

Alan Reinstein
9/10/12
Americanah (by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
Pages Read—1-43 (Part 1)—43 pages
325 words

Summary

The first section of the book introduced the two major characters—Ifemelu, a Nigerian graduate student studying at Yale and about to return to Nigeria after fifteen years in the U.S., and Obinze, her former college boyfriend in Nigeria, now married with a daughter, but clearly excited about the text-message news of Ifemelu’s return to Nigeria. Chapter 1 shows Ifemelu at an African hairdresser’s in Trenton, New Jersey, getting her hair braided and **resolute** about returning to Nigeria—and hinting at her lingering feelings for Obinze; Chapter 2 tells Obinze’s story, **languishing** somewhat back home after some time in England, unhappy—not **disconsolate** though—with his successful job as a Nigerian real estate man in Lagos.

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Comment: Not much more than 100 words

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Comment: Underline and embolden each of three vocabulary words used. Try to work them in, even if it’s a little forced.

Response

I really like the way Adichie’s narration includes very knowing perceptions of the human condition. There’s a scene in Chapter 2, in which Obinze is with his wife Kosi at a party at the Chief’s (Obinze’s boss), and the narration gives way to Obinze thinking about his wife’s beauty and gracefulness in the big room of the party. He is thinking about his wife’s modesty, when he says that she did not want to overemphasize her beauty by also “flattening her personality” so as not to call too much attention to herself. **When I read this, I saw something attractive in her character, but then just a little farther down the page there is this line: “There was something immodest about her modesty: it announced itself.” I understand what this means, and I like a book that gives words to an understanding of human nature that I’ve experienced also but never thought to articulate.** The other thing that I liked about this line was that it sent me to seeing in myself a similar type of criticism and made me think about modesty in an even more authentic way: How can I be modest and respectful in a way that is truly about humility and deference not about perception?

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Comment: Clearly separate the response, which is the more important of the two sections. Find something meaningful to say.

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Comment: Embolden one or two sentences that you want me to read. I won’t read much more.