

"A genius conceit . . . thoughtful, courageous, exciting . . . a splendid work."

—ROBERT JONES, JR.



THE AMERICAN

FOR OUR MOTHERS

A NOVEL

BOOK
CLUB
KIT

DAUGHTERS

MAURICE CARLOS RUFFIN

Author of We Cast a Shadow and The Ones Who Don't Say They Love You



CAST OF CHARACTERS

ADY

a.k.a. Adebimpe, a.k.a. Antoinette Marianne du Marche, a.k.a. Hummingbird

Our heroine: An enslaved girl working in the city of New Orleans who discovers a new way of using her abilities—and a strength she didn't know she had. “The girl possessed of the spirit of freedom . . . She knew that she too was enslaved, but she had not quite thought of herself that way.”

SANITE

Ady's mother, who is not afraid of any man on earth and knows how to bide her time until the right moment. “Some might have said . . . that they had never seen a woman so fearless or foolish.”

LENORE

a.k.a. Ares, a.k.a. Ruth

A free, wealthy Creole woman, and owner of the Mockingbird Inn, “New Orleans's finest sleeping, dining, and leisure quarters for all people of good intentions.” “Lenore—a name that lifted and expanded on Ady's tongue. A name covered in the light of the morning sun.”

ALABAMA

a.k.a. The Dove of Peace

Lenore's friend; a Mockingbird Inn employee and a fiercely bold woman, who once said: “I saw you when those slavers were up in this place. There's nothing wrong with being afraid when something like that happens, but you can't let people make you forget you're a person.”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. Ady goes by many names: Ady, Adibempe, Antoinette, Hummingbird. What do each of these names signify to her? What role did she play while assuming each name?
2. What did you think of the epistolary sections? How was your reading experience with this book different from reading a straightforward historical fiction novel?
3. In what other ways is *The American Daughters* similar to and different from other historical fiction novels? How would you describe its genre?
4. “I wasn’t running away. I was running toward myself,” Sanite tells Ady. Discuss what she means by this.
5. Which character did you connect with most strongly? Why?
6. Discuss the repeated use of the phrase “slave labor camp also called a plantation.” What effect did this have on you?
7. How did the setting of New Orleans factor into the plot? What is significant about New Orleans during the time in which the novel is set?
8. How do both the enslaved and free Black women retain their agency under an oppressive, brutal system?
9. In what ways does Lenore subvert the expectations of her as a young woman of color during this period? In what ways does she conform to expectations?
10. What scenes did you find most evocative? Which have stayed with you the most?
11. Do *The Daughters* remind you of any other group in history? Discuss.
12. What does the character of Alabama represent for Ady?
13. What did you think of the final section of the book? How—if at all—did it change or complicate your thoughts on the rest of the novel?
14. What do you think happens to the characters after the novel?
15. Do you think Ady ever reunites with any of her family members? Discuss.
16. What character or characters do you wish you could read more about?
17. Describe the emotions you felt reading the novel.



CIVIL WAR-ERA NEW ORLEANS



- 1. City Entrance
- 2. Du Marche's Townhouse
- 3. The Mockingbird Inn
- 4. The American Daughters Headquarters
- 5. Playhouse Theater
- 6. River Route to Hidden Veil
- 7. Slave Market
- 8. Congo Square
- 9. French Market

