



## Small great things (2016)

By Jodi Picoult

(Winner, 2017 LibraryReads Favorites)



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### Discussion questions taken from *LitLovers*

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?

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## Author Bio:



- Birth—May 19, 1966
- Where—Nesconset (Long Island), New York, USA
- Education—B.A., Princeton University; M.Ed., Harvard University
- Currently—lives in Hanover, New Hampshire

Jodi Lynn Picoult is an American author. She was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for fiction in 2003. Picoult currently has approximately 14 million copies of her books in print worldwide.

### Early life and education

Picoult was born and raised in Nesconset on Long Island in New York State; when she was 13, her family moved to New Hampshire. Even as a child, Picoult had a penchant for writing stories: she wrote her first story— "The Lobster Which Misunderstood"—when she was five. While still in college—she studied writing at Princeton University—Picoult published two short stories in *Seventeen* magazine. To pay the bills, after graduation she worked at a variety of jobs, including copy writing and editing textbooks; she even taught eighth-grade English and attained a Masters in Education from Harvard University.

In 1989, Picoult married Timothy Warren Van Leer, whom she met in college, and while pregnant with their first child, wrote her first book. *Song of the Humpbacked Whale*, her literary debut, came out in 1992. Two more children followed, as did a string of bestseller novels. All told, Picoult has more than 20 books to her name.

### Personal life

Picoult and her husband Timothy live in Hanover, New Hampshire. They have three children and a handful of pets. (Adapted from a 2003 Barnes and Noble interview and from Wikipedia. Retrieved 9/28/2016.)

### Read Alikes:

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*A map of the world* by Jane Hamilton

*A time to stand* by Robert Whitlow



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