

Homegoing

by Yaa Gyasi

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

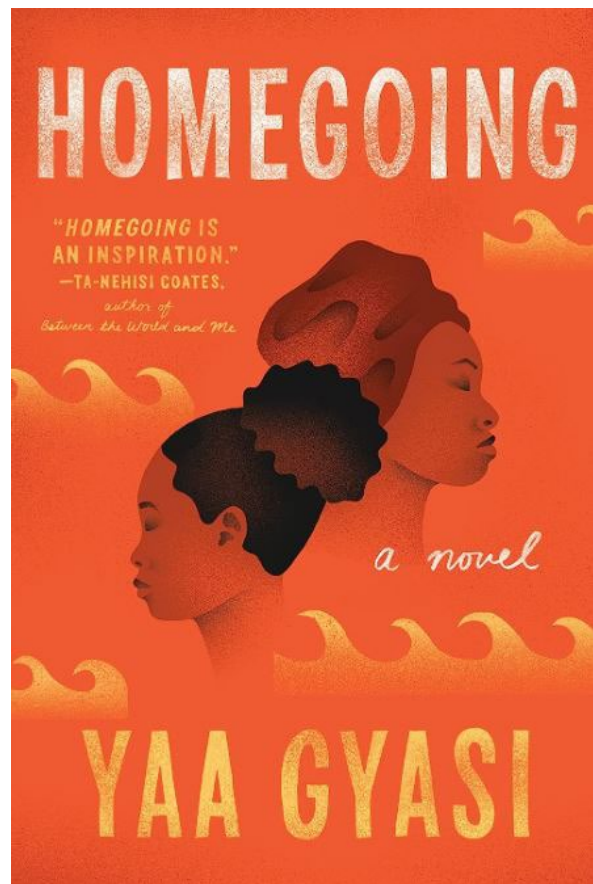
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Book summary

A novel of breathtaking sweep and emotional power that traces three hundred years in Ghana and along the way also becomes a truly great American novel. Extraordinary for its exquisite language, its implacable sorrow, its soaring beauty, and for its monumental portrait of the forces that shape families and nations, *Homegoing* heralds the arrival of a major new voice in contemporary fiction. Two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, are born into different villages in eighteenth-century Ghana. Effia is married off to an Englishman and lives in comfort in the palatial rooms of Cape Coast Castle. Unbeknownst to Effia, her sister, Esi, is imprisoned beneath her in the castle's dungeons, sold with thousands of others into the Gold Coast's booming slave trade, and shipped



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off to America, where her children and grandchildren will be raised in slavery. One thread of *Homegoing* follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, as the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and British colonization. The other thread follows Esi and her children into America. From the plantations of the South to the Civil War and the Great Migration, from the coal mines of Pratt City, Alabama, to the jazz clubs and dope houses of twentieth-century Harlem, right up through the present day, *Homegoing* makes history visceral, and captures, with singular and stunning immediacy, how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed in the soul of a nation. Generation after generation, Yaa Gyasi's magisterial first novel sets the fate of the individual against the obliterating movements of time, delivering unforgettable characters whose lives were shaped by historical forces beyond their control. *Homegoing* is a tremendous reading experience, not to be missed, by an astonishingly gifted young writer.

Source: Princeton Book Review

(https://www.princetonbookreview.com/book_pages/discussion/homegoing.php)

Meet the Author

Yaa Gyasi was born in Ghana and raised in Huntsville, Alabama. She holds a BA in English from Stanford University and an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she held a Dean's Graduate Research Fellowship. She lives in Brooklyn.



Source: Penguin Random House

(penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2117741/yaa-gyasi/)



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Discussion Questions

1. Evaluate the title of the book. Why do you think that the author chose the word *Homegoing*? What is a homegoing and where does it appear in the novel? In addition to the term's literal meaning, discuss what symbolic meanings or associations the title might have in terms of a connection with our place of birth, our ancestors, our heritage, and our personal and cultural histories.
2. Explore the theme of belief. What forms of belief are depicted in the book and what purpose do these beliefs seem to serve for the characters? Does the author reveal what has shaped the characters' beliefs? Do these beliefs seem to have a mostly positive or negative impact on the believer and those around them?
3. What perspective does the book offer on the subject of beliefs and otherness? For instance, does the book delineate between superstition and belief? Why does Ma Aku reprimand Jo after he is kicked out of church? What do the Missionary and the fetish man contribute to a dialogue on beliefs and otherness? Does the book ultimately suggest the best way to confront beliefs that are foreign to us?
4. Evaluate the treatment and role of women in the novel. What role does marriage play within the cultures represented in the novel and how are the women treated as a result? Likewise, what significance does fertility and motherhood have for the women and how does it influence their treatment? In the chapter entitled "Effia," what does Adwoa tell Effia that her coupling with James is really about? In its depiction of the collective experiences of the female characters, what does the book seem to reveal about womanhood? How different would you say the treatment and role of women is today? Discuss.
5. Analyze the structure of the book. Why do you think the author assigned a chapter to each of the major characters? What points of view are represented therein? Does any single point of view seem to stand out among the rest or do you believe that the author presented a balanced



