. A quickening inside her, a dawning." What do you think she recognizes in him?
3. This chapter indirectly points to traditional roles played by men and women in relationships. Do you think Obinze and Ifemelu's relationship breaks any expected cultural roles?
4. Is it possible be 'too happy' in a relationship?
5. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 5



INVITATIONS

Connect: Does traveling to other places change a person's identity or personality?

Question: Share a question about chapter 5. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every day I am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classroom." (p. 77)

Create: "She did not know what 'own yourself a little more,' meant." (p .87) In a poem, song, or a few sentences, describe a moment or experience when you owned yourself a little more.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Ginika and Ifemelu were close friends before they met Obinze. What do you think about how Ifemelu and Ginika deal with the tension between them?
2. Emenike lies about having affluent parents - Have you ever made up an aspect of your life so that you could fit into a group? Why, when and how? What were the results?
3. This chapter references the title for the first time, when Ranyinudo says, "She'll come back and be a serious Americanah like Bisi," and everyone roars with laughter (p. 78). What do you think she means by "serious Americanah" and why is this so funny?
4. At the end of the chapter, Obinze's mother asks Ifemelu to tell her when they're ready to become intimate, and Ifemelu agrees. What does this tell us about their characters?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: "At the flat, Aunty Uju handed Ifemelu's father a plastic bag swollen with cash. 'It's rent for two years, Brother'...She did not look him in the face as she spoke and he did not look her in the face as he thanked her." (p. 95) How have you felt vulnerable when receiving or giving a gift, material or otherwise?

Question: Share a question about chapter 6. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "Ifemelu wondered if Aunty Uju ever looked at herself with the eyes of the girl she used to be." (p. 89)

Create: "Ifemelu would remember the final moments in a blur...The room upstairs had grown unbearably hot; the air conditioners had suddenly stopped working, as though they had decided in unison, to pay tribute to the end." (p. 106) Write about an ending in your own life; how clear are the memories, how like the blur described here?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. What are some symbols of family, manliness and/or social status in this chapter?
2. Ifemelu is frightened by Auntie Uju's relationship with the General. What causes this discomfort?
3. How does Ifemelu's view of her father change during this chapter?
4. When Auntie Uju becomes pregnant, what are some of the unspoken undercurrents from the other characters?
5. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 7



INVITATIONS

Connect: In Chapter 7, Ifemelu starts university in Nsukka. She says she was, “looking forward to being away from home, to the independence of owning her own time...”(p.108)
Describe a time when you have felt this way.

Question: Share a question about chapter 7. We’ll add it to our reader’s guide!

Contemplate: “University was bigger and baggier, there was room to hide, so much room; she did not feel as though she did not belong because there were many options for belonging.”
(p. 110)

Create: The effects of the sharp winds of the harmattan (a dusty winter wind) is described as making the world, “suddenly fragile and breakable.”(p. 113) Represent this image in a drawing, painting, poem, song, video, or ...

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. When Obinze changes his choice from Ibadan to Nsukka, Ifemelu changes hers too. Have you ever changed your mind and plans just to be with the person you were in a relationship with?
2. Have you ever been “curious” - while in a relationship - about someone outside of that relationship? How did that make you feel?
3. What are your thoughts on Ifemelu reaching out to her aunt first when she thinks she is pregnant?
4. What does the fact that Ifemelu blurting out the truth to Obinze’s mother tell us about her character?
5. How does Ifemelu’s parents’ reaction to Obinze’s mother tell us about social structure at that time? Why does she manage to impress them so?
6. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: “Make small, small braids that will last long, it’s very expensive to make hair here,’ Aunty Uju told her.” What are some pieces of advice you have been given when planning for the unknown?

Question: Share a question about chapter 8. We’ll add it to our reader’s guide!

Contemplate: “Obinze’s mother said, ‘And make sure you and Obinze have a plan. Have a plan.’ Her words, so unexpected and so right, lifted Ifemelu’s spirits...In the following years...she would sometimes remember his mother’s words -- *make sure you and Obinze have a plan* -- and feel comforted.” (p. 124)

Create: “To her, America was America.” (p. 122) What is America? Respond with drawing, painting, poem, song, video, poster, photograph or other creative response.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Leaving Nigeria is a big step for Ifemelu. What influences her to go to America the most?
2. What shapes Ifemelu’s idea of America, and what expectations does she has of her life there?
3. Was there ever a time when you felt you might leave your home country? What was the reason?
4. At the end of the chapter, she says there will come a time when she and Obinze will lose touch. What do you think will be the cause of their separation?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Things aren't always what they seem after a big move. Have you ever been disappointed that a new place is different than your expectations?

