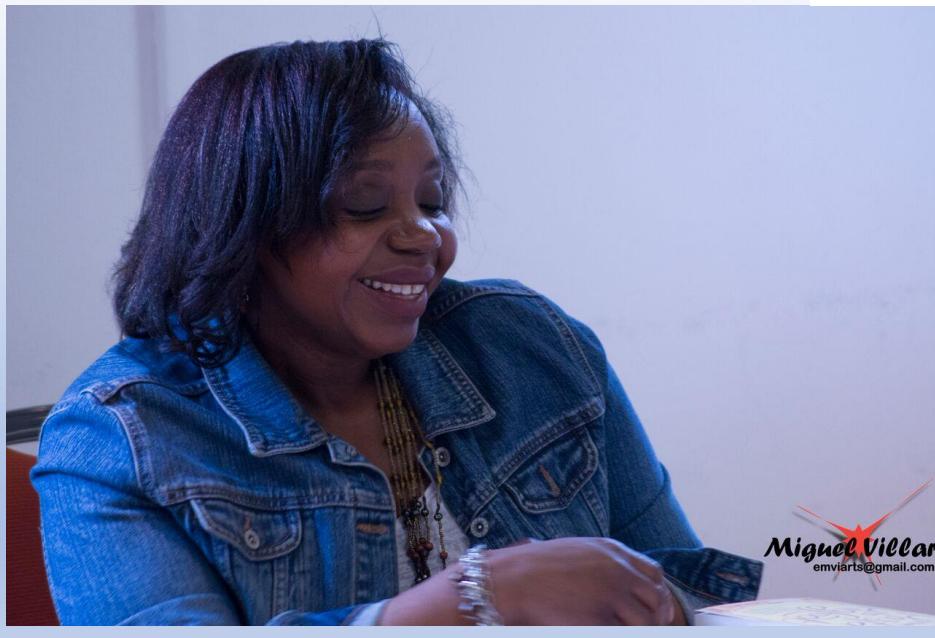


# FRANCES MENSAH WILLIAMS Readers'

# BOOK CLUB NEWSLETTER



ISSUE NO 10 | August 2020 |

## WELCOME DEAR READER!

A big hello to new members of our Readers' Club.

We'd love to get to know you. Where are you based? What do you do? What kind of books do you enjoy reading? Please write in and share your stories – and send us some pictures from your holiday if you're lucky enough to take a break!

I'm excited to hear what you are reading and your recommendations for books.

[Drop me a message with any other news you'd like to](#) share with the readers' Club.

Stay safe

Frances x



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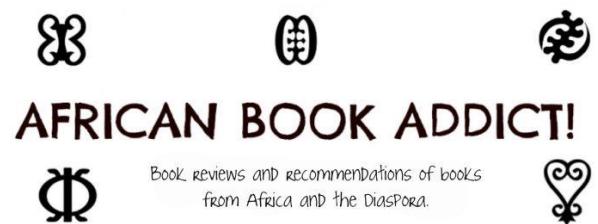
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# BOOKCHAT

## Chatting to the African Book Addict about books, culture, and mothers-in-law



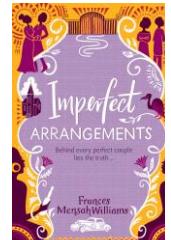
An excerpt from my interview with Darkowaa of the African Book Addict blog

**African Book Addict:** Why was it important for you to write this story that focuses on three best friends who struggle with the arrangements that define their relationships?

**Frances Mensah Williams:** I wanted to celebrate the importance of sister-friends and depict an honest account of the complexity of relationships, both romantic and between best friends. I wanted to explore the joy and pain of relationships, particularly with the added pressures of cultural expectations and norms, and to tell the story from the perspectives of both the women and the men in their lives.

