

"A poignant meditation on one girl's struggle to find her way in a new world."
—Nicola Yoon, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Everything, Everything*

IBI ZOBOI



AMERICAN
STREET

About the Book

On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—the good life. But after leaving Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud, American cousins, the grittiness of Detroit's city streets, a new school, and a surprising romance, all on her own. Just as she finds her footing in this strange new world, a dangerous proposition presents itself that could help set her mother free. Trapped at the crossroads of an impossible choice, will she pay the price for the American dream?

Debut author Ibi Zoboi draws on her own experience as a young Haitian immigrant, infusing this lyrical exploration of America with magical realism and *Vodou* culture.

Questions for Group Discussion

- Fabiola's mother promised that life in America would be *une belle vie*—the good life. What are the components of this "good life" and how does it compare to Fabiola's life in Haiti? Talk about Fabiola's initial impressions of life in Detroit. Do they measure up to her expectations of *une belle vie*?
- The Toussaint family had to make many sacrifices to make it in America. Talk about the various sacrifices that Uncle Philip, Matant Jo, and Manman make. Is sacrifice a universal part of the immigrant experience?
- The history of the house on the corner of American Street and Joy Road is a dark one, but Fabiola's uncle didn't realize that when he bought the house, "He thought he was buying American Joy" (p.57). Discuss the symbolism of these intersections and how it relates to Fabiola's journey in America. Have you ever felt at a crossroads in your own life?
- Discuss Fabiola's faith and her reliance on the Haitian spirits (*Iwas*). How does her faith guide her as she transitions to life in America? Fabiola is the only one who seems to pay attention to Bad Leg. Who do you think he is? What role does he ultimately play in the story?
- Discuss the concept of Americanization. When Fabiola greets Matant Jo, Pri, Donna, and Chantal, she doesn't seem to find any semblance of Haitian culture. In what ways does Fabiola embrace American culture? In what ways does she resist it? In order to "make it" in America, do immigrants need to give up aspects of their cultural identity?
- Talk about Donna and Dray's relationship. Fabiola struggles to understand the nature of their relationship, as she witnesses constant emotional and physical abuse. How does Fabiola try to intervene? How can friends and family support a loved one in ending an abusive relationship?
- Detective Stevens seeks Fabiola out early after her arrival in Detroit to present her with an opportunity to release her mother from detainment, but Fabiola knows that opportunities such as this don't come without a cost. She has to choose to whom she'll be loyal—to her mother, to her aunt and cousins, or to Kasim. How does she decide whom to protect and how? What would you have done if you were in her shoes?