

YOUR TOMORROW

WAS

TODAY

A Novel

OYINDAMOLA
DOSUNMU



Your Tomorrow Was Today – A Literary Debut by Oyindamola Dosunmu
Reading and Book Club Guide

1. Diverse philosophies of womanhood play a significant role in this novel. For Omo, womanhood signifies a sacrifice for family and society, while Karen may hold a different belief. How does Karen's philosophy evolve through her experiences compared to Omo's perspective? What are your thoughts on womanhood?
2. Discuss the character of Tunde Awoniyi. Tunde navigates complicated relationships with Karen and Stefanie. How do his interactions with them reveal deeper themes in the novel?
3. The women in the novel navigate unique challenges shaped by their circumstances and beliefs. How do their experiences compare to women's roles, struggles, and perspectives in your community? What broader themes arise from these similarities and differences?
4. Karen's final decision regarding Tunde and her estrangement from Omo mark significant points in her journey. What aspects resonated with you, and which were challenging to empathize with? How do these decisions shape your understanding of Karen as a character?
5. Saheed's presence in the novel serves a purpose: a representation of societal issues or an embodiment of personal struggles. How do you interpret his role, and how does it reflect real-life experiences or the people you have encountered?
6. Uloma's presence in the novel serves a purpose: a representation of societal issues or an embodiment of personal struggles. How do you interpret her role, and how does it reflect real-life experiences or the people you have encountered?
7. Omo's question, "Who do I belong to?" speaks to the complexities of womanhood. How does this question reflect her journey? How does it resonate with modern women juggling personal identity and external expectations?

8. Karen's visit to the clinic in Magodo represents a pivotal moment in her journey. How does her decision reflect the broader conversation surrounding a government's role in reproductive rights? What does her experience reveal about agency, societal expectations, and the interaction of personal and political choices?

9. Discuss the theme of power within the socio-cultural context of this novel. How do various characters interact with power in their environments? What does the story imply about power and its effects in real-life interactions?

10. Sisterhood and the role of the firstborn daughter in this novel highlight deep familial expectations. What is your perspective on how these roles shape individual identities? In what ways do these roles reflect broader societal expectations of modern women in different aspects of life?

Join the dialogue on Goodreads and StoryGraph!

We'd love to hear your thoughts—whether it's a lengthy reflection, a favorite line, or a moment that stayed with you. Join the conversation on Goodreads, StoryGraph, and other book lover sites, and help us keep Karen's story alive through dialogue.

A Note from the Author

Hello,

Thank you for taking the time to follow Karen's story. Your support means a lot to me—until we meet again, dear friend.

Love,

Oyindamola.

Cultural Glossary

This story moves through places, languages, and expressions rooted in Nigerian life and the vast African diaspora. The glossary below offers brief context for some of the words and phrases that appear in the book. It's not exhaustive, but a companion for curiosity as you read and discuss.

“Chimo! Chai” — Igbo expressions of shock, sympathy, or distress.

“Food dey?” — Pidgin English for “Is there food?”

“If to say” — Pidgin English meaning “If not for...” or “If only...”

“Kedu ka I mere” — Igbo for “How are you?” or “How are you doing?”

“Ko buru, eezz okay” — “Ko buru” means “No worries” in Yoruba; “eezz okay” reflects a Yoruba-accented “It’s okay.”

“Kpuchie onu” — Igbo for “Shut up.”

“Make we dey go” — Pidgin English for “Let’s be on our way.”

“Na them invite me, na me dey wait.” — Pidgin English for “They invited me, yet I’m the one waiting.”

“No be the same Nigeria we dey?” — Pidgin English for “Aren’t we in the same Nigeria?”

“No vex” — Pidgin English for “Don’t be angry,” used sincerely or sarcastically.

“The guy dey craze” — Pidgin English for “The man is crazy.”

“Wetin be her name?” — Pidgin English for “What is her name?”

“You dey follow Kazeem talk?” — Pidgin English for “You’re speaking with Kazeem?”

A–Z entries

Abi — A tag question used to confirm agreement, similar to “right?”

Abeg — “Please” in Pidgin English.

