



I ♥ READING

I have been reading *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

My Kindle is broken. It won't charge. This is a disaster. I have a very specific and quite trashy taste in fiction, specifically historical fiction with strong female characters, and finding this kind of nonsense in actual bookshops is not always easy. As a result I am forced to wander the disturbingly irregular mountains of best-sellers in Waterstones. I begrudgingly selected "Americanah" despite the fact that it has a quote from the Mail on Sunday on the front (who I don't trust) and that the descriptions of the Nigerian civil war in the last Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie book I read (*Half a Yellow Sun*) brought me out in cold sweats on the tube. It's possible that I was heavily influenced by the fact that Adichie's TED talk was sampled by Beyonce on *Flawless*. If it's good enough for Queen Bey...

On my commute over the next few days it takes me several attempts to get started, probably because I was holding the story at arm's length, aware that it wasn't going to be a happy one. Fortunately, all at once I got into the flow of her writing and I found myself carried away by the strength of her images. Adichie writes whole people with gaping flaws who are not always likeable but are immensely knowable. Her descriptions of Nigeria are so strong that you can feel the heat even on a February commute through East London, but it's the contrasting perspectives that she is able to embody that make her writing so interesting. She can speak with a voice which is convincingly white, anglo-saxon protestant and switch with ease to the "non-american black", the blog that her protagonist writes throughout the book.

This is a book about love, race and culture clash. I'd highly recommend it to anybody but if you are interested in topics surrounding race and gender then this is an essential read. Don't put it down until you've made it through the first chapter and then let it carry you the rest of the 477 pages. It's worth it. I promise.