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Americanah reading guide

This guide is a tool to enhance your group's conversation about Americanah, the insightful story of Chimamanda Ngozie Acichie of a young love, migration, exile, and homecoming. Questions: 1. Adichie is herself somewhat of an outsider in America, so is her character, Ifemalelu. Is there any advantage in telling this story from a stranger's perspective? 2. In an interview with the New York Times, Adichie said that she believes there is a tendency in American fiction to celebrate work that fundamentally keeps people comfortable. adichie rejects or embraces keeping the reader comfortable in Americanah? 3. At the Frankfurt Book Fair, Adichie commented on the sympathetic characters in fiction, saying: female writers are expected to make their female characters pleasant, as well as the whole humanity of a female person must finally fulfill the careful limitations of sympatheticness. Did you find the characters in Americanah pleasant? Why or why not? Are there some characters you liked more than others? If we ask for pleasant characters, what does this need say about us as readers? 4. The first part of Ifemalelu's story is told in flashback that she has her hair braided at a salon before returning to Nigeria. Ifemelu interacts with the women in the salon and judges about them. does her identity and long stay in America affect her perception of the women around her? 5. In Americanah, hair is often a focal point to discuss race and culture. Re-read the ifemelu's blog post A Michelle Obama Shout-Out Plus Hair as Race Metaphor (p. 299.) the attention and judgment given to a woman's hair reflects the greater problems of American society with race and feminism? 6. Ifemelu says, I discovered the race in America, and it fascinated me (p. 406). She wonders, how many other people have become black in America? (p. 209) What does he mean by these statements? 7. Opinze has a complicated relationship with Ojiugo, his now wealthy friend, who married an EU citizen. does Opinze balance the need for support from his friend with the feeling that Ojiugo represents someone who has renounced his cultural identity? Are all the characters leaving Nigeria (such as Emenike, Aunt Uju, Bartholomew, and Ginika) similarly compromised? 8. When Ifemalelu is hired to talk about race relations in America, it becomes a hostile reaction at first. She changes her presentation to say, America has made great progress for which we should be very proud, and it becomes a better reaction; however, in her blog, she writes racism should not have happened and so you don't get a cookie for reducing it. (p. 378). reflect these two approaches how Americans navigate questions of race and bias? In your circles, you can have conversations about race? 9. Kimberly, the white woman who hires Ifemalelu as a nanny, seems to the white liberal guilt many Americans feel in relation to Africa and Africans. have you reacted to this character and her relationship with Ifemalelu? 10. Ifemelu's experience with the tennis coach is a low point in her life. Why avoid keeping in touch with Opinze afterwards (157-158)? Why doesn't he read her letters? Are you interpreting his behavior? 11. Would you describe the qualities that Ifemelu and Opinze admire in each other? supports Adichie the suspense if Ifemelu and Opinze will be together until the last page? What, apart from narrative suspense, could be the reason for Adichie's choice in this regard? Would you consider their union the true return home for both of us? * Some questions suggested by or adapted from Penguin Random House Reader's Guide for Americanah Themes and Topics: Nigeria, Lagos, young women, coming-of-age, feminism, racism, race and class, identity, romantic love, membership, separation vs connection, cultural criticism, microaggression, power, American black/African cultures, trans-cultural relationships, bloggers, corruption, immigration, fear of immigrants, the concept of assimilation. Learn more about Nigeria, from Portland State University's International Cultures website. Welcome to LitCharts study guide on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah. Created by the original team behind SparkNotes, LitCharts are the best literature guides in the world. Adichie was born fifth of his sixth child and raised in Nsukka, Nigeria. Her father was a professor at the University of Nigeria, and her mother was the university's first female registrar. Adichie studied medicine at university and then moved to the United States at the age of 19. She received master's degrees from Johns Hopkins and Yale, and she was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship Genius Grant in 2008. She published poems, short stories, a play and three novels — Purple Hibiscus, Half of a Yellow Sun, and Americanah — which received the Orange Award among other honors. Adichie is currently married and divides her time between Nigeria and the United States. Nigeria first gained independence from British colonialism in 1960, but then