Ahan — An expression showing annoyance or excitement.

Amin — “Amen” in Islamic prayer.

Anambra — A southeastern Nigerian state, primarily Igbo, with Awka as the capital.

Anuofia — Igbo insult meaning “fool.”

Arondizuogu — A prominent Igbo kingdom in Imo State, southeastern Nigeria.

Ashawo — A derogatory term meaning “prostitute.”

Biko — “Please” in Igbo.

Chi — God, spirit, or personal deity/ancestor in Igbo cosmology.

Danfo — A yellow public bus widely used for transportation in Lagos.

Efufulefu — Igbo insult meaning “failure” or “traitor.”

Ehen — An expression used to show realization, impatience, excitement, or emphasis.

Ehya — An expression of sympathy or agreement.

Ewoo — An expression of anguish, shock, or mourning.

Garri — Dried, ground cassava flakes, a staple food often eaten with soups or soaked in water.

Haba — An expression of disappointment or mild reprimand.

Ikoyi Club — A prestigious private club in Lagos, associated with wealth, influence, and high society.

Kai — An exclamation expressing regret, surprise, or frustration.

Kaftan — An ankle-length garment popular in West Africa, often made from lace, cotton, or polyester.

Kedu — “What” in Igbo.

Kizz Daniel — A Nigerian musician known for several hit songs, including “Twe Twe.”

Lagos — The most populous state in western Nigeria, known as the “Center of Excellence.” A major economic and entertainment hub, predominantly Yoruba, with Ikeja as the capital.

Mba — “No” in Igbo.

Mi — “My” in Yoruba.

Nawa — An expression of surprise, disbelief, or mild frustration.

Ndo — An Igbo expression used to convey sympathy.

Nko — A conversational particle used when asking follow-up questions.

NYSC — National Youth Service Corps, a mandatory one-year service program for Nigerian graduates.

Ogwa Town — A community in Edo State, southern Nigeria, home to the Esan people.

Sha — A casual expression added after a statement for emphasis or softness.

Shey — A conversational particle used when asking questions.

Sisi — A term for a young woman or damsel.

Tufia — “God forbid” in Igbo.

Ummuna — “Elders” in Igbo; senior members of an extended family who offer guidance and wisdom.

Wahala — Trouble, stress, or a problematic situation.

Oyindamola's Grilled Catfish (Nigerian Style)

Try the dish Stephanie and Tunde enjoyed at the Taste of Naija restaurant in Chapter Three.

Ingredients

Whole fresh catfish — not chopped; cleaned with the guts removed

Habanero or Scotch bonnet peppers — use as many as your spice tolerance allows (I love spicy, so I use two or three!)

One long red bell pepper

Red onion

Vegetable or olive oil — choose a neutral oil so it doesn't overpower the fish.

Salt

Thyme

Curry powder

Seasoning cubes or bouillon

Paprika

Bay leaf (optional, for days when you feel like a chef)

Instructions

- **Prepare the pepper base**

Blend or finely chop the peppers and onions with a bit of water. Pour into a pan over low–medium heat and cook until the excess water evaporates. Add a small amount of oil; remember, this is a marinade, not a stew. Stir in your seasonings and let the mixture simmer for about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and allow the sauce to cool.

- **Prep the fish**

Wash the catfish thoroughly, then pat it completely dry with a paper towel or a clean cloth. In a bowl, mix a little oil with the seasoning, then rub it all over the fish. Make small slits along the sides so the seasoning can seep in.

- **Marinate**

Once the pepper sauce has cooled, rub it generously over the fish. I like adding some chopped onions for an earthy flavor. Optional: let the fish rest in the fridge for about 30 minutes to marinate.

- **Bake or grill**

Preheat your oven or grill to 350°F. Wrap the fish tightly in foil and bake or grill for 15 minutes. Unwrap, drain any excess liquid, and check that the inside is soft and flaky. For extra crispness, broil for 2–3 minutes.

Cooking time may vary slightly depending on the size of your fish.

- **Serve**

Enjoy with soaked garri, coleslaw, fried yams, plantains, or potatoes.