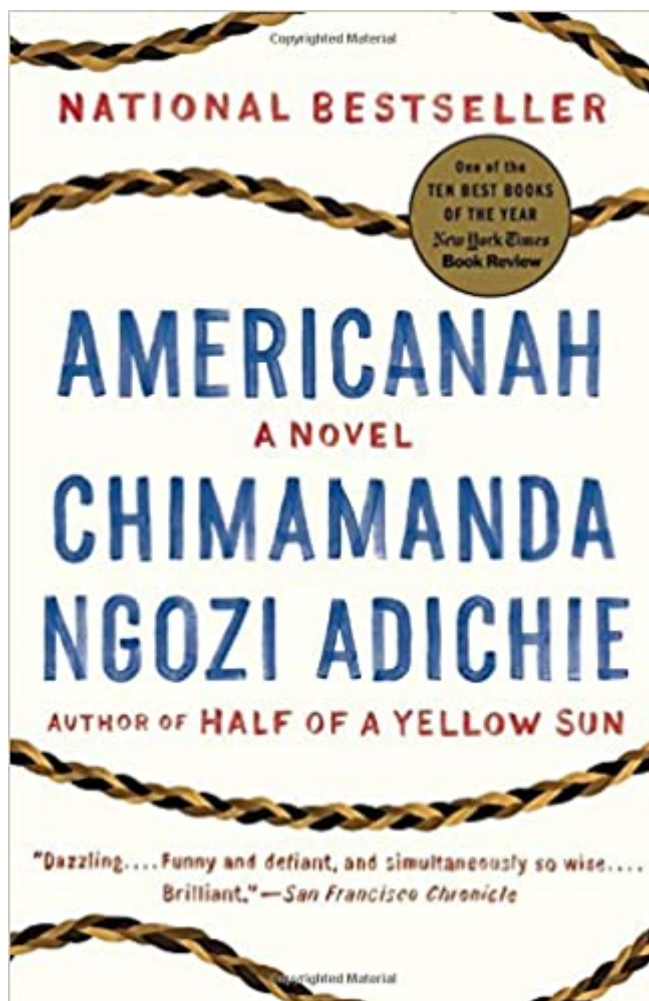


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Americanah



Synopsis

The bestselling novel *Americanah* is a love story of race and identity from the award-winning author of *We Should All Be Feminists* and *Dear Ijeawele*. Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America, where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion for each other and for their homeland.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review To the women in the hair-braiding salon, Ifemelu seems to have everything a Nigerian immigrant in America could desire, but the culture shock, hardships, and racism she's endured have left her feeling like she has "cement in her soul." Smart, irreverent, and outspoken, she reluctantly left Nigeria on a college scholarship. Her aunty Uju, the pampered mistress of a general in Lagos, is now struggling on her own in the U.S., trying to secure her medical license. Ifemelu's discouraging job search brings on desperation and depression until a babysitting gig leads to a cashmere-and-champagne romance with a wealthy white man. Astonished at the labyrinthine racial strictures she's confronted with, Ifemelu, defining herself as a "Non-American Black," launches an audacious, provocative, and instantly popular blog in which she explores what she calls Racial Disorder Syndrome.

Meanwhile, her abandoned true love, Obinze, is suffering his own cold miseries as an unwanted African in London. MacArthur fellow Adichie (*The Thing around Your Neck*, 2009) is a word-by-word virtuoso with a sure grasp of social conundrums in Nigeria, East Coast America, and England; an omnivorous eye for resonant detail; a gift for authentic characters; pyrotechnic wit; and deep humanitarianism. *Americanah* is a courageous, world-class novel about independence, integrity, community, and love and what it takes to become a "full human being." --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is not a stretch to say that her finely observed new book, which combines perfectly calibrated social satire and heartfelt emotion, stands with *Invisible Man* and *The Bluest Eye* as a defining work about the experience of being black in America. --Ruth Franklin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a west African born and raised in Senegal but immigrated to the U.S. At a young age, I had always wanted to see a story like mine captured in a work of fiction. I used to think that I would have to write that book myself, since I really could not see it on bookshelves. I'm referring to books about being an African immigrant to the United States. How we identify racially and how that is different from African Americans. Some of the challenges with immigration papers, unemployment, and being taken advantage of due to our lack of familiarity with the American system. Needless to say, I absolutely adored this book. It was incredibly well-written and worth all 500+ pages necessary. The characters were so alive or felt like they were in the same room as me. This is definitely one of my all-time favorite books.