faced a brutal civil war seven years later (described in Adichie's novel Half of a Yellow Sun). Americanah takes place in contemporary Nigeria and spans the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1992), General Abacha (1993-1998) and General Abubakar (1998-1999), who finally brought the country back into democracy. Since then Nigeria has been led by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Yar'Adua and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. The 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York also affect American ah characters, as does Barack Obama's presidential campaign. Adichie was inspired for the first time to write by Chinua Achebe, Nigerian Nigerian most popular in the West and author of Fall Apart Things. She was also inspired by Camara Laye, author of Dark Child. Both Achebe and Laye gave Adichie a shock of recognition that people who looked like [she] could exist in books. Another influence is Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina, who is Adichie's contemporary and friend. Key Facts About Americanah Full Title: Americanah When Published: 2013 Literary Period: Contemporary Literature, Political Fiction Genre: Fiction Setting: Nigeria, America, England Climax: Dike's Suicide as tried point of view: Third person limited, follower Ifemalelu and Ofinze Chinua Achebe. The great Nigerian writer Chineua Achebe was one of Adichie's most important inspirations and influences, and as a child, Adichie's family even lived in Achebe's former home. Feminism. In 2012, Adichie gave a TED talk entitled We Should All Be Feminist, in which he discussed issues related to gender roles. Page 1 of 4 AmericanahChimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2013Knopf Doubleday588 pp. ISBN-13: 9780307455925SummaryFrom the award-winning author of Half yellow sun, a dazzling new novel: a love story and race centered around a young man and a woman from Nigeria, facing difficult choices and challenges in the countries they come to call home. As teenagers in a Lagos secondary school, Ifemalelu and Opinze fall in love. Their Nigeria is under military dictatorship, and people leave the country if they can. Ifemelu — beautiful, self-assured — goes to America to study. She suffers defeats and triumphs, finds and loses relationships and friends, all while the feeling of weight of something she did not think of at home: race. Opinze - the quiet and caring son of a teacher - hoped to join him, but after 9/11 America will not let him in and he plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Years later, Opinze is a rich man in a new democratic Nigeria, while Ifemelu has achieved success as a writer of an eye-opening blog about the race in America. But when Ifemalelu returns to Nigeria and she and Opinze rekindle their shared passion — for their homeland and for the other — they will face the most difficult decisions of their lives. Fearless, captivating, at once darkly funny and tender, spanning three continents and numerous lives, Americanah is a richly told story set in today's globalized world: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie the most powerful and amazing novel to date. (From the editor.) Book: AmericanahAuthor: Chimamanda Ngozi AdichieEdition: Softcover First Anchor BooksAmericanah is a novel full of universal truths- the highs and downs and and the joys that people everywhere face in relationships, especially in romantic relationships, at the same time intertwine with the specific truths of individuals in a time, in place, in a body. I listened to the audio version, which I preferred over the printed version as the reader apparently creates over a 100 different character voices that are incredibly engaging. As an American who has not traveled to Nigeria, I doubt that I would have come close to correctly pronouncing recurring Nigerian phrases. Even the voice blogging changes from a fairly flat American voice in the American blog to a localized, nuanced voice in the Nigerian blog. Much of the book is dialogue, so hearing the voices of the characters really brings them all to life. And as someone who usually enjoys more action than dialogue, I doubt the printed text would have kept me chapter to chapter. On top of that, there's a lot of woven humor in which he laughed out loud. You might not have felt the humor so deeply I read the print, as the vocal tone and delivery of humor have a much greater impact on me than a humorous comment in print. While the content at times is written as a lecture on a particular facet of bias or stigma, hearing the voices is what took me out of the reading room and in the living room or lounge or bedroom or the work of the characters. I enjoyed the novel as a novel and I appreciated hearing vignettes to open my eyes and reinforce for me prejudices because they are experienced by everyday individuals both in the US and in Nigeria (and a very small look in the UK). This would be a great book for a group ready for a long read, especially a group of people of different races, to provide the