“

I want to provoke a conversation about relationships, the realities of marriage, friendship, and sisterly love, and the male perspective on relationships



**ABA:** Did you learn anything about yourself while writing *Imperfect Arrangements*?

**FMW:** It was quite a challenge to keep the story moving at pace while ensuring that the characters grew into rounded and realistic people. The three women are very different to each other and, much as they love one another, they also experience the frustration and irritation that we all feel with our besties – loving them, but still keeping it honest and real! I think this is a story that no-one can read without examining their own relationships and friendships. Although the three couples face different challenges, their situations reflect what so many people grapple with: lies, betrayal, adultery, interfering families, stagnant careers, and more.

**ABA:** What would you like reader to take away from the story?

**FMW:** I want to take the reader on a roller coaster journey as they get to know the women and their partners. I want you to laugh, cry, grow very frustrated, and cheer! I want every reader to feel exactly what drives and motivates each of the six main protagonists, and to understand what makes them who they are and why they behave as they do.

I want *Imperfect Arrangements* to provoke a conversation about relationships in contemporary Ghana/Africa; the realities of marriage; friendship and sisterly love, and the Black male perspective on relationships. I also want readers to realise that love – whether it is love of self or love between friends or lovers – is the greatest gift of all.

Read the full interview [here](#)

# A Taste of Ghana

Ghana features in almost all my novels – and so does food!

I persuaded my friend, Ghanaian fusion chef and food writer [Patti Sloley](#), to share one of her favourite recipes with our Readers' Club: **Black Eye Beans with Caribbean Salt Fish**

Give the recipe a go at home and send in your pictures!

## INGREDIENTS:

2 onions, sliced  
4 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 scotch bonnet chilli, pricked, to taste  
2cm/1-inch ginger, peeled and grated  
2 tsp tomato puree  
400g/14oz tin chopped tomatoes  
Shavings of dawa dawa, optional  
1 tbsp dried prawn powder, optional  
3 guinea peppers, crushed, optional  
1 tsp grains of paradise, optional  
dash of Worcester sauce, optional  
2 boneless fillets, Caribbean salt fish  
1/2 tsp sugar  
400g/14oz cooked black eye beans  
small handful of fresh basil leaves  
oil to shallow fry  
rashers of smoked streaky bacon, grilled



*A Plate in the Sun and A Date with Plantain* are available on Amazon.

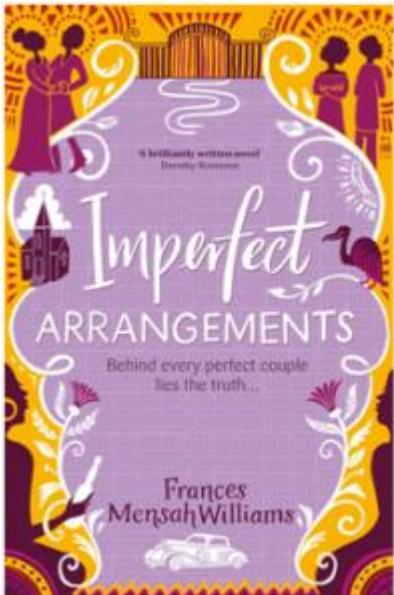
## METHOD:

1. Heat a heavy-based pan, add the oil, and fry the onions until golden.
2. Add the garlic, then the scotch bonnet chilli and ginger and leave to cook for a couple of minutes.
3. Stir in the tomato puree and chopped tomatoes.
4. Using a mandolin or knife, add shavings of dawa dawa (about a heaped teaspoon) and prawn powder.
5. Bruise the grains of selim and grains of paradise and tip into the pan with a dash of Worcester sauce.
6. Chop the salt fish and add to the sauce along with the sugar.
7. Stir in the cooked beans, taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning if you need to.
8. Add the basil, cover and leave to simmer for a further 10-15 minutes, by which time the sauce will have reduced and intensified in flavour.
9. Garnish with grilled bacon to serve.

Find more recipes and learn more at: [www.pattismenu.com](http://www.pattismenu.com) /instagram: pattismenu /facebook: Patti Sloley [facebook.com/pattismenu/](https://www.facebook.com/pattismenu/) / twitter: @PattiSloley

**LIS**TEN UP!

Prefer audio?



