



Reading
Group
Guide

AUGUST LANE

a novel

REGINA BLACK

AUTHOR OF THE ART OF SCANDAL

Dear Reader,

When I started writing *August Lane*, I couldn't have predicted how the conversation about Black voices in country music would evolve. The initial idea came from a Ben Folds song called "Belinda" about a singer forced to perform a song about an ex he wronged. I couldn't get the thought out of my head: what happens when someone's biggest hit is based on their biggest regret? What if they were a Black country singer and it was his only hit?

Like the characters in the book, I grew up listening to "Islands in the Stream" and two-stepped to "Achy Breaky Heart" in my small Arkansas hometown. The fictional setting of Arcadia, Arkansas is a historically Black community where the summers are sweltering, the tea is sweet, and delta music flows from church pews to blues bars. It's a place where coming home means returning to who you are. That's what writing this book did for me. It brought me home.

There's a unique kind of loneliness in loving music that doesn't always seem to love you back. But things are changing. *Cowboy Carter* won a Grammy for Best Country Album and Album of the Year. Linda Martell, Shaboozey, and Tanner Adell have moved from the margins to the mainstream. Artists are reclaiming their rightful space in a genre with deep Black roots, and this story feels even more timely than I could have imagined when I started it.

But at its heart, *August Lane* is a love story. It's about healing after making the type of mistakes that calcify into regret. It explores forgiveness in a way that isn't easy or obvious, but hard-won and transformative. It's about two people whose broken pieces fit together in a way that makes them whole.

This story is for anyone who's ever felt out of place or been told their voice doesn't fit in the spaces they love. It's also for anyone who believes in second chances, even when they seem impossible. I hope August and Luke's journey toward love, forgiveness, and finding their voices resonates with you. And if it makes you cry, I hope it also makes you laugh, and gives you hope.

Kind of like your favorite love song.

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BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) August and Luke's story is set against the backdrop of Black artists in country music. How does the book challenge your perceptions about who "belongs" in certain musical genres? Discuss the real-life Black country pioneers mentioned and how their erasure from mainstream narratives parallels the characters' struggles.
- 2.) "Another Love Song" haunts Luke for thirteen years, forcing him to relive his betrayal every time he performs. How does music function as both a blessing and a curse in the novel? Share examples from your own life where a song became permanently tied to a memory.
- 3.) The fictional town of Arcadia, Arkansas, serves as more than just a setting—it's almost a character itself. How does the small-town environment both nurture and constrain the characters' dreams? What does the book reveal about Black rural life that's often missing from popular culture?
- 4.) Luke fled Arcadia to pursue fame while August remained to care for her grandmother. Compare their different choices and what each gained or lost. How do their different relationships with "home" affect their character development?
- 5.) Luke built his entire career on lyrics he stole from August. Discuss whether his success justifies the betrayal, and how the lie affected both characters over time. Can artistic theft ever be forgiven when it launched one person's career while destroying another's dreams?
- 6.) This is fundamentally a second-chance romance. What makes August and Luke's relationship worth salvaging after thirteen years and such a profound betrayal? How do they each need to grow before they can be together?



BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 7.) August struggles with being “JoJo Lane’s daughter” while trying to establish her own musical identity. How do family legacies both inspire and burden the characters? Discuss other examples from literature or life where children of famous parents face similar challenges.
- 8.) The book explores how trauma and secrets can be passed down through families. How do the characters break cycles of pain while honoring their heritage? What role does music play in both preserving and healing generational wounds?
- 9.) Luke achieved fame by performing a watered-down version of his and August’s original song. Discuss the tension between artistic authenticity and commercial success. How do both characters define “making it,” and how do those definitions evolve?
- 10.) The novel’s themes of reclaiming space and voice mirror current conversations about representation in country music. How do August and Luke each reclaim their narratives by the end? What does it mean to “rewrite the love song” both literally and metaphorically?
- 11.) If your book club created a soundtrack for August Lane, what songs would you include and why?
- 12.) Research one Black country music pioneer mentioned in the book (Linda Martell, DeFord Bailey, Charlie Pride). Share what you learned and discuss why their stories matter.



AUGUST FIREFLY

INSPIRED BY AUGUST LANE BY REGINA BLACK

Like summer evenings in the Arkansas Delta, this mocktail captures the golden glow of fireflies dancing in the twilight. This alcohol-free drink honors Luke's sobriety while celebrating the sweetness of second chances.

