



## Questions for Ada

*Ijeoma Umebinyuo*

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The artistry of QUESTIONS FOR ADA defies words, embodying the pain, the passion, and the power of love rising from the depths of our souls. Ijeoma Umebinyuo's poetry is a flower that will blossom in the spirit of every reader as she shares her heart with raw candor. From lyrical lushness to smoky sensuality to raw truths, this tome of transforming verse is the book every woman wants to write but can't until the broken mirrors of their lives have healed. In this gifted author's own words—"I am too full of life to be half-loved." A bold celebration of womanhood.

## Questions for Ada Details

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Author : Ijeoma Umebinyuo

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## From Reader Review Questions for Ada for online ebook

### Zainab Sulaiman says

This book. This work. It's the third book of poetry I've read in the last two years. I like it a lot better than the other two. Mainly because I felt like the poems had a flow. At times it felt like I was reading a short story collection. It felt like I was reading the thoughts of women at a gathering, a healing space/circle. But one woman is speaking life into them all. I held my chest so many times reading this. A lot of tears too. I could relate to so many poems. Some of my favorites are below. I recommend this for any WOC, especially African women living on the continent and in the diaspora. I'm sure many women will find their feelings and emotions they previously could not explain or make sense of so eloquently described. Well done, Ijeoma.

1.

the happiness when it comes,  
when it stays,  
my goodness it makes you look so beautiful

come closer.

2.

you are living  
you are breathing  
perhaps a bit hurt  
perhaps a bit pained  
but  
you are breathing  
you are breathing  
and that is enough to wake  
the angels still living  
in your chest.

3. (I loved this prior to getting the book. Saw it online somewhere)

You must let the pain visit.  
You must allow it teach you.  
You must not allow it overstay.

4.

Tell me:  
now you are here,  
will you either or bloom?

Too many favorites but these stuck out to me today.

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### Francesca Forrest says

This poetry collection is breathtakingly beautiful. Ijeoma Umebinyuo is writing for women, about the

experience of being a woman. The poems are about self-worth and self loathing, about love, about trauma, about family. Some are about Nigeria; some are about being a student abroad. There are poems so short that you can hold a whole one under your tongue and smuggle it across international lines, and others that are longer and unfold a whole story.

Here's a very short one that I love:

*Stay  
let me tell you  
how salt fell in love*

*one day,  
salt found water  
and just would not let go.*

--Ocean

Here's a slightly longer one:

*Your lover sped away  
leaving tire marks on your skin.  
You have resolved to eat  
yesterday for breakfast.*

*I watch you gather your memories  
like firewood,  
warming yourself  
for yet another lonely night.*

There are also about mothers and daughters:

*You are your mother's amen  
to all her prayers  
the calm to her trembling soul  
she gathers your happiness  
rubbing it on her skin  
till she begins to glow*

Another, "Glory"

*Before the year ends  
teach yourself five things  
your mother never taught you  
then, teach yourself five things  
you want to teach your daughter*

Let me leave you with one about homesickness, called "aching hearts//missing home"

*At the embassy,  
they never warned us about days  
america will feel so lonely,  
we will gather our mother tongue  
hastily swallowing words  
that remind us of home to keep warm*

I'm going to treasure this book, and I look forward to many more poems and poetry collections by Ijeoma Umebinyuo.

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### **Sarah says**

I found her most powerful quotes were when she did not hide behind imagery and comes out and says what she truly feels (like in Diaspora Blues, First Generation and Homeland, so beautiful). But the writing seemed to me like a watered down (slightly cliche) mashup of Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche and Warsan Shire. Some of the lines and organization seemed forced and repetitive (she says thunder in veins a lot), which is a shame because she covers such important topics and it takes away from a lot of the feeling she's trying to portray. In the first half of the book I really wanted her to excavate more about the cultural ramifications and reasons for all she talks about. She gets into that in the second half of the book a little more, which I definitely appreciated. For the most part though, her writing is pretty raw which is what kept me reading until the end.

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### **Lauren says**

wonderful book of poetry.

You must let the pain visit.  
You must allow it to teach you.  
You must not allow it to overstays.

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### **Sania says**

This was my first poetry book. I did really enjoy it and I especially think this is very important and empowering for young black woman!

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### **Preethi Krishnan says**

What can I say, I am in love. With a pain, she says I should not let overstays.  
This collection of poems is breathtakingly beautiful. How can someone write so beautifully about pain, healing, about diaspora blues, and of course, about mother?

*I beat my heart  
till it became unconscious  
last night*

*This morning,  
my mother  
showed me our scars;  
  
multiple wounds  
on her body.*

She made me cry, laugh, and chuckle, all at the same time. She is lovely. Reading her is like listening to a friend who cares.

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### **Jenna says**

Breathtakingly beautiful -- I love this collection of poems! Ijeoma Umebinyuo writes with so much feeling and strength and rawness and realness. The poems in "Questions for Ada" make you ache even as they make you hope, they take you to the heart of pain, lead you through darkness and out into light and self acceptance, out into healing and self-love. Most of the poems are brief, but what power is in their brevity! I hope to see another collection from Ms. Umebinyuo soon; in the meantime, I'm sure this collection will stay with me for quite awhile.

