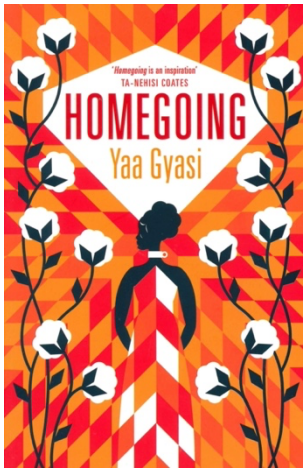
Prison Reading Groups

Homegoing

By Yaa Gyasi



The night Effia Otcha was born into the musky heat of Fanteland, a fire raged through her father's compound. It moved quickly, tearing a path for days. It lived off the air; it slept in caves and hid in trees; it burned, up and through, unconcerned with what wreckage it left behind, until it reached an Asante village. There, it disappeared, becoming one with the night.

Effia and Esi: two sisters with two very different destinies. One sold into slavery; one a slave trader's wife. The consequences of their fate reverberate through the generations that follow. As each chapter offers up a new descendant, alternating between Effia's and Esi's bloodline right up to the present day, a chasm of experience and the differing legacies of chance are brought starkly to light. Taking us from the Gold Coast of Africa to the cotton-picking plantations of Mississippi; from the missionary schools of Ghana to the dive bars of Harlem, spanning three continents and seven generations, Yaa Gyasi has written a miraculous novel.

Discussion Questions

1. The story spans several generations. How much does America change, if any, over this time?

2. *'If I do not get pregnant soon, people will start to believe there is something wrong with me.' (p.101)* In its depiction of the collective experiences of female characters, what does the book reveal about womanhood?

3. How do the characters relationships with their parents influence the way that they raise their own children?

4. '*We believe the one who has the power. He is the one who gets to write the story. When you study history, you must always ask yourself, whose story am I missing?'* (p.226) How might Yaw's view of history reshape your ideas about the historical subjects and themes treated in the book?

5. Colonialism is heavily rooted in the book. Have the issues surrounding colonialism, imperialism, freedom and human rights featured in the book been resolved? Does the book offer any suggestions as to how this might be remedied?