A June, 2016 Pew research study was titled *On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart*. While interesting, the Pew study, like so much of what we "know" about America, comes in a distilled abstraction that does not elicit a feeling. In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie personalizes the various and real meanings of race, racism, black, white, foreign, and native, and describes feelings of anger, hurt, joy and love as she follows a Nigerian couple from high school into the beginning of middle life. Together and in love as young people in Africa they eventually move apart, to different parts of the world, seeing themselves over and over again through the eyes of those raised in cultures that they had long admired, but surprised and confused by the disconnect between expectation and reality, struggling to hold on to their dreams and failing. Their friends follow much the same trajectory and each reconciles to their new culture differently,

giving up parts of themselves and acquiring new parts to survive. This is a wide ranging, smart novel that makes the ideas of race and color and gender real in the context of the sexual, political, religious and intellectual cultures of America, Nigeria and England. Ifemelu, the young woman we follow from Africa to America and back, at one point, frustrated by a young American white woman who asks about the book she is reading thinks, "Why (do) people ask 'What is it about?' as if a novel has to be about only one thing." This novel is about many many things. And though she is not optimistic about racism in America, Adichie gives us one answer from Ifemelu: "The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that real deep romantic love is so rare, and because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved."

Well written but a little fluffy. Adichie's heroine is engaging and the story has a breezy and appealing quality, and Adichie herself has many keen, humorous and subtle insights about living in America as an immigrant from Africa. But while the story was full of passion, affection, and warmth, it was missing its heart in one key way. It subtly lacked compassion for, denigrated and picked apart characters other than the heroine, while having what is essentially a blind spot for the protagonist's and her love interest's faults. The story is basically one of marital infidelity, but the wife as almost subhuman and certainly inferior to the more alive, more honest, more vibrant protagonist. That ultimately made the book seem shallow, facile and not true to life in some key way.

Adichie has really flourished in a book like *Americanah*. Many of the characters don't go into much depth, they appear and disappear without saying much or having a big impact on the story. However in ways this could be praised. Adichie gets the reader to really focus on the main characters (Ifemelu and Obinze), which puts them on a pedestal and highlights their defining characteristics. Given the fact that the book is mostly about them and their affairs this was most likely the best way to go. This book has a hint of the common "rags to riches" vibe, which is a very known theme, but to be also accompanied by a fallen love interest that is to later be revitalized, this is the hook of this story. This proves the complexity that the world actually possesses. It is not just another story of an immigrant coming to America, it is so much more than that; Love, racism, culture, realism, and even confusion about one's identity,

these are virtues that Americanah shares with the real world. The world we live in in many cases is not what we want it to seem. The “American dream” is almost non-existent, without a tremendous amount of work that many people are not willing to commit to, it is unachievable. Even those who are, are still not guaranteed satisfaction. Ifemelu sees the truth when her life is not as she would have hoped. With the difficulty of finding a job and the shameful deeds that occurred with her tennis coach, the American dream surely faded. This being said, Ifemelu was on her own. Mistakes aren’t corrected, and as they begin to pile up Ifemelu and Obinze begin to feel the pressure. As a reader of this book, these mistakes began to anger me. Like in common “stop what you’re doing” situations, these characters preceded in doing things that would negatively affect them in the long run. Ifemelu avoidance of Obinze after her tennis coach encounter really shifted her as a character, this prideful, strong woman has become ashamed of herself. This book has a way of presenting you with a feminist view of life, how the women draw yours sympathy and the men are more or less viewed as villains. This is more so seen when Obinze becomes a wealthy man and finds a new family. It is also demonstrated when a character known as Auntie Uju breaks up and scars her man Olujimi. He is brought up, but is quickly forgotten to emphasize that it is a heavily woman oriented. Adichie as an author really made a piece that obviously touched her. How her words flowed, it seemed as though she wanted to talk about everything in life, all the endeavors and twist that came along with it. With this in plan, her writing made it seem as though Ifemelu and Obinze were just paradigmatic characters, but somehow kept their narrative interest while reaching out to the reader. Americanah seemed as though it was a story that could be approached by anyone with the ability to read, and they would feel some sort of connection to the main characters. Whether the misfortune be like that of Ifemelu and Obinze or not, just about everyone has had hard times in their life, and that is exactly what Adichie was trying to share. I honestly had a hard time setting this book aside, as it is one of the best books of this time and definitely deserves its popularity. The vast amount that was shared in this book that has real world value was tremendous. Honestly the only way someone couldn’t love this book was if they didn’t like hair.

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