

Book Club Kits!



About the Author:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie grew up in Nigeria. Her work has been translated into thirty languages and has appeared in various publications, including *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, the *Financial Times*, and *Zoetrope*. She is the author of the novels *Purple Hibiscus*, which won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which won the Orange Prize and was a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist, a *New York Times* Notable Book, and a *People and Black Issues Book Review* Best Book of the Year; and the story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Her latest novel *Americanah*, was published around the world in 2013, and has received numerous accolades, including winning the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and The Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize for Fiction; and being named one of The New York Times Ten Best Books of the Year.

A recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, she divides her time between the United States and Nigeria.



Inside the kit:

- (8) book copies
- (1) book club guide

About the Book:

From Goodreads:

As teenagers in a Lagos secondary school, Ifemelu and Obinze fall in love. Their Nigeria is under military dictatorship, and people are leaving the country if they can. Ifemelu—beautiful, self-assured—departs for America to study. She suffers defeats and triumphs, finds and loses relationships and friendships, all the while feeling the weight of something she never thought of back home: race. Obinze—the quiet, thoughtful son of a professor—had hoped to join her, but post-9/11 America will not let him in, and he plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London.

Years later, Obinze is a wealthy man in a newly democratic Nigeria, while Ifemelu has achieved success as a writer of an eye-opening blog about race in America. But when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, and she and Obinze reignite their shared passion—for their homeland and for each other—they will face the toughest decisions of their lives.

Suggested Reads:

Bulawayo, NoViolet
We Need New Names

Gyasi, Yaa
Homegoing

Mbue, Imbolo
Behold the Dreamers

Selasi, Taiye
Ghana Must Go

1. The first part of Ifemelu's story is told in flashback while she is having her hair braided at a salon before she returns to Nigeria. Why might Adichie have chosen this structure for storytelling? What happens when the narrator shifts to Obinze's story? How conscious are you as a reader about the switches in narrative perspective?
2. The novel opens in the Ivy League enclave of Princeton, New Jersey. Ifemelu likes living there because "she could pretend to be someone else, ...someone adorned with certainty" But she has to go to the largely black city of Trenton, nearby, to have her hair braided. Does this movement between cities indicate a similar split within Ifemelu? Why does she decide to return to Nigeria after thirteen years in America?
3. How much does your own race affect the experience of reading this or any novel? Does race affect a reader's ability to identify or empathize with the struggles of Ifemelu and Obinze? Ifemelu writes in her blog that "black people are not supposed to be angry about racism" because their anger makes whites uncomfortable (223). Do you agree?
4. Auntie Uju's relationship with the General serves as an example of one mode of economic survival for a single woman: she attaches herself to a married man who supports her in return for sexual access. But Uju runs into a serious problem when the General dies and political power shifts. Why, given what you learn of Uju's intelligence and capabilities later, do you think she chose to engage in this relationship with the General instead of remaining independent?
5. Ifemelu feels that Auntie Uju is too eager to capitulate to the demands of fitting in. Uju says, "You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (120). Is Uju right in compromising her own identity to a certain extent? How is Dike affected by his mother's struggles?
6. In the clothing shop she visits with her friend Ginika, Ifemelu notices that the clerk, when asking which of the salespeople helped her, won't say, "Was it the black girl or the white girl?" because that would be considered a racist way to identify people. "You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things," Ginika tells her (128). In your opinion and experience, is this a good example of American political correctness about race? Why does Ifemelu find it curious? Do you think these attitudes differ across the United States?
7. For a time, Ifemelu is a babysitter for Kimberly, a white woman who works for a charity in Africa. Adichie writes that "for a moment Ifemelu was sorry to have come from Africa, to be the reason that this beautiful woman, with her bleached teeth and bounteous hair, would have to dig deep to feel such pity, such hopelessness. She smiled brightly, hoping to make Kimberly feel better" (152). How well does Kimberly exemplify the liberal guilt that many white Americans feel toward Africa and Africans?
8. Ifemelu's experience with the tennis coach is a low point in her life. Why does she avoid being in touch with Obinze afterward (157–58)? Why doesn't she read his letters? How do you interpret her behavior?

Additional questions available at <http://www.litlovers.com/readingguides/13-fiction/9256-americanah-adichie?start=3>.