



Jodi Picoult

Book club discussion questions

LEAVING TIME

1. What measures does Jenna take to find her mom?
2. Jenna “sometimes thinks it would be easier for me to learn that my mother had died 10 years ago than to hear that she lived and chose not to return” Discuss (p.24)
3. Jenna finds a dollar bill origami-folded in the shape of an elephant and remembers her mother doing it. In what way does this serve as a symbol in the book?
4. Jenna goes to see a psychic, Serenity – who “had” the gift and lost it. Do you believe in psychics? Why or why not?
5. What caused the purple mushrooms to grow under the massive oak tree?
6. Using her phone, what does Jenna find out about Serenity? How would you deal with the information? Is Jenna right to trust her?
7. How does Serenity describe her childhood? Who are Lucinda and Desmond? What makes them leave?
8. Serenity dreams about Jenna’s mother. What makes Serenity decide to help Jenna?
9. Alice describes the death ritual the elephants followed for the death of Bontle. Were you aware that elephants had elaborate grief rituals? Does this change your opinion about elephants?

10. What is the significance of finding Alice's wallet?
11. Why is Jenna's father in Hartwick House?
12. How is Virgil a "typical" cop? What makes him atypical?
13. What triggers the cops to take Thomas Metcalf to the psychiatric hospital? What happens while they're doing that?
14. Virgil learns about the cover up sanctioned by his boss. What does he do? In what ways does this continue to haunt him?
15. Why does Virgil agree to help Jenna find Alice?
16. The conversation between Alice and Thomas gives the reader insight of their relationship. Discuss. (p.105)
17. "Maybe growing up is just focusing on what you've got, instead of what you don't." Discuss.
18. Negative moments get remembered. Traumatic ones get forgotten. Do you agree? Disagree? (p.126)
19. Alice changes her focus of her research to studying the grief elephants show. This angers her boss. In what ways is the study of grief and mourning scientific? In what ways is it too subjective for that? (p. 157)
20. Thomas describes grief as a really ugly couch. Discuss. (p. 176)
21. Allomothering is how elephants raise their young. Do you think "it takes a village" to raise a child? In what ways is this supported by the book, and Jenna's relationship with the other lead characters?
22. After Jenna and Virgil have their falling out, Serenity picks up Jenna and drops her off near her home. Jenna goes to the sanctuary and falls asleep, dreaming about being in nursery school. What does her drawing of a family reveal?
23. Alice realizes she is pregnant and makes plans to go visit Thomas at the Sanctuary. Why doesn't she tell him about the baby?

24. Clearly Thomas is a romantic. What is he holding when he meets Alice at the airport? What is its significance in their relationship? Later, Thomas does the same thing. How is that time different?
25. "And I thought—not for the first time—that forgiving and forgetting aren't mutually exclusive." Discuss. (p. 219)
26. When the new elephant, Maura, is introduced to the sanctuary, what decision does Alice make? In what way does the elephant's acclimation to the sanctuary mirror Alice's life choice?
27. Serenity compares her job as a psychic and Virgil's job as a detective: "We both know what questions to ask. We both know what questions not to ask. We are fluent in body language. We live and breathe intuition." Discuss. (p.228)
28. Why does Alice feel such a kinship with Maura? (p. 283)
29. "One of the most amazing things about elephants mourning is the wild is their ability to grieve hard, but then truly, unequivocally, let go." Do you believe humans can do the same? Discuss. (p. 241)
30. Why does Nevvie insist that she is right to go ahead and bury Maura's baby? How does Gideon help Alice try to "right" the wrong?
31. "Keeping a secret isn't always lying. Sometimes it's the only way to protect the person you love." Discuss.
32. While Thomas is in the shower, Alice sneaks out to the barn to see what he has been working on. What does she discover? What does she ask Gideon to do? What do the strings of letters and numbers mean? What happens when Alice confronts Thomas?
33. "There is no perspective in grief, or in love. How can there be, when one person becomes the center of the universe—either because he has been lost or because he has been found." Discuss. (p.296)
34. What does Alice do when she realizes she has fallen in love with another man?

35. In what way does the title signify not just Jenna's name for her nap, as a toddler, but the structure of the entire book?
36. What do Serenity, Virgil, and Jenna find at the site of the purple mushrooms in the sanctuary? What do they do with it? What happens when Tallulah identifies the tooth as belonging to a child? What does Jenna remember?
37. At what point in the story did you realize things may not be what they seem to be?
38. What do you realize about Serenity's psychic abilities by the end of the book?
39. Alice's disappearance resolves in an unlikely place. How is her current work linked to what's happened to her?
40. How does Alice's scientific mindset compromise her ability to believe Serenity?
41. "{If you think about someone you've loved and lost, you are already with them." Agree? Disagree? Discuss. (p.400)
42. "In the wild, an elephant mother and daughter stay together until one of them dies," says Alice in her research. How does this thematically connect with the novel?