



# Jodi Picoult

## Book club discussion questions

### The Tenth Circle

1. Daniel says, "the real mistake he made...was believing that you could lose someone you loved in an instant, when in reality, it was a process that took months, years...lifetime." How does this apply to his relationship with his wife? His daughter?
2. In what way does the graphic novel complement the story that's being told in the narrative novel? Do you believe that there are many different ways to tell a story? To what end does the art in *The Tenth Circle* support this? Are there spots where the drawn story deviates from what you learn in the written narrative, and if so, is this important?
3. Jodi Picoult often gives her characters names that are extremely significant to the story. Of what significance is the family name 'Stone'?
4. In Dante's *Inferno*, God takes away Lucifer's ability to make choices - his free will - and this is represented as the ultimate hell. Do you agree? Why or why not? What inaction on the part of Daniel can be compared to this?

5. Each of the main characters in *The Tenth Circle* makes one significant mistake that comes back to haunt them. What are these mistakes? Who do you think suffers the most for this, and who changes the most as a result?
6. On page 30, Trixie talks about not controlling her own destiny. Do you believe that we "get what's coming to us", as Dante suggested...or that we can change our circumstances? In what way do the actions of Trixie, Laura, and Daniel support or refute this?
7. How does Wildclaw's loss of humanity (p.32) when angered or afraid reflect itself in Daniel's personality and what we know about Daniel?
8. In both Yup'ik folklore and graphic art, people have the ability to reinvent themselves by morphing into different forms. Daniel, too, has a history of violent behavior that he's successfully repressed...until his daughter's raped. Is it realistic to think that this might be a permanent change, or are older incarnations of personality always simmering just beneath the surface?
9. How does Trixie's rape affect the fragile web of the Stone family? Do you think they would have been able to grow and move on without a catastrophic event like a rape occurring?
10. Is Trixie to blame for the set of circumstances in which she finds herself?
11. On page 94, the judge refuses the attorney's request for house arrest for Jason so that the star player could play hockey. Do you agree with his decision? Do you think this is art imitating true life? Can you give examples.

12. Dante perceived the circles of hell as a learning process for his central protagonist and for the reader, the former of whom is the Christian everyman whose status as a sinner and need for redemption is reflected in all humans. His nine circles of hell do not include betrayal of self...this is Picoult's invention of a tenth circle. Do you agree that lying to oneself is the worst betrayal of all? How do Daniel, Trixie and Laura's actions support or refute this claim? Does this novel suggest ultimately that it is possible, once you've crossed into that tenth circle, to seek redemption...or are we doomed to make the same mistakes over and over?
13. What do you think happens to the Stone family after the book ends? Which character, in your opinion, has learned the most...and which has learned the least?
14. A recurrent theme in many of Picoult's books involves how far a person will go for the sake of love. Does this theme explain the actions of the three protagonists? Does it excuse their actions?