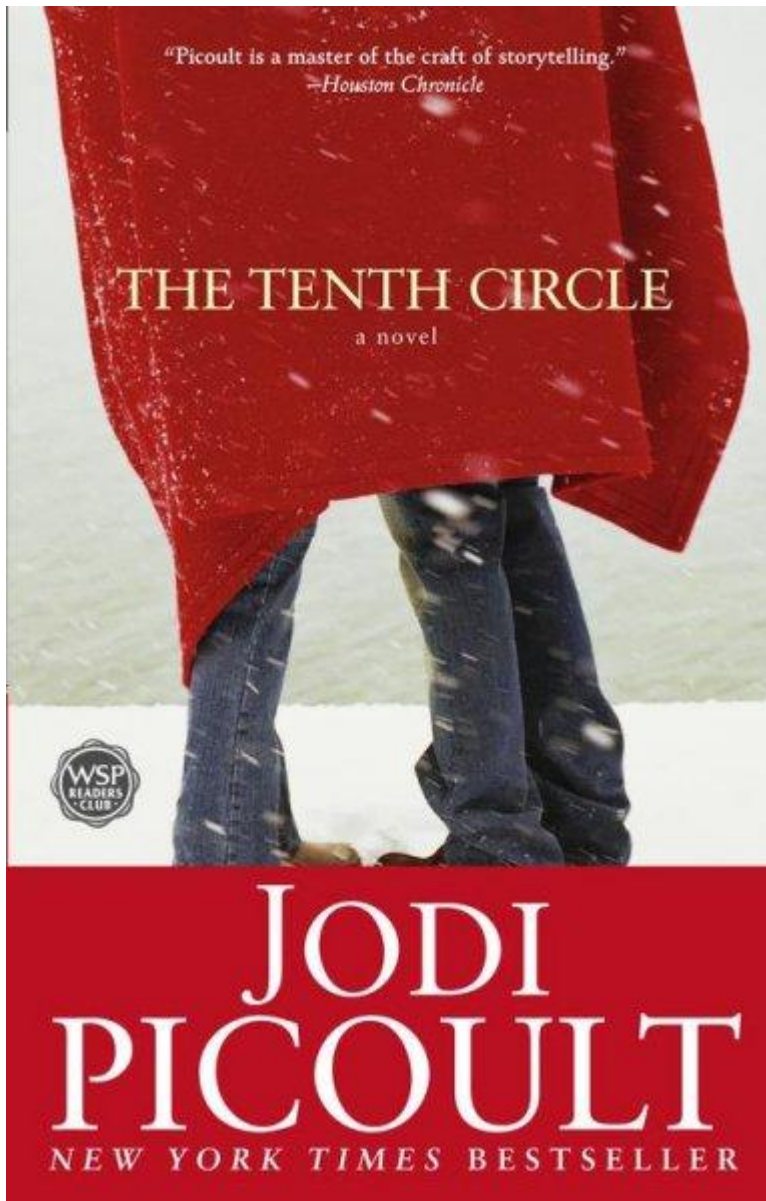


Ann Arbor District Library: Book Club to Go Discussion Guide

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1308889>

About the Book



Fourteen-year-old Trixie has been a ghost for fourteen days, seven hours, and thirty-six minutes now, not that she is officially counting. Trixie's protective father has been consumed with attempts to shield her from a new life, one that includes a boy with a proprietary hand around his daughter's waist. But Daniel Stone never for a moment suspected that the same boy might inflict upon his daughter the worst possible harm. Could the boy who once made Trixie's face fill with light when he came to the door have drugged and then raped her? She says that he did, and that is all it takes to make Daniel, a man with a past hidden even from his family, consider taking matters into his own hands in order to protect his daughter.

This is a novel about the unbreakable bond between parent and child, the temptation to play God, and its dangerous repercussions. Using her sensitive, wise touch, Jodi Picoult once again probes deeply into the love and anguish of a young girl and her family. This time, she has added the innovative element of embedding a graphic novel within her text. They are at once the professional work of her character, Daniel Stone, and a unique insight into his fractured and desperate heart.