Listen to  
the introduction to  
*Imperfect Arrangements*  
[HERE](#)

## Q: ‘Where Can I Buy Your Books?’

A: [Click here](#) for a list of retailers and booksellers:

## YOUR BOOK REVIEW MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE...

If you have read and enjoyed *Imperfect Arrangements*, *From Pasta to Pigfoot* or *From Pasta to Pigfoot: Second Helpings*, please do me a massive favour and post a short review on Amazon.

Even a couple of lines explaining why you liked a book will encourage someone to give it a try. There are so many good books out there that a positive review can give a tremendous boost to writers like me.

Thank you!!

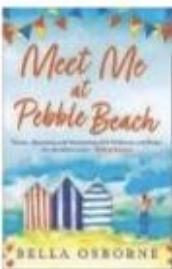
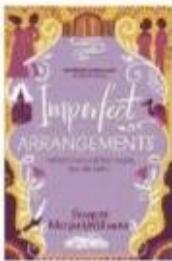
[Here's a helpful link to post your review on Amazon!\\*](#)

\* For readers outside the UK, please use your country Amazon.com website

Thank you,

## Waitrose Weekend!

Osborne, a seaside community comes to the rescue when a prank goes wrong. *Imperfect Arrangements* by Frances Mensah Williams, set in Ghana, tells the beautifully observed, intertwined stories of three couples, each trying to work out what a happy marriage means. Then there's *Cow Girl* by Kirsty Eyre, where a city girl leaves her job and a glamorous girlfriend to go home to save the family farm. Also recommended are Sue Moorcroft's *Summer on a Sunny Island*, a feelgood, will-they-won't-they set in Malta, and *Just Saying* by Sophie Ranald, a laugh-out-loud



As you can imagine, I was absolutely thrilled to see *Imperfect Arrangements* featured as a Recommended Read in Waitrose Weekend magazine in July.

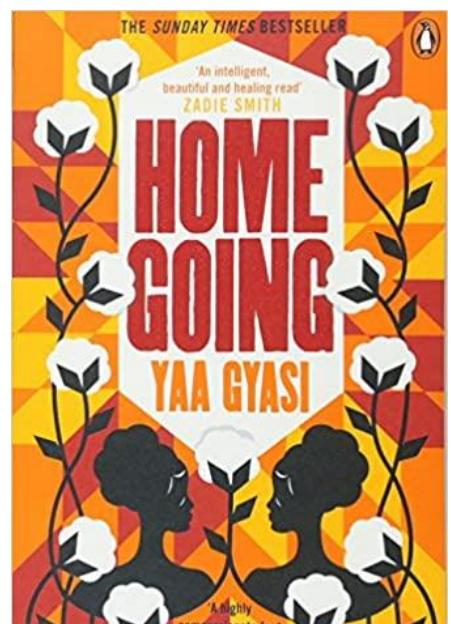
## WHAT I'M READING ...

### **Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi**

A fascinating book with a story that spans three continents and seven generations.

Effia and Esi are two sisters with different destinies. One is sold into slavery while the other becomes the wife of a slave trader. The consequences of their fates impact on their succeeding generations.

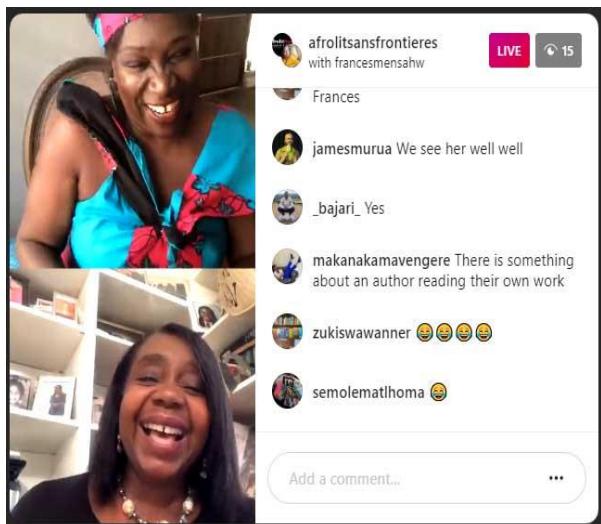
*Homegoing* is a powerful tale that takes the reader from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in Africa to the cotton-picking plantations of Mississippi; from the missionary schools of Ghana to the dive bars of Harlem; and right into the present day.