structure for a discussion on race, racism and anti-racism today. There is much to use as a starter discussion about the role of individuals in erasing or composing prejudices, as well as the benefits and disadvantages of sitting primarily with people who share the background. Internet ResourcesOnline resources abound as references for both a discussion on racism, anti-racism and a discussion on different perspectives. Here are just a few to start. A Bay Area educator set up a blog with a whole host of online resources about diversity, equity and inclusion that goes far beyond race and includes ableism, gender, LGBTQ, and on and on. In 1987, Dr. Peggy McIntosh (to whom Ifemalelu refers in the novel) founded the SEED National Project, a professional development project led by colleagues that creates conversation communities to drive personal, organizational and societal changes towards greater equity and diversity. She also wrote White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Backpack. There are a number of online resources that delve specifically into the subject of different perspectives of black Americans and Africans, including: A blog of a first person distinction between Black American and African-American. For Kenyans I interacted with, having black skin also means being African. To me, being black means, being black. The relationship between Africans and African-Americans is discussed by Washington Post's Global Opinions editor Karen Attiah and Kenyan journalist and broadcaster Larry Madowo. There's so much animus or competition that I didn't quite understand. Both groups use derogatory names to refer to each other. In Africa, African-American culture is very large and influential in terms of how people talk and dress. But in creating the Black Panther, Africans and African-Americans came together to create the art that black people around the world are proud of. But in everyday life, there is no such unity. I think it's a vision for what can be possible when the two groups work together. And if you really want to dive deep into this subject there's a Course Course Course, Americans Through Foreign Eyes, with a module on American Through African Eyes. A chapter uses the fiction of this author as a means to discuss Africans and race in America.Major CharactersIfemalelu: protagonist, Nigerian blogger on the race in AmericaObinze: Ifemalelu long-time Nigerian love interest heading to LondonKosi: Wife of ObinzeAunt Uju: Cousin of Ifemalelu's father much smaller, with whom Ifemmelu grows up as a younger sister of Aunt UjuDike (pronounced DEE-Kay) : Aunt Uju and the general's son. Ifemelu CozThe General Calls: Aunt Uju rich and married loverGinika: Nigerian childhood friend of Ifemmelu's, who is now studying law in the USA Kimberly: White American whose children Ifemalelu babysitsTaylor and Morgan: Kimberly's childrenCurt: Kim The White Cousin of Ifemalelu, with whom Ifemmelu meets for a time in the statesBlaine: the black American academic and Ifemalelu's partner after the break-up of BaloneShavelu : sister of BareKayode: Nigerian childhood friend of Ifemalelu and Obinze who moves to BaltimoreCleotide : The European Union (Portuguese) woman Opinze is set up to marry to obtain the citizenship of SA UENicholas: Cousin of Opinze, who now legally lives in LondonOjiugo: Nicholas Nigerian wife who received British documents as a graduate studentDiscussion TopicsHere are a small selection of topics of discussion for Americanah that can help the book group launch a discussion relevant to the case where the group the book is in discussing racism, diversity, equity and inclusion, secrets, romantic relationships or other topics that have come to the fore as you read. Racism and anti-racismWith ample opportunities in this novel to launch into a discussion about racism, find a starting point that works for your group. Maybe you can choose one of the blogs Ifemmelu and ask for reactions, or, after the break-up of Curt, his reflection on how she and Curt talked about race (page 360), or the reaction to the first diversity discussion ifetelu, which is to a white audience (page 377) or Peggy Peggy test for White Privilege, which ifetelu includes in a blog on, page 430 Share your reactions to what you read, or racist scenes that you have witnessed, or your own struggles with discussing racism or understanding your own racism. If this is a particularly difficult topic for your group, you may want to provide a few reminders at the beginning, to listen openly, for example, remind everyone to hear one-another point of view, even if there is disagreement. Robin DiAngelo, educator, facilitator and author of White Fragility has many resources on her website to help guide her own journey or provide context for a group discussion. Black Americans and American Africans The novel also highlights the experience of black Americans and black people who recently emigrated to the United States from African countries. Ifemelu has a blog about non-American blacks being black in America, page 273 She raises this