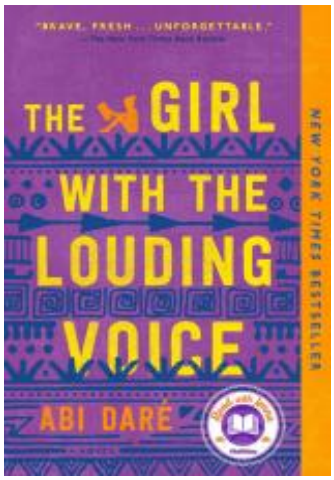
The Girl with the Louding Voice

by Abi Daré



About the Book

A powerful, emotional debut novel told in the unforgettable voice of a young Nigerian woman who is trapped in a life of servitude but determined to get an education so that she can escape and choose her own future.

Adunni is a 14-year-old Nigerian girl who knows what she wants: an education. This, her mother has told her, is the only way to get a ?louding voice? --- the ability to speak for herself and decide her own future. But instead, Adunni's father sells her to be the third wife of a local man who is eager for her to bear him a son and heir.

When Adunni runs away to the city, hoping to make a better life, she finds that the only other option before her is servitude to a wealthy family. As a yielding daughter, a subservient wife and a powerless slave, Adunni is told, by words and deeds, that she is nothing.

But while misfortunes might muffle her voice for a time, they cannot mute it. And when she realizes that she must stand up not only for herself, but for other girls, for the ones who came before her and were lost, and for the next girls, who will inevitably follow; she finds the resolve to speak, however she can --- in a whisper, in song, in broken English --- until she is heard.

Discussion Guide

1. What do you think Adunni?s comparison of her mother to a rose flower (?a yellow and red and purple rose with shining leafs?) symbolizes? She also remembers her mother having a sweet smell like a rosebush. Why do you think she compares her mother to this particular type of flower? And how do you think our five senses play into our memories?

2. Adunni dreads her upcoming marriage to Morufu, but her friend Enitan is genuinely excited for Adunni, believing that her life will be improved after the wedding. Why do you think there is a disconnect between Adunni?s and Enitan?s

points of view? Can you draw any comparisons between cultural attitudes toward marriage in America and Nigeria?

3. Compare and contrast Khadija with the glimpses we get of Adunni?s mother. How were their lives similar or different from one another?

4. Why do you think Bamidele doesn?t return for Khadija? What do you think he whispers in her ear before leaving her for the last time?

5. Why do you think Adunni is closer with Kayus than Born-boy? What is it that makes their sibling bond so deep?

6. Why do you think bathing is such an important symbol in Nigerian folklore and in the novel? Discuss the similarities and differences between the bath that Kadija believes will save her and her baby?s life, and the bath that Ms. Tia?s mother-in-law believes will help her get pregnant.

7. Adunni has dreamed of leaving Ikati and seeing ?the big, shining city? of Lagos since she was young, though when she actually arrives it?s not under the circumstances she envisioned. How do you think her perception of the city changes once she is there? And how does her experience of Lagos relate to Big Madam?s or Ms. Tia?s? Compare and contrast the ways all three women view the city and experience the opportunities it offers.

8. Though they have dissimilar personalities, are not close in age, and have lived very different lives by the time they meet, Adunni and Ms. Tia have an instant connection that deepens over time. What do you think it is that drew each of them to the other? How do you think their friendship will evolve after the book is over? Will they continue to be friends even though their worlds seem incompatible?

9. What is the significance of the moment when Ms. Tia turns to look at Adunni right after the bath ceremony is over? Why do you think it affects Adunni so strongly?

10. After Ms. Tia?s bath, Adunni wants ?to ask, to scream, why are the women in Nigeria seem to be suffering for everything more than the men?? What specific moments have brought her to this question? What do the events of the book reveal about cultural attitudes toward women?

11. Adunni remembers her mother saying, ?Adunni, you must do good for other peoples, even if you are not well, even if the whole world around you is not well.? How do you think this factors into the choices she makes and her dreams for the future?

12. The first time Big Madam hears Adunni singing she slaps her and says, ?This is not your village. Here we behave like sane people.? Later, when Adunni is comforting Big Madam after she has forced Big Daddy out of her house, Big Madam wants Adunni to sing to her. Discuss the significance of that moment. Why do you think Big Madam?s attitude toward Adunni?s singing has changed?

13. At first, knowing and reading English is a source of pride for Adunni. But later, she says, ?English is only a language, like Yoruba and Igbo and Hausa. Nothing about it is so special, nothing about it makes anybody have sense.? What do you think she means by this?

14. How do you feel about the ending? Do you think it is a happy ending for Adunni? Despite the fact that she gets to follow her dream of returning to school, there are bittersweet moments, too --- she must contend with the fact that she?s left her family behind, her husband might have stopped supporting her family, and the mystery of what happened to Rebecca remains partially unsolved. How do you think these loose ends will affect Adunni as she grows into adulthood?

15. After embarking on this journey with Adunni, what does a ?louding voice? mean to you and how does one achieve it? What sort of future do you imagine for Adunni?

Author Bio

Abi Daré is the author of THE GIRL WITH THE LOUDING VOICE, which was a *New York Times* bestseller, a #ReadWithJenna "Today Show" book club pick, and an Indie Next pick. She grew up in Lagos, Nigeria, and went on to study law at the University of Wolverhampton and has an MSc in International Project Management from Glasgow Caledonian University as well as an MA in Creative Writing at Birkbeck, University of London. Abi lives in Essex, UK with her husband and two daughters, who inspired her to write her debut novel. AND SO I ROAR is her second novel.

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