Question: Share a question about chapter 9. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: When Ifemelu first arrives in the United States, she "stared at buildings and cars and signboards, all of them matte, disappointingly matte; in the landscape of her imagination, the mundane things in America were covered in a high-shine gloss." (p. 127)

Create: "...the mundane things in America were covered in high-shine gloss." (p. 127) Represent something you consider mundane (photo, painting, drawing). Now represent it in high-gloss. What will you use to make the mundane glossy?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Have you ever changed your name or the pronunciation of your name so that it made it easier for other people to address you?
2. Comment on the definition of "Hispanic" as explained on p. 129.
3. Dike is extremely kind to Ifemelu when she arrives and on the first night offers her his pillow. How does this contrast with his mother's attitude towards Ifemelu? Why is this contrast so stark and unsettling?
4. Discuss Uju's state being described as "her spirit bleached of color". (p. 132).
5. "America had subdued her" (p. 135) - Comment.
6. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Simple choices make a big difference in how our lives turn out. What was one simple choice you've made that put your life on a new path?

Question: Share a question about chapter 10. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "The real America, she felt, was just around the next corner she would turn." (p 136)

Create: It was Ifemelu's first summer in the United States: "It was, also, her summer of eating." (p 118) What are you eating this week? Share a picture of a new food you are trying or a comfort food you can't imagine leaving behind.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Summer could represent a honeymoon in Ifemelu's adjustment to America. What are the contrasts the author highlights?
2. How does the media shape her view of what Ifemelu calls "the real America?" (p 139)
3. Ifemelu and Dike have a unique and warm relationship. What are some of the roles she and Dike play in each other's lives over this summer?
4. What do you make of her friendship with Jane?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Have you ever been intimidated by your environment? A big city? A new town? How did you overcome your fears?

Question: Share a question about chapter 11. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed." (p 146)

Create: "The first time she took the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan, her palms sweaty, she walked the streets, watching, absorbing." (p145) Walk your streets. Absorb. What are the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes? Post words or pics from your walk, from your watching.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. There is an interesting portrait drawn of Bartholomew, Aunty Uju's new boyfriend. What is it about him that makes him an unsuitable match in Ifemelu's view?
2. How has being in America changed the way Auntie Uju, Bartholomew and Ifemelu each engage with Nigeria?
3. What are some American cultural norms Aunty Uju accepts without question once she passes her medical exam?
4. Discuss why the relationship is so poignant between Dike and Ifemelu: She thinks of him as a treasure already lost as she prepares to go to Philadelphia.
5. "All of us look alike to White people." What do you think of a homogenous understanding of race and culture?
6. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 12



INVITATIONS

Connect: Ifemelu is an outsider. When have you been an outsider? What, if anything, did you do or say about the experience?

Question: Share a question about chapter 12. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "As they walked out of the store, Ifemelu said... 'Why didn't she just ask, *Was it the black girl or the white girl?*' Ginika laughed, 'Because this is America. You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things.'" (p 155) What are the things you're not supposed to notice in your family or community?

Create: "Ginika recounted anecdotes about her own early experiences in America, as though they were all filled with subtle wisdom that Ifemelu would need." (p 151) Share an anecdote (short account of a real event or incident) you think could benefit someone else.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. In this chapter, Ifemelu and Ginika rekindle their friendship. How does Ginika become a 'cultural guide' to Ifemelu?
2. The author gives some jarring descriptions of women's appearances in this chapter. What are some assumptions or criticisms made about women and beauty here?
3. How does confusion about the meanings of words, humor and music highlight Ifemelu's feelings that she is different? (pp 151-153)
4. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Have you ever really needed a job? What goes through your mind while you're waiting?

Question: Share a question about chapter 13. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "That credit card preapproval, with her name correctly spelled and elegantly italicized, had roused her spirits, made her a little less invisible, a little more present. Somebody knew her." (p 162)

Create: "The world was wrapped in gauze; she could see the shapes of things but not clearly enough, never enough. She told Obinze that there were things she should know how to do, but didn't, details she should have corralled into her space but hadn't." (p 160) Using whatever method you think best, share your experience of not seeing clearly or not yet organizing, to your standards, certain details of your life.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Ifemelu goes for interviews for jobs she has applied for. They are angst laden. Why is she nervous and anxious - what are some of her concerns?
2. "The world was wrapped in gauze." Discuss how Ifemelu must be feeling at this point.
3. Discuss the nature of Ifemelu and Obinze's relationship. "He calmed her." (p. 161)
4. Dike offers Ifemelu companionship despite their age difference. Why do you think this is so?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: “To accept one's past - one's history - is not the same things as drowning in it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.” — James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* What does this mean to you?

Question: Share a question about chapter 14. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: Ifemelu discovers a hunger for reading American books, devouring *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin in one sitting. What words do you devour? Why do you hunger for them?

