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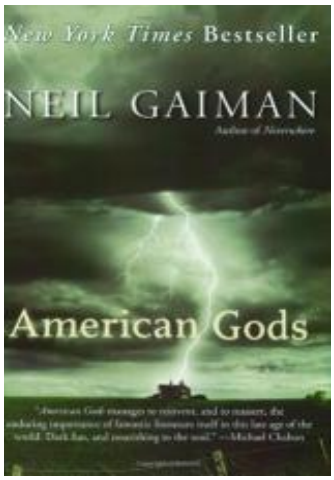
American Gods: A Novel

by Neil Gaiman



About the Book

Shadow Moon spent three years in prison, keeping his head down, doing his time. All he wanted was to get back to the loving arms of his wife, Laura, and to stay out of trouble for the rest of his life. But just a few days before his release, he learns that Laura has been fatally injured in a car accident.

On the plane ride home to the funeral, a grizzled man who calls himself Mr. Wednesday makes Shadow an offer he can't refuse. But Shadow soon learns that his role in Wednesday's schemes will be far more dangerous than he ever could have imagined. Entangled in a world of secrets, he embarks on a wild road odyssey and encounters, among others, the murderous Czernobog, the impish Mr. Nancy, and the beautiful Easter -- all of whom seem to know a great deal about Shadow's private life.

Shadow will discover that everyone in Mr. Wednesday's world harbors secrets, that the living and the dead are all around him, and that nothing is what it appears. As a storm of epic proportions threatens to break all around them, Shadow and Wednesday get swept up in a conflict as old as humanity itself; for beneath the placid surface of everyday life, a pitched battle is being fought over America's soul.

As unsettling as it is exhilarating, **American Gods** is a dark and kaleidoscopic journey into an America at once eerily familiar and utterly alien. Magnificently told, this work of literary magic will haunt the reader far beyond the final page.

Discussion Guide

1. Where is Shadow at the beginning of **American Gods**? Where is he at the end? Of the many characters he encounters along the way, which did you find most memorable? What did you make of Shadow's obsession with coin tricks? How did you interpret his determination to participate in the vigil for Wednesday?

2. How does Laura die? Were you surprised by what happens at her funeral? How does she come to Shadow's aid? What explains the phenomenon of her persistence in the world of the living? How does Shadow release her from her state of limbo?

3. How would you describe Wednesday? How does he interact with Shadow at the start of the book? Did you find any of his grifter schemes especially entertaining? What is his connection to Odin? By the end of **American Gods**, what relationship between Wednesday and Shadow is revealed?

4. Who is Czernobog? How would you describe him? What is his relationship with the three Zoryas? What did you make of this group? What role did they play in Shadow's experiences?

5. "There are new gods growing in America ... gods of credit card and freeway, of Internet and telephone, of radio and hospital and television, gods of plastic and of beeper and of neon." How do you interpret this remark? Do you think there's any element of truth to it?

6. How would you describe Shadow's sojourn in Lakeside, Wisconsin? How do Hinzelmann, Chad Mulligan, Marge Olsen, and Missy Gunther treat their mysterious new neighbor?

7. Who is Alison McGovern and how does Shadow come to know her? What clue enables Shadow to determine her killer? What did you think of the outcome of this mystery?

8. "Would you believe that all of the gods that people have ever imagined are still with us today?" Shadow asks this question of Samantha Black Crow. Do you find this premise compelling? Did any elements of the plot of **American Gods** push this idea in interesting directions?

Author Bio

Neil Gaiman is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling A VIEW FROM THE CHEAP SEATS, THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK, CORALINE, NEVERWHERE and the *Sandman* series of graphic novels, among other works. His fiction has received Newbery, Carnegie, Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy and Will Eisner Awards. His novel AMERICAN GODS will be a TV series airing in 2017. Originally from England, he lives in the United States, where he is a professor at Bard College.

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