



Beneath *the* Tamarind Tree

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. The 2014 kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram made international headlines and prompted the #BringBackOurGirls movement. Before reading *Beneath the Tamarind Tree* were you aware of the kidnapping and the #BringBackOurGirls movement? What were your thoughts?
2. According to Sesay, the eventual return of the Chibok girls to their families received so little media attention because “in large sections of US society, the suffering of black and brown people—and in particular black and brown women—is readily accepted and cast aside.” Do you agree? What are some other examples of this kind of bias in media coverage?
3. In *Beneath the Tamarind Tree*, Sesay argues that events like the Chibok girls’ kidnapping should be paid attention to as issues of national security in the western world. Do you agree? Do you believe that countries like the U.S. should be doing more to intervene in these situations?
4. What do you make of the Nigerian government’s response to the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls?
5. Faith plays a significant role in the lives of the Chibok girls. What are some examples in the book of faith being used to help overcome hardship? Have there been moments in your life when you’ve relied on your faith to help you overcome something?
6. In Chibok, young women are given small plots of land by their families to teach responsibility and provide financial independence. Discuss the ways in which your own community empowers young women. Do you think there is more that your community can be doing?
7. How does education impact the lives of the Chibok schoolgirls? How does it empower them? Does education play a similar role in your society?
8. Priscilla, Mary, Saa, and Dorcas are described as four very different girls who had “largely followed the same script, played out in simple homes and rudimentary primary schools, each act shaped by their hardworking parents.” How would you describe the similarities and differences between the four girls? How do you think these traits might have contributed to each of their paths in the book?
9. Throughout the book, Sesay weaves in the story of her mother, who came from humble beginnings in Sierra Leone, and who bettered her life and the lives of her children through education. What parallels do you see between the lives of Sesay’s mother, Sesay, and the Chibok girls?
10. Since reading *Beneath the Tamarind Tree* has the way you consume news stories, like the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, changed? If so, in what ways?