Create: Using paint, pen, or your favorite medium, create a jumble of words that represents what it looks like to “drown in one's history.”

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. What do you think Cristina Tomas's intentions are towards Ifemelu? (p 163) What unintentional impact does Ifemelu feel from the way she speaks to her?
2. What do you make of Ifemelu's quest to learn everything about America?
3. Ifemelu continues to relate her experiences to Obinze and Auntie Uju through letters and phone calls. What role do you think they play in her life, even now?
4. Who do you think will become Ifemelu's long term friends in America?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Traumatic events can spark a sadness or depression. Close friends can help bring us out. Tag one of your close friends and tell them how much you appreciate them in your life.

Question: Share a question about chapter 15. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "Nobody in Kinshasa had panic attacks. It was not even that it was called by another name, it was simply not called at all. Did things begin to exist only when they were named?" (p195) What are your thoughts on the (possible) power of naming?

Create: "...she liked Kimberly, her breakable beauty, her purplish eyes full of the expression Obinze often used to describe the people he liked: *obi ocha*. A clean heart." (p181) Look around you. Locate an expression of *obi ocha*. Take a picture or represent what you see in whatever way you think best.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. When Ifemelu goes to the tennis coach's house for the interview, her skin prickles upon meeting him. What are the feelings these words conjure in your mind as you imagine the proposition he has for her?
2. As Ifemelu leaves the tennis coach's home she is struck by a sense of homesickness so sharp that she starts crying. Have you ever been so homesick that you cried in a public place? Talk about how you imagine she may have felt.
3. Talk about Obinze sending her money - knowing the exchange rate - and how he must be feeling about her.
4. The house and family she goes to see about the babysitting job lives a life so starkly different from hers and what she is used to - speak to the disparity of wealth as it is portrayed here.
5. Ifemelu wakes up every day "at war with the world and woke up each day feeling bruised." Discuss her descent into depression, and the ultimate desolation she must feel as she takes the tennis coach up on his offer.
6. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 16



INVITATIONS

Connect: “Ifemelu knew that for a long time afterwards, she would not unwrap from herself the pashmina of the wounded.” (p208) What makes you feel safe when scared or wounded? What’s your pashmina made up of?

Question: Share a question about chapter 16. We’ll add it to our reader’s guide!

Contemplate: “She believed in other people’s happiness because it meant that she, too, might one day have it.” (p 202)

Create: “She would reply, too, she told herself...but a week later, the letter still lay there. She placed a book on top of it, then another book, and one day it was swallowed beneath files and books. She would never read it.” (p 197) Using household objects, represent what gets, or has been, buried in your life.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Ifemelu is introduced to the Turner family in this chapter. How is she able to see the relationship dynamics so clearly? How is she a more mature “parent” to the children than Don and Kimberly?
2. Which of the family’s actions give Ifemelu a specific kind of position in relation to themselves?
3. Ifemelu’s relationship with Obinze continues to disintegrate. Why can’t she bring herself to read his emails and letters?
4. Ifemelu confronts Laura about a misconception she has and Laura is offended. (p 207) What is the misconception and why does Ifemelu feel she has to apologize instead of Laura?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: "That's a pretty strong opinion." / "I don't know how to have any other kind." (p 220)
Do you have strong opinions? How do you express them?

Question: Share a question about chapter 17. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "Sometimes I feel that [people with graduate degrees] live in a parallel universe of academia speaking academese instead of English and they don't really know what's happening in the real world." (p220)

Create: "'My group leader, Haley? She gave sunscreen to everyone but she wouldn't give me any. She said I didn't need it.' ...She didn't know what to say. 'She thought because you're dark you don't need sunscreen. But you do. Many people don't know that dark people also need sunscreen.'" Represent, in the way you think best, assumptions people have made about you.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Explain why Ifemelu decided to stop faking her American accent.
2. What is Ifemelu's "Mr. Agbo Voice"? Why do you think she reserves it for certain people and certain occasions? Why do you think it works?
3. How had Ifemelu learned to discern where Black people were from? How did she know the difference between people of African or Caribbean descent as opposed to someone who was born and raised in the USA?
4. Ifemelu feels it odd that she meets Blaine on the day she decides to give her voice back to herself. What do you think of their meeting? And of her calling and calling him, and he never answering?
5. Discuss how Dike's wanting to fit in by wanting sunscreen is shrouded in racism?
6. What does the commentary about race and class at the end of the chapter mean and signify?
7. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: A budding romance is always an exciting time. What characteristics do you look for in a good match?

Question: Share a question about chapter 18. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "She could have blogged about...this girl who somehow believed that she was miraculously neutral in how she read books, while other people read emotionally." (p234) What would reading from a neutral position feel and look like? In what ways do we read neutrally and/or emotionally?

