

Further Reading

Little Bee
Chris Cleave (2009)
CLEAVE

The fates of a 16-year-old Nigerian orphan and a well-to-do British couple seeking to repair their strained marriage with a free holiday are joined when the couple decide to stray beyond the walls of their holiday resort on a Nigerian beach.

Americanah
Chimimanda Adichie (2013)
ADICHIE

A young woman from Nigeria leaves behind her home and her first love to start a new life in America, only to find her dreams are not all she expected.

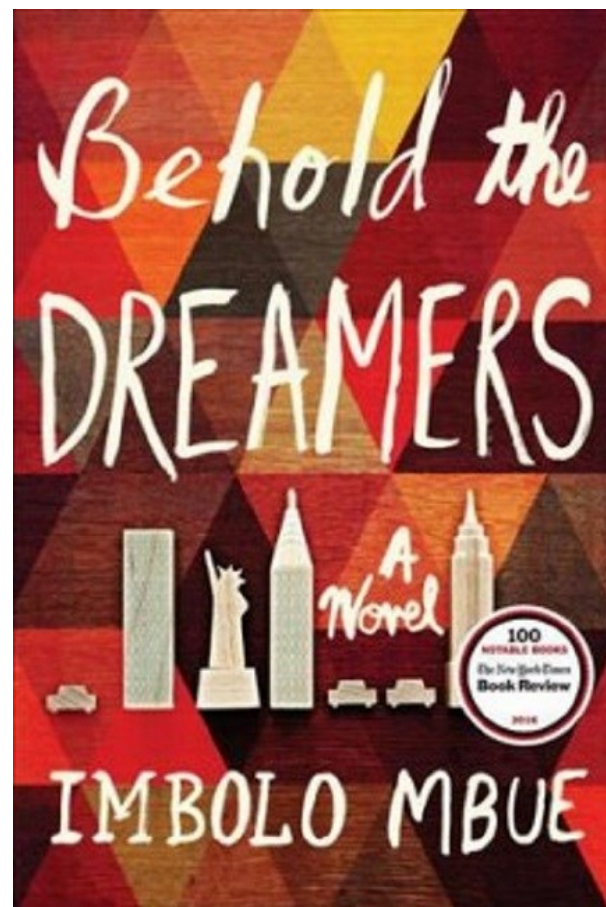
Exit West
Mohsin Hamid (2017)
HAMID

Presents the story of two young lovers whose furtive affair is shaped by local unrest on the eve of a civil war that erupts in a cataclysmic bombing attack, forcing them to abandon their previous home and lives.

KDL

Kent District Library
www.kdl.org

Book Discussion Guide



KDL

Kent District Library
www.kdl.org

About the Book

In 2007, Manhattan-based Cameroonian immigrant Jende Jonga gets a job chauffeuring for Lehman Brothers executive Clark Edwards, easing the financial strain on his family. At first, all goes well, but problems in the Edwards' marriage lead to problems for the Jongas, and when Lehman falls, both families are caught up in the terrible aftermath.

Discussion Questions

1. Immigration plays a huge role in this novel. For the Jongas, America is a place of hope and promise, a "place where you can become somebody," but the machine and policies are anything but welcoming or clear and the road to citizenship is jagged. Discuss the portrayal of the American immigration in this novel. How does this shift the traditional representation of America?
2. In Jende's job as a driver for the Edwards family, he often transcends the boundaries between their public personas and their private lives. Behind the safety of a closed car door, the Edwards show their truest selves and Jende is often a silent witness to much of what they would not show to the world: marital issues, the crumbling of Lehman Brothers, infidelity, family arguments. How does this impact Jende's understanding of this family? How does it inform our interpretations?

3. On the surface, it would seem that Cindy and Neni are two extremely different women. Cindy, in particular, is a conflicted person: sometimes ignorant, conniving, self-centered. However, it soon becomes clear that, in their own ways, Cindy and Neni are bonded, both women are struggling to understand their roles as wives and women, and as the novel progresses, their identities seem to merge. How else are they similar? How are they different? What do they learn from one another?

4. Discuss the character of Vince Edwards. What do you make of his relationship to his family and his thoughts about his country? How do his opinions play a larger role in the novel? What do you think is in store for him in India?

5. Discuss the role of dreams in the novel. How do dreams drive the plot of the novel? What kind of dreams do these characters wish to achieve? What dreams are deferred?

6. Though external forces drive the plot of the novel, the marriages of both the Edwards and the Jongas fuel a lot of the drama as well. How do these marriages differ? How are they similar? How do both of these relationships influence the events of the story?

7. Perhaps one of the saddest moments of the novel is the Jongas' return to Cameroon. What do you think of this decision? How do you envision their lives if they had tried to stay in America?

8. Consider the role of the American Dream in the novel. How is this ideal defined in this story? In what ways is it manifested in the central men and women of this story? How does it fail them?