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- point of view? Explain. Although each chapter is distinct, what do the stories have in common when considered collectively? How might your interpretation of the book differ if the author had chosen to tell the story from a single point of view?
6. Consider the setting of the book. What time periods are represented and what places are adopted as settings? Why do you think that the author chose these particular settings? What subjects and themes are illuminated via these particular choices? How does the extensive scope of the book help to unify these themes and create a cohesive treatment of the subjects therein?
 7. In the chapter entitled "Quey," Fiifi tells Quey that "[the] village must conduct its business like [the] female bird" (53). What does he mean by this and why do you think that Fiifi chooses this approach?
 8. Why was Quey sent to England? After his return home, why does Quey say that it was safer in England? Why might he feel that what he faces at home is more difficult than the challenges he faced in leaving home and living abroad?
 9. James's mother, Nana Yaa, says that the Gold Coast is like a pot of groundnut soup (89). What does she mean by this?
 10. Why does Akosua Mensah insist to James, "I will be my own nation" (99)? What role do patriotism, heritage, and tradition play in contributing to the injustices, prejudices, and violence depicted in the book? Which other characters seem to share Akosua's point of view?
 11. Explore the theme of complicity. What are some examples of complicity found in the novel? Who is complicit in the slave trade? Where do most of the slaves come from and who trades them? Who does Abena's father say is ultimately responsible (142)? Do you agree with him? Explain why or why not.

Source: Princeton Book Review
(https://www.princetonbookreview.com/book_pages/discussion/homegoing.php)

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Recipes

African Yam & Peanut Soup

- 8 cups vegetable stock
- 1 Tbsp grapeseed oil
- 2 onions diced (about 1 cup)
- ⅓ cup fresh ginger grated
- 5 cloves garlic crushed
- 1 Tbsp curry powder
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 540 ml 19 oz can diced tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper diced (about 1 cup)
- 4 medium yams peeled and chopped (about 5 cups)
- 75 ml 14 oz can of pineapple in pineapple juice
- 3 Tbsp unsweetened smooth peanut butter
- 2 limes juice



Heat oil in a large, heavy bottomed soup pot. Add onions and cook until translucent. Add ginger, garlic and spices and cook over medium heat until fragrant. Add bell pepper, tomatoes and yams and stir to combine. Cook for 5-10 minutes, stirring frequently to ensure to spices don't burn.

Add stock to the soup pot, bring to a boil and then reduce heat to a simmer. Cook until yams are tender, 10-15 minutes, depending on the size of your yam chunks.

Add peanut butter and pineapple, reserving the pineapple juice in the can. Simmer for an additional 20 minutes.

Puree the soup until smooth using either an immersion blender or a counter-top blender (you will have to blend it in batches using a counter-top blender). Add pineapple juice and lime juice and stir to combine.



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Serve with additional lime wedges, hot sauce, fresh cilantro, and a sprinkle of chopped peanuts.

Source: Hungry Bookworm (hungry-bookworm.com/wprm_print/2932)



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Peanut Punch Recipe

- 1 cup plain, skinless peanuts
- 1 1/2 cups coconut milk
- 1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees and line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.

Spread the peanuts on the baking tray and put them in the preheated oven. Roast the peanuts for about 5 minutes until they start to turn golden brown. You will be able to smell the peanuts when they are ready. Remove the tray from the oven and let the peanuts cool.

Place the cooled peanuts in a blender along with the coconut milk. Puree until smooth. Try to blend until the peanuts are as small as possible. You really want to grind them well. Pour the peanut mix through a cheesecloth, squeezing as much liquid out of the nuts as possible and then discarding the pulp.

Add the sweetened condensed milk, cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla to the mix and stir. Enjoy the peanut punch cold over ice or straight from the bowl!



Source: Mocktail.net (mocktail.net/peanut-punch/)

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