



"Wildly steamy,
utterly heartwarming."
—TIA WILLIAMS

a novel

The Art of Scandal

REGINA BLACK

BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) After Rachel learns of Matt's affair, she demands one million dollars and the house. Matt pushes back, but Rachel tells him that if he respects her, he'll give her what she's owed. Discuss what Rachel means by this.

2) Rachel feels like an outsider in Oasis Springs, while Nathan feels like an outsider in his family. How do their communities contribute to their feelings of isolation? Have you ever felt like an outsider in your community?

3) When Nathan lets Rachel drive his '69 Camaro, she tells him, "Nathan, that was amazing. It made me feel so . . . alive." Being in a relationship with Matt has forced Rachel to give up many of the things she used to enjoy. Discuss how Nathan helps Rachel rekindle her passions and find her true self. Did this inspire you to revisit any passions in your own life?

4) Matt campaigns on a progressive platform, but his words don't always match his actions. Discuss how Matt uses his relationship with Rachel to support his political career. How does race affect their relationship? What are some of the ways in which Rachel takes control of her narrative?

5) When Rachel first learns that Nathan's last name is Vasquez, she asks if he is related to Beto Vasquez. He brushes it off, saying, "I mean, in this town, isn't everybody?" Why do you think Nathan hides who his family is from Rachel?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6) After Beto reveals to his family that he has been diagnosed with a late-stage brain tumor, Joe and Sofia urge Nathan to reconcile with his father. Why is Nathan reluctant to reconnect, even in the face of Beto's terminal illness? Should Nathan change his mind about his father, even if Beto doesn't change his mind about Nathan?

7) Nathan doesn't think his art is serious enough to be in the art show because it is based on a children's novel. Fan art and similar works, like fanfiction, are often not considered 'real art' or 'real writing.' Why do you think some creative works are taken less seriously than others?

8) Rachel is called the 'D.C. Meghan Markle,' 'the Ice Queen,' and other names by the media. Discuss the ways in which the media shapes our perception of public figures. How are Matt and Rachel's affairs portrayed at the end of the novel? How does race play into these characterizations?

9) When Matt and Rachel get engaged, Herman Abbott tells Rachel that she's a "scandal waiting to happen" and that he's not "talking about race" but rather "pedigree." Discuss what Herman means by this. Does race still play a part in his judgment of Rachel? Given the scandal caused by Rachel's relationship with Nathan, was Herman right?

10) While Faith is away at school, Matt and Rachel decide not to tell her about the affair and their plan to get a divorce. Why do they decide to do this? Does Faith have a right to know what her parents are going through?

Q&A

with Regina Black



ReginaBlack.com

[ReginaBlkWrites](https://twitter.com/ReginaBlkWrites)

[ReginaBlackWrites](https://www.instagram.com/ReginaBlackWrites)

[ReginaBlackWrites](https://www.facebook.com/ReginaBlackWrites)

What inspired you to write *The Art of Scandal*?

I wanted to write a book about a woman in the public eye who was privately dealing with a betrayal that caused her to question everything about her life and identity. I started thinking about high-profile scandals involving women who stood by their powerful husbands while the world questioned their motives for doing so. A common question is, “Why would someone stay married after being publicly humiliated?” I wanted to answer that in an interesting but also very human way. Deciding to leave someone you planned to build a life with is difficult, regardless of how big the betrayal might be. And, of course, I made that decision even more complicated with an unexpected romance at the worst possible time.

Art and artists play a big role in the novel. What importance does art hold in your own life? Do you make art of your own in a medium other than writing?

Art has always been how I could express myself in ways I didn’t feel comfortable doing in real life. I grew up in a single-parent household with limited access to museums, plays, or concerts because we couldn’t afford to invest in them. But I’ve always found ways to make it a part of my life.

I'm not a musician, but I love music, so when I was a kid, I made mixtapes, memorized song lyrics, and performed concerts for my family instead. I dreamed of writing books, but buying them was cost-prohibitive, so I practically lived in the public library. I don't draw, but I do graphic design as a hobby. I love art and try to engage with it in small ways as often as I can.

***The Art of Scandal* takes place in the political world of Washington, D.C. Do you have a personal connection to this space?**

I grew up in a fairly homogenous small town and rarely traveled until I went to college. Washington, D.C. was one of the first major cities I visited regularly. It's a large, diverse cultural hub that buzzes with power-hungry energy, and it imprinted on me in those early years. I absolutely love everything about it. When I started brainstorming settings for *The Art of Scandal*, I immediately thought of D.C.—it's the perfect place for a story about political intrigue.

Were any of your characters inspired by people you know or public figures?

I used bits and pieces from various public figures to develop my characters. Matt is a combination of Pete Buttigieg's "Mayor Pete" persona and Bill DeBlasio's progressive brand, which leaned heavily on the optics of his interracial marriage during his mayoral campaign. Anthony Weiner's accidental tweets inspired the reveal of Matt's affair. And I used the media attention that Michelle Obama and Megan Markle received for being Black women married to powerful public figures to inspire some of the pressure Rachel faces for being Matt's wife.

[**CLICK HERE TO READ THE REST**](#)