Create: "She was aggressively friendly." (233) Represent an "aggressively friendly" conversation in emoji.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. We return to Ifemelu at the hairdresser in this chapter. What, if anything, surprises you about the conversations that go on there between the different women this time?
2. Ifemelu says about Curt: "She had always been able to sense the desire of men, but not Curt's, at first." What differences do you see about this relationship, and why do you think she gets involved with him?
3. Ifemelu compares Curt with many things. Which comparison is most striking to you?
4. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: Sometimes, we get opportunities because of our status or our network. Even when we're deserving, these privileges aren't given to everyone. In these situations, are you more likely to feel gratitude, or guilt?

Question: Share a question about chapter 19. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "... and here she was, a pink balloon, weightless, floating to the top, propelled by things outside of herself." (p 250)

Create: There is no escaping the importance of hair in Americanah: style, length, fullness, and texture. Several women drastically change their hair in the story. Talk with your friends and family or strangers on the bus. What is their relationship with their hair? Create a collage, montage or simple photograph representing the role of hair in your community.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Why does Curt's mother feel it necessary to explain to Ifemelu what kind of Republicans they are? Why is Ifemelu's response both funny and serious?
2. Discuss the sharp contrast in Ifemelu's life now with Curt as opposed to how it was when she was struggling to find work and pay her bills? How has her disposition changed too?
3. Why do you think she does not speak to her parents of Curt? What do you think their reaction would be?
4. Talk about the idea that relaxed hair is professional vs natural hair being unprofessional. How does the burn and pain she endures affect Curt? Do you think she would have gotten the job if her hair was in braids or an afro?
5. Her parents are clearly happy that she got the job. How do they each, differently, express their joy at her success?
6. What else do you want to talk about?

AMERICANAH • PART 2 • CHAPTER 20



INVITATIONS

Connect: "I don't want my hair to be brave." (p 248) What is it that makes our hair an extension of our identity?

Question: Share a question about chapter 20. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "You're always battling to make your hair do what it wasn't meant to do." (p248)

Create: "He was always thinking of what else to do and she told him that it was rare for her, because she had grown up not doing, but being." (p257) Quick Pic: Post a pic of what you are doing, or how you are being, during a reflective or fun moment this week.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. In this chapter, Ifemelu gets to know Curt better, and yet she realizes that he could never be fully knowable to her. (p 255,6) Why does she say this--is it because he is white, American, or because of something else?
2. How do you think Curt sees their relationship?
3. Ifemelu cuts her hair short and develops a whole new relationship with it--and herself. What makes this relationship with hair so central to how women feel about themselves?
4. What more do the blog posts tell us about Ifemelu than we know already?
5. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: After being mistreated in relationship, sometimes the smallest thing can make it clear that enough is enough. For Uju, it was toothpaste in the sink. What has it been for you?

Question: Share a question about chapter 21. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "These people, they make you become aggressive just to hold your dignity." (p 270)

Create: "Ifemelu liked the name of the town, Willow; it sounded to her like freshly squeezed beginnings." (p 273) Represent the names of towns you like and what they sound like to you in paint, animation, drawing or another medium you prefer.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Why does Aunty Uju worry so much about Dike wearing appropriate clothes to church? What does it say about Ifemelu and Dike's relationship that she still can influence and cajole him?
2. What does Uju's reaction to Ifemelu's hair say about how other Black women may consider Black women who wear her hair naturally?
3. What does Uju's feelings towards Bartholomew's understanding of her money say about her character? And to why she eventually decides to leave?
4. "With him she breakable, precious". Discuss how the visit to Uju with Curt somehow cemented Ifemelu's understanding of him and their relationship?
5. What does Dike's lack of mentioning Bartholomew say about how he felt about him?
6. In her blog post, Ifemelu talks about the stereotypes of the danger of being the angry Black woman or the violent Black man. What are your thoughts?
7. What else do you want to talk about?



INVITATIONS

Connect: It can be hard to summon the courage to reconnect with a long-lost friend or lover. What would motivate you to reach out after many years of silence?

Question: Share a question about chapter 22. We'll add it to our reader's guide!

Contemplate: "There were things scattered inside her that she needed to gather together." (p 277)

Create: "He sensed very well that she had made the choice to shut him out. She was already walking away...She was supposed to exchange phone numbers, talk for longer, behave in all the expected ways. But emotions were rioting inside her." (p 277) It's a challenging time, across our country, around the world. Collect or create images that represent rioting emotions to you.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. What is it about running into her old classmate, Kayode that is so unsettling for Ifemelu?
2. Why does this meeting suddenly enable her to reach out to Obinze after all this time?
3. What do you make of Curt's sudden declaration: "I want to be the fucking love of your life"?
4. What else do you want to talk about?