

# UW-Madison: Transcendent Kingdom Chosen As University's 2021-22 Go Big Read Book

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MADISON – While recent Go Big Read books have been nonfiction, this year's selection for the campus common reading program, "Transcendent Kingdom," uses a fictional story to explore the very real issues of race, immigration, science, faith and family.

Yaa Gyasi's novel tells the story of Gifty, a graduate student in neuroscience and the only member of her Ghanaian family born in the United States, as she examines her family's experience of immigrating and her own place in the world.

"Fiction has a unique ability to connect with us in a very personal way," says Chancellor Rebecca Blank. "Gifty's story is all about her struggle to establish her own identity. In this particular story, we can all identify with how we work to integrate our past experiences, family history and future dreams into a coherent sense of who we are. This past year has shown us all the importance of listening to people's stories and finding ways to reach out to them."

The book is a follow-up to Gyasi's acclaimed "Homegoing." Gyasi, who lives in Brooklyn, New York, was born in Ghana and raised in Huntsville, Alabama. She holds a BA in English from Stanford University and an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

“My family moved around a lot when I was a child. I was born in Ghana, but then we lived in Ohio, Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama,” Gyasi told National Public Radio. “And the kind of one constant was the fact that I could go to the library with my library card and check out books. And in these books, I could start to kind of encounter people, understand people and have that stability that I was seeking throughout all of these moves. So I was a person who just found herself in literature quite young.”

“Transcendent Kingdom” was recently longlisted for the 2021 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction as well as the 2021 Women’s Prize for Fiction.

Publishers Weekly calls it “meticulous, psychologically complex ... At once a vivid evocation of the immigrant experience and a sharp delineation of an individual’s inner struggle, the novel brilliantly succeeds on both counts.”

“If there are any skeptics left, they can stand down now. ‘Homegoing’ wasn’t beginner’s luck. Gyasi’s new novel, ‘Transcendent Kingdom,’ is a book of blazing brilliance,” says The Washington Post.

The Go Big Read program is an initiative of the Office of the Chancellor. It engages members of the campus community and beyond in a shared, academically focused reading experience.

Go Big Read events connected to the book are expected to include a visit from the author. Planning is underway for how students, faculty and staff will use the book in classrooms and for special events. Copies of the book will be given to first-year students at the Chancellor’s Convocation for New Students and to students using the book in their classes. UW-Madison instructors or event planners interested in using the book can request a physical or e-review copy.

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