

Stay With Me by Ayobami Adebayo

Author:

Ayobami Adebayo was born in Lagos, Nigeria. She received fellowships and residencies from Ledig House, Sinthian Cultural Centre, Hedgebrook, Ox-Bow School of Art, Ebedi Hills and the Siena Art Institute. She is an editor for *Saraba Magazine*. (From the publisher.)

Summary:

This celebrated, unforgettable first novel gives voice to both husband and wife as they tell the story of their marriage—and the forces that threaten to tear it apart.

Yejide and Akin have been married since they met and fell in love at university. Though many expected Akin to take several wives, he and Yejide have always agreed: polygamy is not for them.

But four years into their marriage — after consulting fertility doctors and healers, trying strange teas and unlikely cures — Yejide is still not pregnant. She assumes she still has time — until her family arrives on her doorstep with a young woman they introduce as Akin's second wife.

Furious, shocked, and livid with jealousy, Yejide knows the only way to save her marriage is to get pregnant, which, finally, she does — but at a cost far greater than she could have dared to imagine. An electrifying novel of enormous emotional power, *Stay With Me* asks how much we can sacrifice for the sake of family. (From the publisher.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the early stages of Yejide and Akin's courtship, from both of their perspectives. What is Yejide's initial reaction to Akin's romantic propositions? Consider Yejide's childhood and past that is revealed over the course of the novel. What does she seek in a romantic relationship? How does Akin provide security for her? How does Akin convince Yejide that he is trustworthy?
2. Consider the family unit as a social force in *Stay with Me*. How do the opinions of Akin's family members influence his decisions? Describe the relationship between Akin and his parents. How does Akin both obey and defy the wishes of his family? How does Yejide navigate her role as a daughter-in-law?

3. In the beginning of *Stay with Me*, the reader is introduced to the central conflict of Yejide and Akin's life: their infertility as a couple. How is Yejide and Akin's childlessness seen as a reflection on the family unit? What is the burden of expectation placed on Yejide? How is she treated by Akin's family as a result of her infertility? By the community? How do attitudes toward Yejide change once she is pregnant?
4. Discuss the road leading to Yejide's first pregnancy. How do the social pressures to become a mother weigh on Yejide? Once Yejide learns that she is no longer Akin's only wife, how does the urgency of her mission become more pronounced? Consider the barriers to her pregnancy, and what she learns about herself from the field remedies and the medical establishment. How does the psychological trauma that accompanies her journey weigh on her throughout the novel?
5. The tension between modern attitudes and traditional thought informs much of *Stay with Me*. How does Yejide and Akin's early agreement of monogamy conflict with the prevailing social attitude? How does this create tension over the course of the novel? How does Yejide defy the wishes of her husband's family? How does the eventual shift of parental responsibilities to Akin upend the expectations of motherhood and parenting?
6. Consider the identity of "mother," and how understanding of that role shifts for Yejide over the course of the novel. How does the story of her mother's death influence her worldview and her perspective on family? Discuss the relationship Yejide had with her father's other wives. Which woman in her life, if any, provides her with an understanding of what a loving mother-child relationship looks like? Once she becomes a mother, how does her self-image change?
7. Describe Yejide's relationship with Iya Bolu. How does Iya Bolu's attitude toward Yejide shift over the years? When does Yejide seem to earn the most respect from Iya Bolu? When does she earn her sympathy?
8. Consider the political background of *Stay with Me*. How does the instability of the government undermine the health and happiness of Yejide and her family? How does the political upheaval reflect the emotional turmoil of Yejide and Akin?
9. The reveal of Akin's medical condition is an important development in the plot. Given this revelation, would you consider Funmi's death to be purposeful? How did you interpret his reaction to her accusation? How does Akin contend with threats to his masculinity throughout the novel?
10. Discuss the significance of the hair salon in Yejide's life. How does it encourage her independence? How does it act as a place of gathering within their community?
11. Compare the bedtime story that Yejide tells her children with the tale that Akin shares with Rotimi as she grows. What do these stories reveal about the worldviews of both parents? What lessons are they sharing? How is it a cautionary tale between parent and

child? How does it reflect Yejide's own childhood experiences?

12. Discuss the process of mourning as depicted in *Stay with Me*. How does the community react to Yejide's mourning for the loss of her first child versus her second? Discuss the general attitude towards Yejide's depression from her family and those around her.

13. What is Akin's relationship with his brother? How do they compete with each other? How do they jockey for the coveted spot of favored son throughout the novel? After their brawl, how does their relationship change? Do you think Dotun possessed real romantic feelings for Yejide?

14. Discuss Yejide's reunion with Rotimi. Were you surprised by this reveal? How did you interpret Timi's insistence on calling Yejide "Moomi"?

15. *Stay with Me* is a novel that challenges readers' expectations with its surprising reveals, its secrets, and its deception. What plot development did you find to be most surprising? How does Adebayo play with the idea of expectation versus reality throughout the novel?

(Questions issued by Lit Lovers.)