JODI PICOULT
From the bestselling author of The Storyteller
Small Great Things
The love that binds us is stronger than the differences that divide us
Small Great Things

Jodi Picol

Fiction
470 pages; 2016

'I don't want that nurse touching my baby.' Those are the instructions from the newborn child's parents. However, when the baby goes into cardiac arrest, Ruth, a nurse of twenty years' experience, sees no option but to assist. But the baby dies. And Ruth is charged with negligent homicide...Ruth is shattered and bewildered as she tries to come to terms with her situation. She finds different kinds of support from her sister, a fiery radical, and her teenage son, but it is to Kennedy McQuarrie, a white middle-class lawyer, to whom she entrusts her case, and her future...As the two come to develop a truer understanding of each other's lives, they begin to doubt the beliefs they each hold most dear. In order for the privileged to prosper, they come to realise, others have to suffer. Racism takes many forms, and is reinforced and underpinned by the structures of our society...In gripping dramas like Nineteen Minutes, My Sister's Keeper and The Pact, Jodi Picoult has explored the big issues of our time through characters whose lives resonate with us. Here we see once again her unrivalled ability to immerse us in a story whose issues will linger with us long after the final page has been finished...

REVIEWS

Publishers Weekly

Bestselling author Picoult's latest page-turner is inspired by a Flint, Mich., event in which a white supremacist father refused to allow an experienced African-American labor and delivery nurse to touch his newborn. In Picoult's story, a medical crisis results in an infant's death and a murder charge against a black nurse named Ruth Jefferson. The story unfolds from three viewpoints: Ruth's, the infant's father—a skinhead named Turk—and Ruth's public defender, Kennedy McQuarrie, a white professional woman questioning her own views about racism. The author's comprehensive research brings veracity to Ruth's story as a professional black woman trying to fit into white society, to Turk's inducement into the white-power movement, and to Kennedy's soul-searching about what it's like to be black in America. Unfortunately, the author undermines this richly drawn and compelling story with a manipulative final plot twist as well as a Pollyannaish ending. Some may be put off by the moralistic undertone of Picoult's tale, while others will appreciate the inspiration it provides for a much-needed conversation about race and prejudice in America. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.
Small great Things
*Jodi Picoult*

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. Which of the three main characters (Ruth, Turk, or Kennedy) do you most relate to and why? Think about what you have in common with the other two characters as well—how can you relate to them?

2. The title of the book comes from the Martin Luther King, Jr. quote that Ruth's mother mentions on p. 173: "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." What does this quote mean to you? What are some examples of small great things done by the characters in the novel?

3. Discuss Ruth's relationship with her sister, Adisa. How does the relationship change over the course of the novel?

4. Kennedy seeks out a neighborhood in which she is the only white person to help her gain some perspective. Can you think of an example of a time when something about your identity made you an outsider? How were you affected by that experience?

5. All of the characters change over the course of the novel, but Turk's transformation is perhaps the most extreme. What do you think contributed to that change?

6. Discuss the theme of parenthood in the novel. What does being a parent mean to Ruth, to Kennedy, and to Turk? What does it mean to you?

7. Why do you think Ruth lies to Kennedy about touching Davis when he first starts seizing? What would you have done in her position?

8. Why do you think Kennedy decides to take Ruth's case? What makes it so important to her?

9. Discuss the difference between "equity" and "equality" as Kennedy explains it on p. 427. Do you think Ruth gets equity from the trial?

10. Was your perspective on racism or privilege changed by reading this book? Is there anything you now see differently?

11. Did the ending of *Small Great Things* surprise you? If so, why? Did you envision a different ending?

12. Did the Author's Note change your reading experience at all?

13. Have you changed anything in your daily life after reading *Small Great Things*?

14. Whom would you recommend *Small Great Things* to? Why?

(Questions issued by the publisher.)