About the Author Source: <http://www.jodipicoult.com/>

Jodi Picoult, 41, is the bestselling author of fifteen novels: *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1992), *Harvesting the Heart* (1994), *Picture Perfect* (1995); *Mercy* (1996), *The Pact* (1998); *Keeping Faith* (1999), *Plain Truth* (2000), *Salem Falls* (2001), *Perfect Match* (2002), *Second Glance* (2003), *My Sister's Keeper* (2004), *Vanishing Acts* (2005), *The Tenth Circle* (2006) and her newest novel, *Nineteen Minutes*, which debuted at number one on the New York Times bestseller list, and her newest novel, *Change of Heart* (2008)

Picoult studied creative writing with Mary Morris at Princeton, and had two short stories published in *Seventeen* magazine while still a student. Realism - and a profound desire to be able to pay the rent - led Picoult to a series of different jobs following her graduation: as a technical writer for a Wall Street brokerage firm, as a copywriter at an ad agency, as an editor at a textbook publisher, and as an 8th grade English teacher - before entering Harvard to pursue a master's in education. She married Tim Van Leer, whom she had known at Princeton, and it was while she was pregnant with her first child that she wrote her first novel, *Songs of the Humpback Whale*.

In 2003 she was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction. She has also been the recipient an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association, sponsored by the Margaret Alexander Edwards Trust and Booklist, one of ten books written for adults that have special appeal for young adults; the Book Browse Diamond Award for novel of the year; a lifetime achievement award for mainstream fiction from the Romance Writers of America; *Cosmopolitan* magazine's 'Fearless Fiction' Award 2007; Waterstone's Author of the Year in the UK, and a Vermont Green Mountain Book Award. Most recently, she wrote five issues of the Wonder Woman comic book series for DC Comics. Her books are translated into thirty four languages in thirty five countries. Two - *The Pact* and *Plain Truth* - were made into television movies; a third, *The Tenth Circle*, will air on Lifetime this summer. *My Sister's Keeper* is currently in development at New Line Cinema, with Nick Cassavetes directing and Cameron Diaz starring.

She and Tim and their three children live in Hanover, New Hampshire with two Springer spaniels, two donkeys, two geese, three ducks, six chickens, and the occasional Holstein.

Reviews

Publishers Weekly *Starred Review*

Some of Picoult's best storytelling distinguishes her twisting, metaphor-rich 13th novel (after *Vanishing Acts*) about parental vigilance gone haywire, inner demons and the emotional risks of relationships. Comic book artist Daniel Stone is like the

character in his graphic novel with the same title as this book—once a violent youth and the only white boy in an Alaskan Inuit village, now a loving, stay-at-home dad in Bethel, Maine—traveling figuratively through Dante's circles of hell to save his 14-year-old teenage daughter, Trixie. After she accuses her ex-boyfriend of rape, Trixie—and Daniel, whose fierce father-love morphs to murderous rage toward her assailant—unravel in the aftermath of the allegation. At the same time, wife and mother Laura, a Dante scholar, tries to mend her and Daniel's marriage after ending her affair with one of her students. Picoult has collaborated with graphic artist Dustin Weaver to illustrate her deft, complex exploration of Daniel and his beast within, but the drawings, though well-done, distract from the powerful picture she has drawn with words. Laura and Daniel follow their runaway daughter to Alaska, at which point Picoult drives the story with the heavy-handed Dante metaphor—not the characters. Still, this story of a flawed family on the brink of destruction grips from start to finish.