distinction in multiple conversations throughout the novel, it would beMaybe when the African-American father was not allowed to vote because he was black, the Ugandan father was running for parliament or studying at Oxford, Ifemelu said. page 207Or I came from a country where race was not a problem I didn't think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. page 359Later, sister of Blike Shan says of Ifemelu: Do you know why Ifemmelu can write this blog, by the way ... Because she's African. It's from the outside. He doesn't feel all the stuff he writes about. It's all weird and curious to her. So that she can write it down and get all these distinctions and be invited to give discussions. If she were African-American, she would be labeled angry and averted. Page 418Do you have the perspective of one of these views? Do you know people who do? interact with one group different from the other? can we move towards greater inclusion? Secrets and liesMany layers of secrets are kept between the characters, the one that looms most in Ifemmelu's life is her sexual encounter with a tennis coach to pay the rent. Not only does Ifemelu keep his secret from Opinze, breaking their relationship for decades, but he dives into a deep depression. When Ifemalelu finally tells Opinze after returning to Nigeria, she says, 'It's so weird now to talk about it. It seems like a stupid reason to throw away what we had, but that's why, and as more time went on, I didn't know how to fix it.' She lies when she returns to Nigeria, saying that Balone will be joining her soon. Sometimes he believed his own lies. She could now see, she and Blike wear white on a Caribbean beach, page 493Many characters carry secrets, sometimes thinking they're protecting someone, would be Aunt don't tell Dike about his father. When Dike visits Ifemmelu in Nigeria, he says: 'I can't believe my mother hid from me for so long that she was his mistress.' page 523You kept a secret and threw away something good keeping him? When did it become more difficult to reveal as time went on? Did you feel you're keeping

a secret? Revealing one? have the lies and secrets intertwined in your life? What strategies have helped you or others you know to unearth and get out of the burden of a secret? Romantic relationshipsIfemelu and Opinze have a very deep, loving relationship. However, miles and secrets apart, Ifemmelu forms romantic relationships with other men, including Curt. it was also true that he longed, together with Curt, to hold his emotions in his hand that he could never have. Page 355When she and Curt broke up, Itemelu, puzzled her, the ability of romantic love to mutate, as quickly as a loved one could become a stranger. Where did love go? Maybe true love was familial, somehow blood-related, since love for children didn't die as romantic love page 357How do you see romantic love ebbing and growing? Have you nurtured romantic love in your life? What I really had in mind was Aunt Uju and General. That relationship destroyed her. He became a different person because of the general and there was nothing he could do for her, and when he died, he was lost. page 521 Do you think Aunt Uju's relationship with the general destroyed her? Did he grow up in that relationship or after Ifemelu comments, when he died, he was lost.? While Opinze opines marries Kosi even while still in love with Ifemmelu, Opinze's friend says: Many of us did not marry the woman we truly loved. We married the woman who was around when we were about to get married.' page 582 Do you agree? Is it possible to advise others to move away from a loveless marriage? Home-goingWhen Ifemalelu returns to Lagos, she is greeted with Welcome Returned, Aunt, to whom Ifemelu believes, He not only said welcome, but welcome back, as he somehow knew that she was truly back. and she hurt with an almost unbearable emotion that she couldn't name. It was nostalgic and melancholy, a beautiful sadness for the things he missed and the things he would never have known. Page 478Love sought she reflects,She spent the weekends with her parents in the old apartment, simply happy to sit and look at the walls that witnessed her childhood Page 489Have you ever returned to a place you considered yourself? Did you feel it when you came back? Does the feelings that ifemelu talk about about nostalgic and melancholy resonate with you? Quotes shouldn't have happened and so don't get a cookie for reducing its Chapter 33Wow-so much here from the realization that the bonus points aren't are to do something that should have already been done to start unpacking the important history of racism in the United States.Some people are content rather than curious about the world. Chapter 54I really like this juxtaposition. Both can be a wonderful way to be. I often believe that partnerships in which the ambitions of the two people are balanced are most likely successful, which somehow reflects the comparison of content and curiosity. What quotes resonated with you? on you?

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