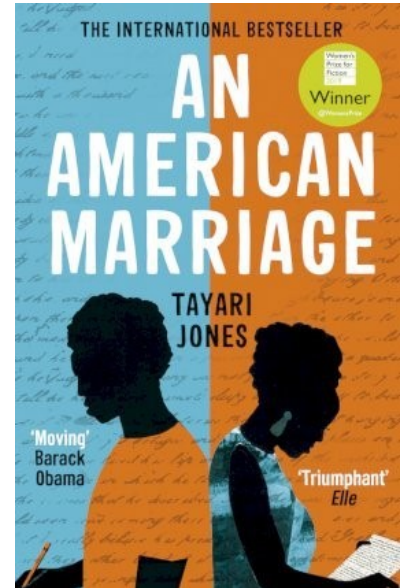


An American Marriage

Tayari Jones

Suggested Discussion Questions

- 1.— Do you think the title *An American Marriage* accurately represents the novel? Why or why not?
- 2.— There are two father figures in Roy's life: Big Roy is the one who shepherded him into adulthood and helped him grow into a responsible, capable person, but Walter is the one who taught Roy how to survive. Do you feel these men deserve equal credit? If not, which was the more important figure in Roy's life and why?
- 3.— When Celestial asks Roy if he would have waited for her for more than five years, he doesn't answer her question but reminds her that, as a woman, she would not have been imprisoned in the first place. Do you feel that his response is valid, and do you think it justifies his infidelity? Do you believe that he would have remained faithful if Celestial had been the one incarcerated? Does this really matter, and if so, why?
- 4.— The story is told through three characters' points of view. The author originally wrote it from Celestial's perspective and then tried a second version from Roy's point of view. Do you agree with her decision to tell it from all sides? Why was it important for us as readers to have the three first-person perspectives? What did it reveal about each character's intentions?
- 5.— You may not have noticed that Tayari Jones does not specify the race of the woman who accuses Roy of rape. How did you picture this woman? What difference does the race of this woman make in the way you understand the novel's storyline?
- 6.— Roy is hurt when Celestial, in discussing her career as an artist, doesn't mention him or the role he played in giving her the encouragement and freedom to follow her dreams, but Walter argues that she is justified in her silence. Do you agree? Do you think her silence is due to shame, or is she just being practical in how she presents herself to advance her career?
- 7.— In her "Dear John" letter to Roy, Celestial says, "I will continue to support you, but not as your wife." What do you think she means by this statement? Do you feel that Roy is wrong to reject her offer?



8.– Do you think that Andre strategized to get Celestial to fall in love with him, or did it happen naturally? Do you feel that it was a surprise to them that their relationship developed after all those years of friendship?

9.– Andre insists that he doesn't owe Roy an apology for the way his relationship with Celestial changed. Do you agree? Why or why not?

10.– Do you understand Celestial's impulse to seek companionship and love with Andre in Roy's absence, or do you think she should have stayed true to Roy no matter what?

11.– When Roy is released from prison, he first goes to his childhood home and almost immediately makes a connection with Davina. Do you feel that given the tenuous relationship he has with Celestial - who is still legally his wife- he is cheating? Why or why not? And when Roy announces to Davina his intention to return to his wife, do you feel that her anger is justified?

12.– It is obvious that Andre is different from Roy in many ways. Do you feel that he is ultimately a better match for Celestial? If so, why?

13.– If Roy had never gone to prison, do you think their marriage would have survived? Why or why not?

14.– After Roy is released from prison, Celestial eventually feels she must return to Roy because he is still her husband. Do you think this was the right decision? And do you think she should have given the marriage more of a chance?

15.– The author set out to write a book that explored some of the inequalities related to race and the legal system in a way that these issues would resonate with readers who might think, "This could happen to me". Do you think she succeeded?