

### *Americanah*: STUDY QUESTIONS

#### *Answer the questions underlined*

1. While *Americanah* is not an autobiographical novel, the originality of its voice presented a new point of view on America, as seen from a Nigerian perspective.

- Briefly research the author's biography and find 3 or 4 points of comparison within the novel.

2. The novel opens in the Ivy League enclave of Princeton, New Jersey. Ifemelu likes living there because "she could pretend to be someone else...someone adorned with certainty" (3). But she has to go to the largely black city of Trenton, nearby, to have her hair braided.

- Does this movement between cities indicate a similar split within Ifemelu? Why does she decide to return to Nigeria after 13 years in America?

3. Ifemelu's blog is a venue for expressing her experience as an African immigrant and for provoking a conversation about race and migration. She says, "I discovered race in America and it fascinated me" (406). She asks, "How many other people had become black in America?" (298).

- Why is the blog so successful? Are there any real-life examples that you know of similar to this?

⇒ CHOOSE ONE QUESTION BETWEEN 4 and 5 and ANSWER IT:

4. The term "Americanah" is used for Nigerians who have been changed by having lived in America. Like those in the novel's Nigeropolitan Club, they have become critical of their native land and culture: "They were sanctified, the returnees, back home with an extra gleaming layer" (408).

- a. Is the United States presented in generally positive or generally negative ways in *Americanah*?  
b. Is the book's title meant as a criticism of Ifemelu, or simply an accurate word for what she fears she will become (and others may think of her)?

5. The questions of cultural identification and appropriation looms large in *Americanah*.

- a. Why is it important to have the perspective of an African writer on race in America? How does reading the story make you more alert to race, and to the cultural identifications within races and mixed races?  
b. Did this novel enlarge your own perspective, and if so, how?