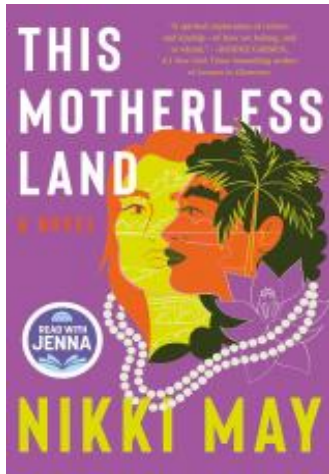


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# This Motherless Land

by Nikki May

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## About the Book

From the acclaimed author of WAHALA comes a vibrant (Charmaine Wilkerson) decolonial retelling of MANSFIELD PARK, exploring identity, culture, race and love.

Quiet Funke is happy in Nigeria. She loves her art teacher mother, her professor father, and even her annoying little brother (most of the time). But when tragedy strikes, she's sent to England, a place she knows only from her mother's stories. To her dismay, she finds the much-lauded estate dilapidated, the food tasteless, the weather gray. Worse still, her mother's family are cold and distant. With one exception: her cousin, Liv.

Free-spirited Liv has always wanted to break free of her joyless family. She becomes fiercely protective of her little cousin, and her warmth and kindness give Funke a place to heal. The two girls grow into adulthood the closest of friends.

But the choices their mothers made haunt Funke and Liv, and when a second tragedy occurs, their friendship is torn apart. Against the long shadow of their shared family history, each woman will struggle to chart a path forward, separated by country, misunderstanding and ambition.

Moving between Somerset and Lagos over the course of two decades, THIS MOTHERLESS LAND is a sweeping examination of identity, culture, race and love that asks how we find belonging and if a family's generational wrongs can be righted.

## Discussion Guide

1. *THIS MOTHERLESS LAND* portrays grief in many forms --- whether it be due to death, homesickness or estrangement. What are some ways that the characters show and cope with grief? How are they indicative of different cultural norms?
2. Four films --- *Grease*, *Top Gun*, *The Bodyguard* and *Titanic* --- are featured as openers for each of the book sections. What did you think of this device as a way of showing the passage of time? What films would you choose to mark key moments in your life?
3. In some West African cultures, the term 'bush' is used pejoratively to indicate someone unsophisticated or uneducated. What does the use of this word tell us about Funke's father and his attitudes at the beginning of the book? Are there any similar words in your culture or language?
4. When Funke is sent to England, she brings her mother's pearls, hair roller and photograph, her brother's action figure and newspaper cutting, and a bottle cap from the car crash. If you had to suddenly leave home, which sentimental items would be the most important for you to bring?
5. What are some indicators of wealth that we see in Lagos? What are some different ones in England? Were there any status symbols that surprised you in either place?
6. The theme of belonging plays a major role in the book, especially for Funke/Kate, who finds it's possible to belong to two cultures while also belonging nowhere. Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? How did you cope?
7. Liv is extremely traumatized by Clinton Bonner's scam and the threat of her naked photos being published. Years later, she sees Madonna posing nude on the cover of a magazine. How has the conversation around women's naked photos changed since Liv's adolescence to now? How has it stayed the same?
8. When Funke sees the Nigerian women's relay team win bronze at the 1992 Summer Olympics, she is witnessing an important moment in women's sports history --- Mary Onyali (who crossed the finish line for Nigeria in that relay) would go on to be the first ever Nigerian to compete in five consecutive Olympic games. Why do you think Nikki May chose this moment to highlight? What does it mean for Funke to see this take place?
9. When Liv visits Lagos, she realizes there are different ways to travel. While Kunle's family encourages her to stick with familiar foods, places and activities, Liv attempts to experience the 'real Lagos.' What are some ways to have an authentic encounter in a place that is foreign to you, and how does Liv try to do it? What are important principles to keep in mind when you are a tourist like Liv?
10. Nikki May's inspiration for this book came from Jane Austen's *MANSFIELD PARK*. What similarities and differences can you draw between both books? What has changed, for women in particular, since the 1800s, and what has stayed the same?
11. Were you satisfied with the book's ending and where all the characters ended up? Was there anyone you wanted a different ending for? Did anyone's fate surprise you?

## Author Bio

Born in Bristol and raised in Lagos, Nikki May is Anglo-Nigerian. Her critically acclaimed debut novel, WAHALA, won the Comedy Women In Print New Voice Prize, was longlisted for the Goldsboro Glass Bell Award and the Diverse Books Award, and is being turned into a major BBC TV drama series. Nikki lives in Dorset with her husband, two standard Schnauzers and way too many books. THIS MOTHERLESS LAND is her second novel.

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### **This Motherless Land**

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**Publication Date:** October 29, 2024

**Genres:** Fiction, Women's Fiction

**Hardcover:** 352 pages

**Publisher:** Mariner Books

**ISBN-10:** 0063084295

**ISBN-13:** 9780063084292