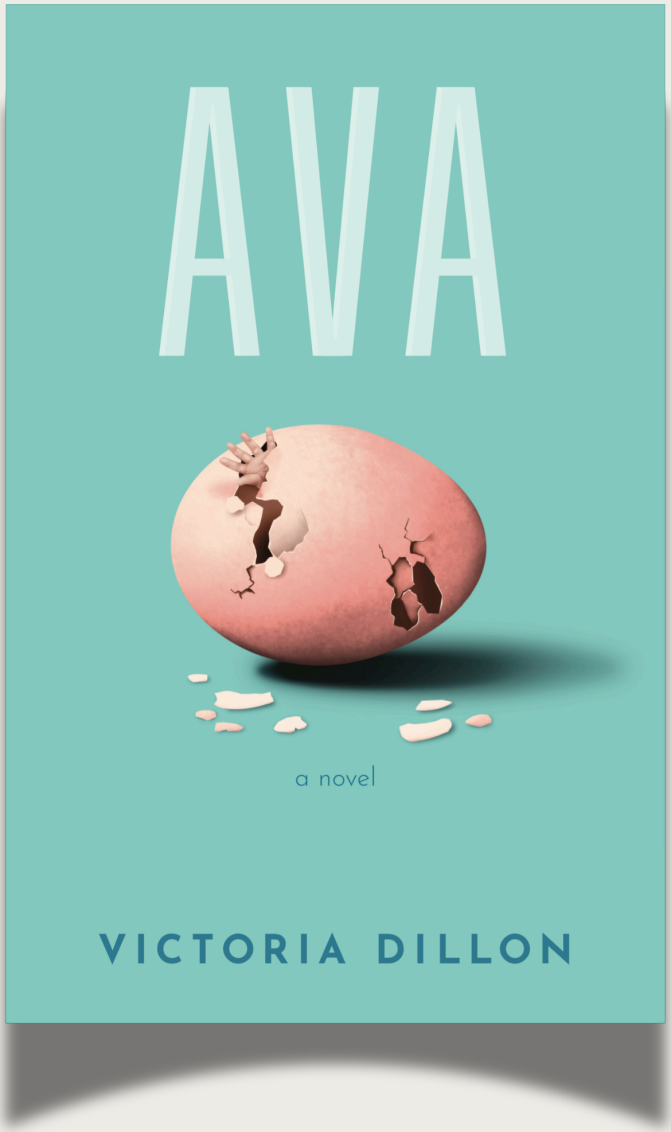
Book Club Discussion

PLUS BONUS
BOOK CLUB LEADERSHIP GUIDE!



INTRODUCTION

About the Book

Set in the conservative South after the overturning of Roe v. Wade, this thought-provoking, speculative novel follows a scientist-turned-reluctant activist whose personal tragedy ignites a quest to protect reproductive autonomy. Drawing on her background in comparative biology, she develops an unconventional plan to challenge oppressive laws — one that could change everything, but at great personal risk.

About the Author

I grew up as a liberal agnostic in the rural South, often feeling like an outsider in my own community. My medical career as a pediatrician — and my years as a research scientist working with avian embryos — gave me a deep respect for the complexity and fragility of life. This novel is my way of exploring what happens when science, ethics, and human emotion collide under political pressure, and how far we might go to protect what we believe is right. Ava blends speculative science with urgent conversations about justice, autonomy, and equity. As you discuss, consider both the science of possibility and the politics of reality. Thank you for reading and discussing!

Tips For Leading Discussion

- **Start with the real-world elements.** Many readers may feel most comfortable talking about the nonfictional grounding (Roe v. Wade, abstinence-only education, vaccine controversies) before diving into speculative science.

- **Invite personal connections.** Questions about reproductive rights, healthcare access, or feeling like an outsider can open space for personal sharing.

- **Balance science and story.** Some readers may geek out about the biology, while others may focus on ethics or characters. Encourage both!

- **Respect comfort levels.** Topics like reproductive health, race, and maternal mortality are sensitive. Give space for people to pass on a question.

- **Keep the flow dynamic.** Move between *big picture* questions (politics, culture) and *intimate* ones (motherhood, identity) to keep energy high.

