

Reading Group Questions for Discussion

1. The title alludes to a quote often attributed to Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr: 'If I cannot do great things, I can do small things that are great.' Discuss the ways the actions of each of the narrators support this statement.
2. Of the three main characters, Ruth, Kennedy and Turk, who do you most empathise with? Why?
3. Which key moments in each of the three characters' stories could you relate to and/or feel compassion for?
4. What does Kennedy learn in this story about the ways being white has shielded her from racial discrimination? Did you feel she was open to learning? If yes, how did she demonstrate that? If no, why do you think she wasn't?
5. Jodi Picoult often writes about difficult topics: in *The Storyteller*, she writes about the Holocaust, in *Small Great Things*, she writes about racism. Why do you think she chooses to do this, and why is it important?
6. What do you think Ruth has learned from her mother, and how is she different? What do you think Edison has learned from Ruth, and how is he different?
7. Why do you think Adisa and Ruth have such different outlooks?
8. Jodi Picoult writes from multiple character perspectives in her novels. How do you think this affects your reading of her books?
9. Discuss how Ruth changes throughout the novel. If you've read *Shine*, how does her childhood affect her adult self?
10. Why do you think Kennedy is initially so reluctant to allow Ruth to bring the question of race into the trial?
11. Early in the novel, Kennedy tells Ruth she doesn't 'even see colour'. Micah, Kennedy's husband, is an ophthalmic surgeon who makes people see for a living. Why do you think the ideas of sight and vision are such important themes throughout the book?
12. What effect do you think his mother's trial has on Edison? How does he react and change?
13. When Ruth's mother delivers Ms Mina's baby in the opening scene of the novel, Ruth describes it as a moment 'where all the differences in schooling and money and skin colour evaporated like mirages in a desert. Where everyone was equal, and it was just one woman, helping another.' Would you agree with the statement that the moments of life and death are the only times we are all truly equal?
14. What can be said of the way that Christina, Ruth's childhood best friend, acts towards Ruth?
15. What do you think is the most shocking moment of the novel, and why?
16. '*We aren't crews anymore. We are pockets of discontent within the system.*' What role do you think the internet plays in disseminating prejudice?
17. Though *Small Great Things* is set in America, it remains very relevant to UK readers. Do you agree?
18. Ruth describes her act of carrying a Yale mug on the bus as 'a sign saying: *I'm one of you*'. Are there any other instances in the book when she can be said to be doing the same thing in different ways, big or small?