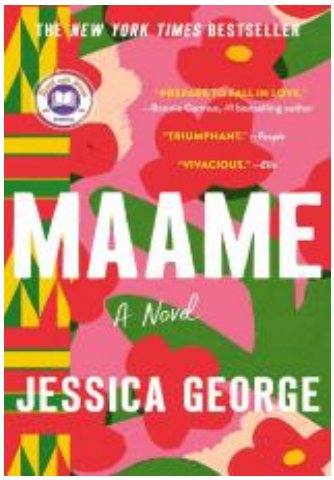
Maame

by Jessica George



About the Book

Maame (ma-meh) has many meanings in Twi but in my case, it means woman.

It?s fair to say that Maddie?s life in London is far from rewarding. With a mother who spends most of her time in Ghana --- yet still somehow manages to be overbearing --- Maddie is the primary caretaker for her father, who suffers from advanced stage Parkinson?s. At work, her boss is a nightmare and Maddie is tired of always being the only Black person in every meeting.

When her mum returns from her latest trip to Ghana, Maddie leaps at the chance to get out of the family home and finally start living. A self-acknowledged late bloomer, she?s ready to experience some important ?firsts?: She finds a flat share, says yes to after-work drinks, pushes for more recognition in her career, and throws herself into the bewildering world of internet dating. But it's not long before tragedy strikes, forcing Maddie to face the true nature of her unconventional family, and the perils --- and rewards --- of putting her heart on the line.

Smart, funny and deeply affecting, Jessica George's MAAME deals with the themes of our time with humor and poignancy: from familial duty and racism, to female pleasure, the complexity of love and the life-saving power of friendship. Most important, it explores what it feels like to be torn between two homes and cultures --- and it celebrates finally being able to find where you belong.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the meaning of the word *Maame* evolve throughout the story, and how does Maddie?s relationship to it change?

2. Google search results appear frequently throughout the novel. In what kind of situations does Maddie turn to Google

for answers, and why do you think she does so? How did the inclusion of her search results affect your reading experience?

3. Maddie misses out on several social experiences because she is taking care of her father. How does this affect the way she views herself, particularly in relation to other young people her age?

4. How does religion and God play a role in this story? Are the two distinct at any points? Does their role in Maddie?s life shift after her father passes away?

5. Maddie?s mother tells her to ?keep family matters private? (page 1). How does this affect Maddie?s personal life and/or her ability to connect with people? How does this same directive affect how Maddie?s mum lives her life?

6. At times, Maddie doesn?t feel like she meets the expectations of her English environment or her Ghanaian culture. Have you or anyone you know struggled with a similar conflict?

7. Maddie is often the only Black person in the room at both of her jobs with CGT and OTP. This environment makes Maddie hyperaware of things like her hair or the food she eats. How does Maddie?s race, gender and culture affect her experience in the workplace? Compare and contrast Katherine?s and Maddie?s experiences in the workplace.

8. On page 14, Maddie explains that CGT hired her when they were focusing on ?reflecting diversity.? Months into the job, Maddie realized that the only other Black people she worked with ?were mainly front of house, serving staff.? What are your thoughts on this observation, and how companies in general treat diversity in the workplace? Do you notice any performative diversity in the story or in your own life?

9. On page 167, Shu says, ?You don?t want a boyfriend who isn?t racist, Maddie. You need a boyfriend who is actively anti-racist.? How does Maddie experience the lower layers of the lasagna of racism --- like microaggression and unconscious bias --- in her dating experience? What about within the workplace? In your own life, what steps, if any, do you take toward being anti-racist, and why is it so important to do so?

10. Maddie?s brother and mum have been absent most of her life. Discuss their family dynamic, and how secrets and guilt play a role in it. How do Maddie, James and their mum each deal with regret, and does this affect the way they choose to live, moving forward?

11. Maddie explains that she and her dad never spoke to each other much, but they clearly have a deep, genuine relationship. Why do you believe they are so close? What do you think brings them together?

12. To what extent does Maddie?s relationship with her mother evolve over the course of the novel? What do you imagine for their dynamic in the future?

13. How does Maddie grieve the loss of her father? How does her perspective on how she?s ?supposed? to grieve evolve over the story? Does Maddie grieve the loss of her father at all before his death? What role does Nia?s and Shu?s friendship play?

14. The author dedicates the novel ?For Dad.? For both Maddie and Jessica George, writing proves to be an emotional

outlet. How does knowing that Maddie?s experiences are partially inspired by Jessica?s own loss of her father affect your understanding of the story? What kinds of outlets have you turned to in your own instances of grief or heartbreak?

15. How did this book impact you, and what emotions did it leave you with?

Author Bio

Jessica George is the *New York Times* bestselling author of MAAME and LOVE BY THE BOOK. She was born and raised in London to Ghanaian parents and studied English Literature at the University of Sheffield.

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