

The Revelation of Dionne Daphne

READING GROUP GUIDE

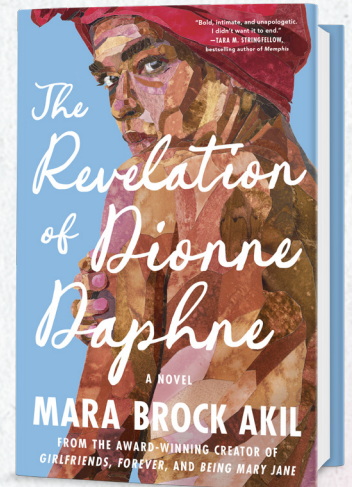
In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is sometimes necessary to reveal certain aspects of the storyline. If you have not finished reading, you may want to do so before reviewing this guide.

Opening Reflections

1. What were your overall impressions of the novel? What emotions stayed with you after finishing it?
2. Why do you think this story feels timely right now? Did anything in the book resonate with current

The Beginning

1. In the opening pages of *The Revelation of Dionne Daphne*, Dionne seems to be a woman who typically has it all together. What is revealed to be weighing her down?
2. What does Dionne desire for her future and how is her current reality a challenge to that desire?
3. On page 11 it reads: "I can feel someone's hot breath breathing down my neck; the stench of the breath lingers and reminds me of my own when I was a little girl, of milk and cookies and that other taste I could never get out of my mouth. I fight to disappear in the room, but then I hear her. A distant memory of myself, laughing at me now like this is just a game. The sound of her feels so close, it seems I could simply turn to my left and see her, actually catch her giggling with her hand muffling her mouth and her eyes filled with glee." What do you believe is happening with Dionne in this moment?
4. On page 15, why does Marlene seem to persist that Dionne must write down her ex-lovers? Over the course of this book, how does this one exercise bring Dionne revelations about her past?
5. Dionne's mother used to tell her, "You're broken when they see you fall" and, "Some days the work is just standing." How does Dionne act on this advice, and do you believe it's true for most women in the workplace?
6. On page 61, it reads: "Yet step by step, as I groom my body and my hair, I feel a growing sense of calm. I wash my hair and set it in rollers, get under my home dryer and wait patiently for the hour it takes, blow-dry the crown, until no one would ever imagine I'd been a wet, crying mess less than twelve hours ago." Throughout the book, how does Dionne use beauty to cover up her pain? How have you seen this occur in real life and why do you believe there's a level of safety in doing so?
7. In the midst of a life crisis, Dionne receives news of a possible promotion. Do you think asking to do the beauty concept presentation was the best move given everything she is facing? What would you have done?



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8. In Dionne's unplanned visit to Darren, we learn he was planning to propose. Discuss what we learn about Darren in Chapter 10. Do you believe his love for Dionne was genuine? How do you believe toxic masculinity culture impacted his own identity?
9. In Chapter 10, why do you think Dionne is able to open up to Dominic when he finds her on her bathroom floor that evening? And how does her demeanor shift thereafter?

Road Trips and Friendships

1. Were you surprised by Dionne's decision to take a road trip with Dominic? Why do you think this felt to her like the best route? Did you think it was a good idea from the start?
2. Over the early course on the road, Dionne wonders if she can trust Dominic and even has an accusatory outburst in Chapter 13. What do you think is happening with Dionne in these moments? Do you think her fear is valid? How does he respond?
3. On page 124, Farrah and Dionne have what seems to be the first fully honest conversation since Dionne's crisis. It reads: "'We've been best friends for over a decade,' she says, and I hear the hurt and fury building in her voice. 'And you're going through the biggest crisis of your life, and I find out from some boy? Are you for real? . . . You're like a sister to me.'" Why do you believe Dionne had a hard time sharing her truth with Farrah?
4. Let's discuss Farrah and Dionne's relationship. In what ways does Farrah hold space for Dionne that no one else does? What did the dynamics of their relationship make you think about the bond of sisterhood?
5. While having breakfast with Dominic at the diner after their first motel stay (page 135), Dionne shares that she'd like to adjust their plans and only visit her father in Detroit instead of confronting her mother

Facing the Past

1. Discuss Dionne's visit with her father in Detroit and her decision to return soon after leaving (Chapter 16 and 17). How did both parties handle it? What do you think could have been done differently?
2. Dionne shares earlier in the book that she felt a lightness after speaking her truth to Dominic and we see this after sharing with her father. Discuss the power in owning the truth of our past.
3. There is a glimmer of chemistry between Dionne and Dominic. What did you think would happen with this brimming chemistry? What do you hope happens for the future of these characters?
4. How has childhood trauma had an impact on Dionne's life and how do you think she is managing it? What does the book say about the effects of past trauma and what shocked you about Dionne's experience?
5. In Chapter 22, as Dionne makes it home to Kansas City and shares her truth with her family over breakfast, what did you make of her mother's response? How about Richard's? Who responded lovingly and what did you wish for that moment?
6. How does Dominic and Dionne's road trip end? Were you surprised by Dominic's actions?

The Aftereffects

1. In Chapter 26, Farrah shows up for Dionne in a way that exemplifies true sisterhood. In what ways does her presence allow Dionne to soften and more openly share her story?
2. We hear more about Dionne's generational family story as she confides in Farrah. We learn about the harm her grandparents may have caused and what might have affected her mother's story. Why might this be crucial to understanding what happened to Dionne and Deborah's role in it?
3. The Everyday Beauty project is a way for Dionne to capture a campaign all on her own for the magazine promotion consideration. Why do you think this is the beauty campaign she lands on? Do her own ideals of beauty evolve over the novel?
4. Owning and interrogating one's sexual agency is a complex journey and one that brings up many memories for Dionne, some positive and some negative. But when Farrah reminds her that not all her past loves were traumatic, she is able to reckon with the good of her past as well. What is the power of having an honest, safe witness to our stories?
5. As Dionne receives the results of her tests and returns to her home, her job, and her family, how has she

Major Themes

1. In what ways does history—personal, familial, or cultural—shape the characters' understanding of themselves and their freedom?
2. How does the story explore the tension between who we've been told we are and who we choose to become?
3. The title centers on "revelation." What revelations occur in the story? Which felt most transformative and why?
4. There's a deeper conversation around shame that is happening throughout the novel as Dionne wrestles with her past. How does her shame appear? And what did you take from her journey?
5. While *The Revelation of Dionne Daphne* is set in the 90s, there are many pertinent themes, such as childhood trauma, secrecy in Black families, a woman's sexual liberation, and family healing. Which themes stood out to you the most and why?
6. How does the story portray love alongside pain, betrayal, and distance? Did it change your understanding of what it means to love someone?
7. What do you think the novel is ultimately saying about truth—both the truths we hide and the ones we reveal?
8. What will you carry with you from Dionne's story?