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 1)

- 2 oz brewed black tea, chilled *(16 oz for Batch)*
- 1 oz white or muscadine grape juice *(8 oz for Batch)*
- 1/2 oz lemon juice, fresh or bottled *(4 oz for Batch)*
- 1/4 oz maple syrup or honey *(2 oz for Batch)*
- Ginger ale, to top
- Optional: a dash of cinnamon or a tiny drop of vanilla extract *(Lemon wheels for Batch)*



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brew black tea, chill it down (or toss it over ice if you're impatient)
2. In a shaker or glass, combine tea, white grape juice, lemon juice, and maple syrup. Stir or shake to mix
3. Pour over fresh ice in a rocks glass
4. Top with ginger ale
5. Garnish with a lemon wheel or grape cluster if you're feeling fancy

BATCH INSTRUCTIONS (SERVES 8)

1. Combine tea, white grape juice, lemon juice, and maple syrup in a large pitcher
2. Stir well until the maple syrup is fully dissolved
3. Chill until ready to serve
4. To serve: Pour 4 oz of the mixture over ice in each glass, top with ginger ale, and garnish with a lemon wheel

TIPS FOR BOOK CLUB HOSTS

- Make the tea base ahead of time and keep it chilled
- The muscadine grape juice version creates a deeper, more complex flavor
- Batch the tea, white grape juice, lemon juice, and maple syrup ahead of time
- Let guests add their own ginger ale so it stays fizzy
- Mason jars make perfect serving glasses for that Southern touch



READING LIST

BOOKS

Royster, Francesca. *Black Country Music: Listening for Revolutions*. University of Texas Press, 2022.

Essential scholarly exploration of Black artists' contributions to country music.

Randall, Alice. *My Black Country: A Journey Through Country Music's Black Past, Present, and Future*, Atria, 2024

Personal essays on being Black in country music, offering intimate cultural insights.

Perry, Imani. *South to America: A Journey Below the Mason-Dixon to Understand the Soul of a Nation*, Ecco, 2022

Pulitzer Prize-winning exploration of Southern Black culture and identity.

ARTICLES

["A Beginner's Guide to Black Country Music"](#) – Inside Hook

["The Black Vanguard in White Utopias"](#) – Andscape

["Linda Martell, Country's Lost Pioneer"](#) – Rolling Stone

["How Black women reclaimed country and Americana music in 2021"](#) – NPR

["The legend of Howdy Glenn, Inglewood's Black firefighting country singer"](#) – LA Times

["Why Haven't We Had a Black Woman Country Star?"](#) – Nashville Scene

["When Being Black and Loving Country Music Got You Down"](#) – Vice

VIDEOS

[Uncovering the History of the Banjo with Rhiannon Giddens](#) – The Great Courses



AUGUST LANE PLAYLIST

SNOWDEN'S JIG (GENUINE NEGRO JIG)
Carolina Chocolate Drops

RIVER
Leon Bridges

HOLD ON
Leon Bridges

REMEMBER
Seinabo Sey, Jacob Banks

FALLING FOR ME
Johnnyswim

CAN I CALL YOU ROSE?
Thee Sacred Souls

BLACK MYSELF
Amythyst Kiah

IF I DIE YOUNG
Micaela Kleinsmith

GRANDMA'S HANDS
Bill Withers

PAY DEARLY
Johnnyswim

FOUND
Jacob Banks

EVERY TIME I HEAR THAT SONG
Brandi Carlile

GOOD NEWS
Shaboozey

I REMEMBER EVERYTHING
Zach Bryan, Kacey Musgraves

A SONG FOR YOU
Donny Hathaway

SWEET ★ HONEY ★ BUCKIN'
Beyoncé, Shaboozey

NO TURNING BACK
Joy Oladokun

TAKE ME TO CHURCH
Hozier

SORRYS DON'T WORK NO MORE
Brittney Spencer

DUMB LUCK
The War and Treaty

II HANDS II HEAVEN
Beyoncé

MY CHURCH
Maren Morris

MY FIRST RODEO
Brittney Spencer

GET LUCKY
Patty Griffin

CLOSE MY EYES
Mariah Carey

NIGHTFLYER
Allison Russell

KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOVED
Cleo Sol

DEAR AUGUST
PJ Harding, Noah Cyrus

WORTHY
Jacob Banks

SWEET SYMPHONY
Joy Oladokun, Chris Stapleton

LISTEN HERE!