Library Journal

When a comic book artist married to a Dante scholar writes a graphic novel, what better title than *The Tenth Circle*? Of course, Daniel Stone feels he's descended into hell when his 14-year-old daughter, Trixie, is date raped by Jason Underhill. Despite his soft and gentle Maine demeanor, Daniel had a wild and violent past growing up in Alaska, and letting the police investigation proceed is setting off a rage he had long suppressed. The night of the attack, he also learns his wife, Laura, is having an affair. Hell would be preferable. Picoult's (*Vanishing Acts*) latest novel actually features Daniel's artwork in a tale that parallels his real life, and readers are drawn into the mystery surrounding the events of the rape and its subsequent effects on all concerned. What truths will be revealed? And who, ultimately, will find justice? Picoult had this reader up until the very end of this fast-paced tale. As with her previous novels (e.g., *My Sister's Keeper*), Picoult doesn't guarantee a happy ending, but something here just missed its mark. Still, this best-selling author is going to be in demand. Recommended for most public libraries.

Booklist

There are no black and whites in Picoult's latest novel, except for the drawings that graphic artist Daniel Stone inks. Stone, a former bad boy who grew up among the Yup'ik Eskimos in Alaska, now lives a sedate life in Bethel, Maine, with his college-professor wife, Laura, and his 14-year-old daughter, Trixie. But the night Trixie's ex-boyfriend, Jason, rapes her at a party is the night Daniel's carefully ordered life falls apart. Daniel is forced to acknowledge that he's ignored the distance growing between him and his daughter and that his wife, a Dante scholar at a local college, is having an affair. After the rape, Trixie's classmates turn on her, and even her best friend, Zephyr, sides with Jason, a school hockey star whose future seems bright. When Trixie claims she was drugged and the evidence backs her up, the tide turns against Jason, and another tragedy sends Trixie fleeing Maine for her father's childhood home of Alaska, forcing Daniel to confront the demons he'd hoped he'd

left in the past. Picoult's sad, complex novel should appeal to the many readers who have enjoyed her previous works.

Discussion Questions Source: <http://www.readinggroupguides.com>

1. In Chapter One, Laura says "God, according to Dante, was all about motion and energy, so the ultimate punishment for Lucifer is to not be able to move at all." (p. 16) How do you feel about this concept of hell as the inability to take action? What do you take from this? How does this theory translate into modern-day life?

2. Why does Daniel find villains interesting? Daniel describes Duncan as "a forty-something father who knew that getting old was hell. Who wanted to keep his family safe; whose powers controlled him, instead of the other way around." If "power always involved a loss of humanity," then how does this comic book character maintain his humanity? Compare and contrast Daniel with the character he creates in his comic strip.

3. Early on, Daniel and Trixie seem to have the ideal father-daughter relationship. During Trixie's examination, Daniel reflects that he and Trixie would play the alphabet game with superhero powers. What superhero powers did Daniel wish he had? Why do you think these were so important to him? What does that reveal about his character? Trixie's?

4. It is said that a rape victim is revictimized by the initial examination. Do you think this is true for Trixie? Why do you think the police detective doubts her accusation against Jason?

5. In popular culture, the husband is more often portrayed as the cheater, and the wife typically as the one who makes career sacrifices for the family. Does Daniel as a character seem emasculated by the way these roles are reversed in *The Tenth Circle*? Why are stay-at-home fathers seen differently by society than mothers who raise their children full time?

6. In Chapter Four, regarding trauma, Picoult writes, "It was a catch-22: If you didn't put the trauma behind you, you couldn't move on. But if you did put the trauma behind you, you willingly gave up your claim to the person you were before it happened." Which characters would agree with this statement and why?

7. Trixie is consistently revictimized at school, and her own best friend doesn't believe that she was raped. If Trixie's school was a kind of hell for her, then what would Dante say about her situation and the best way to get out of it?

8. Discuss reality versus perception, intention versus action. Why are Trixie's and Jason's versions of what happened so different? Whose do you believe is the truth? Do you think there IS a definitive truth?

9. After Laura and Daniel have a romantic episode, Daniel continues to express his resentment for her infidelity. In that moment his sexual urge is not to make love to her but to "take her back." How does his urge compare to Jason's urge in raping Trixie?

