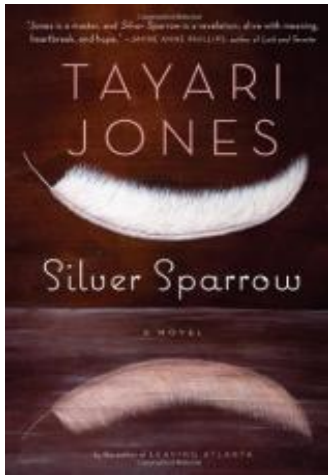


# Silver Sparrow

by Tayari Jones

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## About the Book

With the opening line of **Silver Sparrow**, "My father, James Witherspoon, is a bigamist," author Tayari Jones unveils a breathtaking story about a man's deception, a family's complicity, and the two teenage girls caught in the middle.

Set in a middle-class neighborhood in Atlanta in the 1980s, the novel revolves around James Witherspoon's two families --- the public one and the secret one. When the daughters from each family meet and form a friendship, only one of them knows they are sisters. It is a relationship destined to explode. This is the third stunning novel from an author deemed "one of the most important writers of her generation" (the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*).

## Discussion Guide

1. Gwen tells Dana that they have an advantage over Laverne and Chaurisse because they know the truth. Is this true?
2. Is it possible to have a healthy relationship that is not monogamous?
3. Should Gwen have married Raleigh when she had the chance?
4. There is so much talk these days about fatherhood --- contrasting the deadbeat dad with the Bill Cosby-type father. How do you evaluate James Witherspoon, who is both?
5. Both Dana and Chaurisse have relationships with older boys who don't necessarily treat them well. What do you think accounts for this?
6. Is Laverne's life better or worse for having married James? What about Gwen? Does James love Laverne or Gwen?

7. Tayari Jones often writes about the way real people interact with history, for example, Gwen's feelings about the death of Martin Luther King. How have you interacted with history? How did it affect your personal story?
8. Does Chaurisse have an obligation to be 'sisterly' toward Dana once she learns they are related? By that token, does Dana have any obligation to Chaurisse, as a friend or as a sister?
9. Why do you think Raleigh is so loyal to James?
10. What is the role of economics in this story?
11. Much of the book is set in Laverne's salon, the Pink Fox. How does hair figure into this story? Do you think your own hair has impacted your life? For better or for worse?
12. Was Gwen wrong to confront Laverne?
13. Which of the characters was your favorite? Which characters would you like to know more about?
14. Who do you think sent the mysterious postcard at the end of the book?
15. Could this story have had a happy ending?

## Author Bio

Tayari Jones is the author of the novels *LEAVING ATLANTA*, *THE UNTELLING*, *SILVER SPARROW* and *AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE*. Her writing has appeared in *Tin House*, *The Believer*, *The New York Times* and *Callaloo*. A member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, she has also been a recipient of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, Lifetime Achievement Award in Fine Arts from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, United States Artist Fellowship, NEA Fellowship and Radcliffe Institute Bunting Fellowship. *SILVER SPARROW* was named a #1 Indie Next Pick by booksellers in 2011, and the NEA added it to its Big Read Library of classics in 2016.

Jones is a graduate of Spelman College, University of Iowa and Arizona State University. An Associate Professor in the MFA program at Rutgers-Newark University, she is spending the 2017-18 academic year as the Shearing Fellow for Distinguished Writers at the Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

## Critical Praise

"An amazing, amazing read."? Jennifer Weiner on NBC's 'The Today Show'?

"A love story . . . full of perverse wisdom and proud joy."? *O, The Oprah Magazine*

"Immensely pleasurable . . . empathetic and provocative."? *MORE*

"Compelling."? *Vogue*

"Fascinating."? *Ebony*

"If your mom is a fan of emotionally charged morality tales (and whose mom isn't?) she's going to devour *Silver Sparrow* in a single sitting."? *Essence*

"Absorbing . . . Jones writes dialogue that is realistic and sparkling, with an intuitive sense of how much to reveal and when."? *Washington Post*

"Astonishing . . . Impossible to put down."? *Los Angeles Times*

"Nakedly honest . . . dazzlingly charged."? *Atlanta Journal Constitution*

"A recipe for great book club discussions."? *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"Tense, layered and evocative."? *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Beautifully written, **Silver Sparrow** will break your heart."? *Brooklyn Rail*

"Funny and sharp, haunting and heartbreaking."? *The Root*

"[Jones] is fast defining middle-class black Atlanta the way Cheever did **Westchester**."? *Village Voice*

"Jones beautifully evokes Atlanta in the 1980s while creating gritty imperfect characters whose pain lingers in the reader's hearts."? *Kirkus*

"A graceful and shining work about finding the truth."? *Library Journal*, starred review

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