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### **Sookie says**

Though the poetry collection, *Questions for Ada*, can display repetitive pattern of bruise, bondage and love with every page turn, Ijeoma Umebinyuo doesn't linger. Most of the poems here are short and brutal. Some poems can be read in time that takes to pull elbow back and deliver a punch; in both cases, the bruising and the aches arrive at the same time. Ijeoma Umebinyuo's themes vary between colonialism, cultural exploitation, alienation in foreign country, diaspora, mother, daughter, lover, father, sister, woman, girl, aunties, grandmothers, sex, violence, abuse, emotions, tragedy, power, self love, care, pride, independence, education, nature, and so forth. The style is often visceral and sometimes tongue in cheek, Ijeoma's writing is anger in poetic form.

### **Survival:**

*I have always wondered  
how women who carry war  
inside their bones  
still grow flowers  
between their teeth.*

**Nne:**

*forcing manhood  
on boys with skin  
still made of  
silk and mother's love  
is cruel.*

**The Clinic:**

*Be kind to your body,  
it has won so many wars.*

**Bad Habits:**

*I have left poems  
on his skin  
let her kiss him  
and  
read me to him.*

**Alone:**

*so many broken children  
living in grown bodies  
mimicking adult lives.*

**Irony:**

*they invite you to come view artifacts  
stolen from your ancestors in their museums  
as their "experts" explain your ancient Benin kingdom*

**Invisible:**

*You must let the pain visit.  
You must allow it teach you.  
You must not allow it overstay.*

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**Books & Rhymes says**

In 'Questions for Ada', Ijeoma Umebinyuo is bold and unflinching in calling for better treatment of women in society.

Ijeoma holds a mirror up to the many agents whose complicity sustains patriarchy, misogyny, oppression and subjugation of women.

This collection demands active intellectual & emotional engagement from the reader. Some of the poems will make you laugh out loud, gasp in shock or in one case, question your moral compass.

I'm forever grateful to my dear friend who saw it surprise me with this book as a birthday gift.

It is a worthy addition to all bookshelves.

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### **Chipo says**

I've become familiar with Ijeoma's work through her social media platforms and Tedx talk. Also this book was quite popular amongst my friends. So, how to rate this ?

If it was possible I would rate the first half of this book 2/5 stars and the rest 4/5 stars. So 3 stars.

The first half read in that very familiar Rupi Kaur way I still haven't gotten around to liking. Outside of a handful of pieces, most of it was underwhelming for me and I guess I'm just not the target group.

I will leave it at that.

But the rest of the book read more like Warsan Shire's work in *Teaching my mother how to give birth* (which I loved!). It was the human experience. It was culture, being an immigrant, family and more. I found that it does more justice to her writing -which is good- has a wider audience, and isn't the exhaustingly repetitive narrative I find insufferable with most of the popular contemporary poetry.

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### **chloe says**

*"She was always a wildflower - even her sadness, like water, helped her grow."*

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### **Ije the Devourer of Books says**

Poignant and beautiful poetry.

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### **Amanda says**

So breathtaking I read it straight through twice. I'm sure I'll be rereading this when I'm heartbroken, when I need to be resilient, when I need to remind myself to be soft as well as tough, when I need to forgive myself.

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## artemis says

tw csa

“You lost cultures  
You lost languages  
You lost religions  
You lost it all in the fire  
that is colonisation  
so, do not apologise  
for owning every piece of you  
they could not take, break  
and claim as theirs.”

“Weight of sadness

You apologise for  
how you carry your  
mother’s loneliness  
quietly  
between your teeth.

You apologise for  
how you carry your  
father’s sins  
inside your blood.

You forgot  
how to carry yourself  
away from the histories  
that threatens to break you  
open, leaving you with grief  
and unbearable weight of emptiness.

Tell me, apart from the sadness  
thick as smog  
living inside your chest  
tell me the last time  
you held your face  
and saw love  
staring back at you.”

“When your body remembers,  
how do you carry her back into love?”

Usually when I review poetry, I just post a few of my favourite poems , and leave them to speak for

themselves. With 'Questions for Ada', however, I feel like the more I say, the less is said.

I had to read through this book slowly, as each poem touched my heart so deeply. This book, by a black woman who talks about colonialism, trauma and loving women. This book is perhaps one of the most important books in the world.

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### **Darkowaa says**

!!! REVIEW - <https://africanbookaddict.com/2017/05...>

Now THIS is how you write a poetry collection. 'Questions for Ada' is full of strength, vulnerability and pride. Every word in these poems is heavy with meaning and purpose. These poems show you that all your emotions are valid and must be felt. Some poetry collections feel lazy and words just seem to be thrown onto the pages. But 'Questions for Ada' is a collection that was carefully crafted with love and full awareness of self. I've dog-eared sooo many of the pages in this book because the poems just spoke to me. I found myself reflecting after reading a couple of poems at a time. I love when a piece of writing makes you reflect on your life/society and allows you to think about them critically.

I will definitely give this collection many more reads in the months and years to come.

'Questions for Ada' by Ijeoma Umebinyuo is beautiful work. I highly recommend everyone to savor these poems.

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