Suggested Discussion Flow

- Opening (Icebreaker)

- Ask: "Which part of the book felt most real to you — the nonfictional opening or the speculative science?"

- Invite a quick round of answers to get everyone's voices in the room.

Section 1: Real World Roots

- Start with Question 1 (real-world events) to ground the group.

- Follow-up prompt:
  - "Did you recognize headlines you remembered from the news? How did it feel to see them woven into fiction?"

Section 2: Characters + Motivation

- Use Questions 4–6 (mentor and main character).

- Follow-up prompts:
  - "Do you sympathize more with the mentor's scientific urgency or the main character's willingness to risk herself?"
  - "If you had been in her position, would you have volunteered?"

Section 3: Speculative Technology

- Use Questions 7–12 (egg-laying, ethics, social impact).

- Follow-up prompts:
  - "Would you want this technology for yourself or your daughter?"
  - "Do you think society would adapt quickly, or resist fiercely?"

- If discussion lulls, ask: "What would be the unintended consequences?"

Section 4: Power + Resistance

- Use Questions 13–15 (control, science as protest, believability).

- Follow-up prompts:
  - "If this breakthrough happened tomorrow, who would fight hardest to control it?"
  - "Did this story make you more hopeful or more worried about the future of reproductive rights?"

Closing Question (Reflection)

- Ask: "Which character did you identify with most, and why?"

- Invite people to connect personally, even briefly. This often ends discussions on a heartfelt note.

Extra Activities (Optional)

- **Vote on plausibility.** On a scale of 1–10, how likely do members think egg-laying could ever exist?

- **Compare headlines.** Bring in a real news article about Roe, maternal mortality, or vaccine controversies and talk about how the novel extends or reframes it.

- **Speculative brainstorm**. Ask: "What other scientific 'fixes' might exist for things evolution didn't get right?"

THOUGHTS + QUESTIONS

Real World Roots

1.The novel begins with real-world events — the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, abstinence-only sex education in Southern schools, controversies about the HPV vaccine, and the firing of Tennessee's health commissioner during the COVID-19 pandemic. How did reading these true-to-life elements affect your experience of the story? Did they make the fictional elements feel more believable?

2. How does the main character's background as a scientist intersect with her personal experiences in the conservative South? Did you relate to her sense of being an outsider?

3. Do you think blending nonfictional political and health crises with a speculative storyline makes the book more powerful, or does it blur the line between reality and fiction in ways that are unsettling?

Science, Ethics, Motivation

4. The main character's mentor, a Black scientist whose mother died due to a misdiagnosed postpartum complication influenced by racial bias, views human pregnancy as an "evolutionary failure." How does his personal history shape both the scientific and ethical dimensions of the story?

5. In what ways do his motivations parallel or contrast with the main character's motivations for volunteering to be his first test subject?

6. Did the novel shift your perspective on racial disparities in healthcare, particularly maternal mortality rates among African American women?

Speculative Reproduction Technology

7. What was your reaction to the concept of women laying eggs instead of experiencing pregnancy? Did it strike you as disturbing, liberating, or both?

8. The new system eliminates menstruation, makes contraception simple (sunglasses!), and reduces maternal mortality. Which of these consequences do you find most compelling or most problematic?

9. Was it ethical for the mentor to pursue such a radical scientific breakthrough? Was the main character reckless or courageous in volunteering?

10. How might egg-laying alter gender roles, family structures, or feminist movements? Do you see it as empowering, destabilizing, or both?

11. How might rural and religious communities in particular react differently than urban or secular ones?

12. Would removing pregnancy from reproduction change the meaning of motherhood and the parent–child bond?

Power, Resistance, + Future Possibilities

13. Who should control access to such technology — scientists, governments, or individuals? What safeguards would you want in place?

14. The novel suggests that science can be a form of resistance against injustice. Do you agree? Can you think of examples where scientific advances have challenged political or cultural norms?

15. Looking at the book as a whole, what felt most believable: the nonfictional grounding of the first section or the speculative science of the later sections? Did one enhance the other?

Happy Reading

DON'T FORGET TO SHARE
YOUR THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL!

FIND AUTHOR VICTORIA DILLON
ON BLUESKY