10. Throughout the story Trixie is struggling to get back to her life prior to the rape, and similarly Daniel and Laura are trying to return to a place in their marriage prior to Laura's infidelity. What does this story say about whether or not we can recapture our past? How does Daniel's childhood figure into this theme?

11. Does a victim get justice when the perpetrator takes his or her own life? When Daniel abuses Jason, is he helping or hurting Trixie? When Trixie runs away, did you believe that she killed Jason? What did you think about this surprise ending? How can you map the breakdown in trust between these relationships: Trixie and Jason, Laura and Daniel, Daniel and Trixie, Trixie and Zephyr. How has this breakdown contributed to the demise of all parties?

12. How did Daniel's artwork, embedded inside The Tenth Circle, affect your reading experience? In what ways does reading the graphic novel give you insight into Daniel's behavior during the narrative part of the novel?

13. In the story there is a thread of control --- characters losing and gaining control over their lives and their environments. Discuss what control means to each character.

14. After Daniel takes his revenge, does he believe he is more of a superhero? Does he really think he has avenged Trixie? What is the story saying about retribution?

15. Why is snow symbolic in the story? What other symbols are there?

16. Trixie is haunted by Jason's ghost. Is this a figment of her imagination or a manifestation of guilt?

Multimedia

Jodi Picoult, Author of 'The Tenth Circle' (Video Clip)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pr7_TpJK8Pc

Behind the scenes of Lifetime Television's newest movie, *The Tenth Circle*. For novelist Jodi Picoult, watching her words come to life on film is like witnessing a little miracle.

At Home With Jodi Picoult (Video Clip)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=663ZTxWuqqQ>

Author Jodi Picoult takes some time at her scenic home to talk about writing and give some insight into her latest book for Simon and Schuster, "*Nineteen Minutes*."

Further Reading

***Sing You Home* by Jodi Picoult**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1376425>

(Call number: Fiction Picoult)

Max and Zoe's marriage, stressed by infertility problems and miscarriages, is finally destroyed by a stillborn baby. After their divorce, Max moves in with his brother and sister-in-law, Reid and Liddy, and backslides into self-destructive drinking, while Zoe devotes herself to music therapy turns into love and marriage. Max, meanwhile, converts to an evangelical brand of Christianity that pits him against Zoe when she asks Max for permission to use their frozen embryos.

***Handle With Care* by Jodi Picoult**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1326687>

(Call number: Fiction Picoult)

Things break all the time. Day breaks, waves break, voices break. Promises break. Hearts break. Every expectant parent will tell you that they don't want a perfect baby, just a healthy one. Charlotte and Sean O'Keefe would have asked for a healthy baby, too, if they'd been given the choice. Instead, their lives are made up of sleepless nights, mounting bills, the pitying stares of "luckier" parents, and maybe worst of all, the what-ifs. What if their child had been born healthy? But it's all worth it because Willow is, well, funny as it seems, perfect. She's smart as a whip, on her way to being as pretty as her mother, kind, brave, and for a five-year-old an unexpectedly deep source of wisdom. Willow is Willow, in sickness and in health. Everything changes, though, after a series of events forces Charlotte and her husband to confront the most serious what-ifs of all. What if Charlotte should have known earlier of Willow's illness? What if things could have been different?

***Vanishing Acts* by Jodi Picoult**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1237557>

(Call number: Fiction Picoult)

Delia Hopkins has led a charmed life. Raised in rural New Hampshire by her widowed father, Andrew, she now has a young daughter, a handsome fiancé, and her own search-and-rescue bloodhound, which she uses to find missing persons. But as Delia plans her wedding, she is plagued by flashbacks of a life she can't recall. And then a policeman knocks on her door, revealing a secret that changes the world as she knows it. In shock and confusion, Delia must sift through the truth -- even when it jeopardizes her life and the lives of those she loves. What happens when you learn you are not who you thought you were? When the people you've loved and trusted suddenly change before your eyes? When getting your deepest wish means giving up what you've always taken for granted? *Vanishing Acts* explores how life -- as we know it -- might not turn out the way we imagined; how doing the right thing could mean doing the wrong thing; how the memory we thought had vanished could return as a threat.