[Write in and share what's at the top of your reading list!](#)

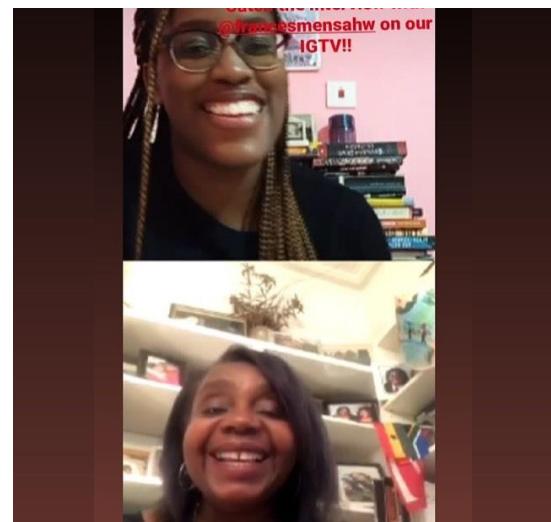
# EVENTS

I've had a busy few weeks! It was fantastic to go on African literary festival, Afrolit Sans Frontières. I also enjoyed talking about careers at the Raise Your Vibrations online retreat. It was also an absolute pleasure to be hosted on Instalive by the Writers Project of Ghana. THANK YOU all so much!!!

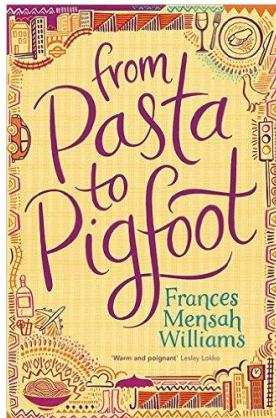


Following her YouTube review of *Imperfect Arrangements*, I also enjoyed a great chat with Sandra from the book blogging site Pull Down the Moon. Thanks, Sandra x **Watch our chat at:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TtTEepcsQs>



# Have you read...?



A novel set in London and Ghana following the mishaps of under-achieving PA, Faye Bonsu. On a mission to find love, a disastrous night out leaves pasta-fanatic Faye's romantic dreams in tatters and underscores her alienation from her African heritage. Leaving her cosy middle-class life in London's leafy Hampstead to find out what she's missing, Faye is whisked into the hectic social whirlpool of Ghana where she meets a host of characters. Transported into a world of food, fun and sun, and faced with choices she had never thought possible, Faye is forced to discover that no matter how far you travel, you can't find love until you find yourself.

★★★★★ 'Brilliant characters...very true to life and you got a glimpse into Ghanaian life and its culture.'

Pasta fanatic Faye Bonsu seems to have it all; a drop-dead gorgeous and successful boyfriend, a burgeoning career as an interior designer and a rent-free mansion in leafy Hampstead to call home. But with all her friends shifting into yummy mummy mode, a man who seems to have no desire to put a ring on it, tricky clients, and an attractive and very single boss, things are not quite as straightforward as they might appear. Hoping to escape from her suddenly complicated life and revive her wilting romance, Faye returns to sunny Ghana for what she hopes will be the time of her life. But life doesn't always offer second chances and when disaster strikes, she is forced to confront the biggest question of her life and to make a choice that comes with consequences she will have to live with forever.



[Paperback and ebook versions available online](#)

[Get in touch – I'd love to hear from you!](#)

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**Twitter:** [@FrancesmensahW](#)

**FB:** [facebook.com/francesmensahwilliams](#)

To unsubscribe from the FMW Readers' Book Club,  
[contact me](#)

**A final thought...**

**"Think before you speak. Read before you think."**

– Fran Lebowitz

