**An American Marriage**

**By Tayari Jones**

**About the Book:**

Newlyweds Celestial and Roy are the embodiment of both the American Dream and the New South. He is a young executive, and she is an artist on the brink of an exciting career. But as they settle into the routine of their life together, they are ripped apart by circumstances neither could have imagined. Roy is arrested and sentenced to twelve years for a crime Celestial knows he didn’t commit. Though fiercely independent, Celestial finds herself bereft and unmoored, taking comfort in Andre, her childhood friend, and best man at their wedding. As Roy’s time in prison passes, she is unable to hold on to the love that has been her center. After five years, Roy’s conviction is suddenly overturned, and he returns to Atlanta ready to resume their life together.

This stirring love story is a profoundly insightful look into the hearts and minds of three people who are at once bound and separated by forces beyond their control. An American Marriage is a masterpiece of storytelling, an intimate look deep into the souls of people who must reckon with the past while moving forward—with hope and pain—into the future.

**About the Author**:

Tayari Jones is the author of the novels Leaving Atlanta, The Untelling, Silver Sparrow, and An American Marriage (Algonquin Books, February 2018). Her writing has appeared in Tin House, The Believer, The New York Times, and Callaloo. A member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, she has also been a recipient of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, Lifetime Achievement Award in Fine Arts from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, United States Artist Fellowship, NEA Fellowship and Radcliffe Institute Bunting Fellowship. Silver Sparrow was named a #1 Indie Next Pick by booksellers in 2011, and the NEA added it to its Big Read Library of classics in 2016. Jones is a graduate of Spelman College, University of Iowa, and Arizona State University. An Associate Professor in the MFA program at Rutgers-Newark University, she is spending the 2017-18 academic year as the Shearing Fellow for Distinguished Writers at the Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**If you enjoyed this book*:***

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* Behold the Dreamers by Imbolo Mbue
* Sold on a Monday by Kristina McMorris
* The Water Dancer by Ta-nehisi Coates
* Educated by Tara Westover

**Discussion Questions**

1. The title of this novel is "An American Marriage." Do you feel this title accurately represents the novel? Why or why not?
2. When Celestial asks Roy if he would have waited for her for more than five years. Do you believe that he would have remained faithful if Celestial had been the one incarcerated? Does this really matter, and if so, why?
3. In her "Dear John" letter to Roy, Celestial says, "I will continue to support you, but not as your wife." What do you think she means by this statement? Do you feel that Roy is wrong to reject her offer?
4. Andre insists that he doesn’t owe Roy an apology for the way his relationship with Celestial changed. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. There are two father figures in Roy’s life: Big Roy is the one who shepherded him into adulthood and helped him grow into a responsible, capable person, but Walter is the one who taught Roy how to survive. Do you feel these men deserve equal credit?
6. When Roy is released from prison, he first goes to his childhood home and almost immediately makes a connection with Davina. Do you feel that given the tenuous relationship he has with Celestial—who is still legally his wife—he is cheating? Why or why not? And when Roy announces to Davina his intention to return to his wife, do you feel that her anger is justified?
7. Roy is hurt when Celestial, in discussing her career as an artist, doesn’t mention him or the role he played in giving her the encouragement and freedom to follow her dreams, but Walter argues that she is justified in her silence. Do you agree? Do you think her silence is due to shame, or is she just being practical in how she presents herself to advance her career?
8. It is obvious that Andre is different from Roy in many ways. Do you feel that ultimately he is a better match for Celestial? If so, why? Also, why do you think Celestial and Andre decide against formally marrying?
9. Do you think that Andre strategized to get Celestial to fall in love with him, or did it happen naturally? Do you feel that it was a surprise to them that it happened after all those years? Do you predict that Celestial’s parents will come to accept Andre as her life partner?
10. Toward the end of the novel, Celestial does a complete about-face and returns to Roy. Do you feel that it was the right decision?