The divine comedy: the inferno, the purgatorio, and the paradiso by Dante Alighieri

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1208925>

(Call number: 851 Da)

Dante Alighieri's poetic masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, is a moving human drama, an unforgettable visionary journey through the infinite torment of Hell, up the arduous slopes of Purgatory, and on to the glorious realm of Paradise--the sphere of universal harmony and eternal salvation.

Author's official website

<http://www.jodipicoult.com/>

Information, news, and appearances.

Read-Alikes

Before You Know Kindness by Chris Bohjalian

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1227410>

(Call number: Fiction Bohjalian)

For ten summers, the Seton family--all three generations--met at their country home in New England to spend a week together playing tennis, badminton, and golf, and savoring gin and tonics on the wraparound porch to celebrate the end of the season. In the eleventh summer, everything changed. A hunting rifle with a single cartridge left in the chamber wound up in exactly the wrong hands at exactly the wrong time, and led to a nightmarish accident that put to the test the values that unite the family--and the convictions that just may pull it apart. *Before You Know Kindness* is a family saga that is timely in its examination of some of the most important issues of our era, and timeless in its exploration of the strange and unexpected places where we find love.

The Secret Between Us by Barbara Delinsky

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1300605>

(Call number: Fiction Delinsky)

Delinsky, author of the "New York Times" bestseller "*Family Tree*," has produced another powerful novel about family dynamics and the drastic repercussions of a lie gone wrong.

The Way the Crow Flies by Ann-Marie MacDonald

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1211035>

(Call number: Fiction MacDonald)

From the acclaimed author of "*Fall on Your Knees*"--a "New York Times" bestseller and Oprah pick--comes a mesmerizing new novel, breathtaking in its storytelling power.

Lost in the Forest by Sue Miller

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1237513>

(Call number: Fiction Miller)

For nearly two decades, since the publication of her iconic first novel, *The Good Mother*, Sue Miller has distinguished herself as one of our most elegant and widely celebrated chroniclers of family life, with a singular gift for laying bare the interior lives of her characters. In each of her novels, Miller has written with exquisite precision about the experience of grace in daily life--the sudden, epiphanic recognition of the extraordinary amid the ordinary--as well as the sharp and unexpected motions of the human heart away from it, toward an unruly netherworld of upheaval and desire.

Prospero's Daughter by Elizabeth Nunez

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1259773>

(Call number: Fiction Nunez)

A spellbinding new novel from acclaimed author Elizabeth Nunez, *Prospero's Daughter* is a brilliantly conceived retelling of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* set on a lush Caribbean island during the height of tensions between the native population and British colonists. Addressing questions of race, class, and power, it is first and foremost the story of a boy and a girl who come of age and violate the ultimate taboo. Cut off from the main island of Trinidad by a glistening green sea, Chacachacare has few inhabitants besides its colony of lepers and a British doctor who fled England with his three-year-old daughter, Virginia. An amoral genius, Peter Gardner had used his talents to unsavory ends, experimenting, often with fatal results, on unsuspecting patients. Blackmailed by his own brother, Peter ends up on the small island as England's empire is starting to crumble.

The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1192882>

(Call number: Fiction Sebold)

Once in a generation a novel comes along that taps a vein of universal human experience, resonating with readers of all ages. *THE LOVELY BONES* is such a book -- a #1 bestseller celebrated at once for its artistry, for its luminous clarity of emotion, and for its astonishing power to lay claim to the hearts of millions of readers around the world. "My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973." So begins the story of Susie Salmon, who is adjusting to her new home in heaven, a place that is not at all what she expected, even as she is watching life on earth continue without her.

Summaries from AADL.org Catalog

