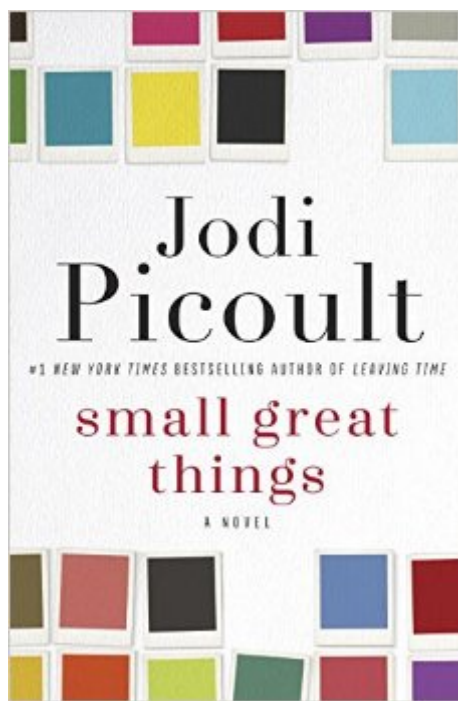


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# Small Great Things: A Novel



## Synopsis

With richly layered characters and a gripping moral dilemma that will lead readers to question everything they know about privilege, power, and race, *Small Great Things* is the stunning new page-turner from #1 New York Times bestselling author Jodi Picoult. "Picoult offers a thought-provoking examination of racism in America today, both overt and subtle. Her many readers will find much to discuss in the pages of this topical, moving book." **Booklist (starred review)**

Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse at a Connecticut hospital with more than twenty years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene? Ruth hesitates before performing CPR and, as a result, is charged with a serious crime. Kennedy McQuarrie, a white public defender, takes her case but gives unexpected advice: Kennedy insists that mentioning race in the courtroom is not a winning strategy. Conflicted by Kennedy's counsel, Ruth tries to keep life as normal as possible for her family—especially her teenage son—as the case becomes a media sensation. As the trial moves forward, Ruth and Kennedy must gain each other's trust, and come to see that what they've been taught their whole lives about others—and themselves—might be wrong. With incredible empathy, intelligence, and candor, Jodi Picoult tackles race, privilege, prejudice, justice, and compassion—and doesn't offer easy answers. *Small Great Things* is a remarkable achievement from a writer at the top of her game. **Praise for Jodi Picoult's *Leaving Time*** "A riveting drama." **Us Weekly** "A moving tale." **People** "A fast-paced, surprise-ending mystery." **USA Today** "Poignant . . . an entertaining story about parental love, friendship, loss." **The Washington Post**

## Book Information

Hardcover: 480 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books (October 11, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345544951

ISBN-13: 978-0345544957

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.2 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (28 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #486 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Family Saga](#) #166 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary](#) #168 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Contemporary Women](#)

## Customer Reviews

Since I have read every single one of Jodi Picoult's books, I knew that I had to read this one when it was up for review on the Vine program. Some would say that they find Picoult predictable especially after reading so many of her books. I have learned to stop second-guessing what Picoult is going to put to paper because she will always surprise you. Was I surprised in this book? Not really, because I knew she would have a twist or three up her sleeves. It just wasn't surprising to me but it may be to other readers. (I read a lot and I read a wide variety of books, so it takes a lot to surprise me.) This book is about Ruth, a widowed African-American nurse, who is also a single mom. She loves her job as a labor-delivery nurse in a small hospital. She worked there for 20 years and never had a problem until one day, when someone requested that she doesn't take care of their baby because of her race. This request eventually led to a series of events where Ruth finds herself questioning the system she has lived in all of her life, worked in and everything she believed in. Kennedy is Ruth's lawyer, a public assistance lawyer who took on the case, determined to win the case for Ruth. As the case winds on, Kennedy finds herself questioning the status quo and realizes that not everything is as black and white as it may seem in the real world. Turk, the white supremacist father, who was so aggrieved at the loss of his baby son needed a scapegoat for his rage and sorrow. He chose to file against Ruth, whom he thought murdered his baby. He shares his backstory; raised by a grandfather who was angry at the world; taught him self-defense. Turk then gets involved with different skinhead groups and met his wife at one of those rallies. This novel is filled with backstories of each of the main characters. Sometimes, some of the stuff being said is uncomfortable, but it is definitely thought-provoking. If there is a time to be discussing race, now is the time to start. This book is a start for those who want to learn a little bit more about what it is like on both ends of the spectrum. Most people would consider themselves to be in the middle, until something happens and they find themselves on opposite ends of the issue. It is an eye-opener, even for the reader. Picoult weaves her way through this story delicately as well as making her points without beating someone on the head with the truth. Out of all of her books, this one is my favorite. There is no unlikable character in this book. Just unpleasant truths that reveal the decades-long apathy with history and with the truth of how things really are in this country. I hope this book will start conversations among

friends and in book clubs. It is definitely a thought-provoking book.

4.5 stars' *Small Great Things*' a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, is a difficult book to read at times. I urge you to read the Author Note for an inclusive discussion of why she felt she had to write this book. Any discussion of racism is prone to cause feelings of guilt, anger, or dismissal. Yet, in this country, at this time, it is imperative. Ruth Jefferson discovered she was different from other people the day her mother took her to her job as a housekeeper in Manhattan. When they got off the subway she realized everyone else was white, the color that matched the snow around them. She also saw her first birth of a baby that day, the ambulance did not make it in time, and her mother delivered her employer's baby. She felt as one with the little white girl who held her hand while her brother was being delivered. The first and last time she felt equal, and the color of skin did not matter. Ruth went on to become a labor and delivery nurse. During her 20 years in this field she became an expert in her profession. Then one day a parent refused to have her near his child and wife because of the color of her skin. Turk and his wife are part of a white supremacist group. An incident occurs, Ruth's life changes immediately, and a lawsuit occurs. During this time the characters involved tell their stories. Ruth, Turk and Brittany, the parents; Kennedy McQuarrie, Ruth's lawyer, all share their past and present experiences. This book is important because of the subject matter, references to active and passive racism, and the need to bring racism into the light. I found some of the characters at times were so completely at either ends of the race spectrum, I guess in order to give us a full glimpse of their philosophies. Like many of us, racism is embedded deep in our subconscious, and Kennedy is the white voice finding her place. I found her voice compelling. The ending is a little too pat and cliché. However, I would urge all to read this captivating book. Recommended. prisrob 07-29-16

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