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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Jellicoe Road by Melina Marchetta

Summary

On Jellicoe Road, the trees make breezy canopies like a tunnel to Shangri-la. From the outset they bear witness to tragedy. There, twenty-two years ago, on the prettiest road you've ever seen, three children lost their families in a car crash. Jellicoe Road is their story and that of the generation that follows. In the present day, Taylor has also been marked by tragedy, abandoned by her mother when she was a girl. This is the story of her seventeenth year—the year she becomes a leader at the Jellicoe School and plots to win the territory wars that the students play with the Townies and the Cadets, the year she falls in love, and the year she learns why she belongs to Jellicoe.

Discussion Questions

1. Re-read the first page of *Jellicoe Road* and consider Hannah's and Taylor's various descriptions of Jellicoe. What role does setting play in the story?
2. What do the territory wars represent to the Jellicoe students, the Townies, and the Cadets? Why do the students give the Little Purple Book so much power? How have the wars changed over time?
3. Why does Hannah stay at Jellicoe instead of going out into the world, like Tate or Jude? Hannah's projects comfort Taylor because "people don't leave unfinished houses" (p. 18). Why doesn't Hannah finish her house? What does the house mean to her?
4. Why is Jude drawn to Narnie? How is Taylor similar to and different from the girl who stands across the road from the poppies, "her eyes pools of absolute sorrow" (p. 31)? How is Jonah similar to and different from the Brigadier?
5. What role do dreams and visions play in the novel? Can you explain Taylor's dream relationship with the boy who is her father? Is it necessary for there to be a logical explanation?
6. Why do you think Taylor is selected to be a House leader? What kind of a leader is she? How might she benefit from having to deal with other girls and their dependency (p. 127)?

7. Why do Taylor and Jonah seem to thrive in the structure provided at Jellicoe and in the Cadets, respectively?
8. How is Taylor being in love similar to and different from Tate being in love? Tate tells Webb that he is “everything” to her (p. 85). What does it mean to be everything to someone, or to have someone tell you that you’re everything to him or her? Is it romantic or dangerous—or both?
9. Taylor holds Jonah’s hand and he links his hand with her when they are on the train, allowing Taylor to “feel someone else’s pain for the first time” (p. 183). What does it mean to a person who’s hurting to become a caretaker for another? How is it similar to and different from being “everything” to someone? Can you draw a parallel to any other characters in the story?
10. Do you think that Taylor and Jonah will be happy together? Why or why not?
11. Do you support Tate’s decision to leave Taylor at the 7-Eleven, abandoning her to Hannah, Jude, and Jellicoe? Why do you think Hannah follows Tate’s wishes and keeps her distance from Taylor? Why doesn’t Hannah say anything to Taylor when she leaves to play Jem to Tate’s Mrs. Dubose?
12. Describe Hannah and Narnie. Are your descriptions the same? How does Hannah change over time? Do you think of her differently when you consider her as the author of the manuscript – the one who paints Narnie as weak?
13. What does Fitz mean when he says, “I didn’t exist before I belonged” (p. 231)? How does Taylor find a sense of belonging?
14. Among the five, Tate and Webb sparkle and even Fitz is described as a “hero riding by on a stolen bike” (p. 187). Meanwhile, Jude and Narnie aren’t as flashy, and yet they survive after the others burn out. Why? Is there a message with regard to the story’s survivors? What does Taylor learn in thinking about the five?
15. Taylor initially “can’t make head or tail” of Hannah’s manuscript because she “hasn’t structured it properly” (pp. 24–25). Melina Marchetta presents her novel in the same way. Why? What are the advantages of telling the story through a disjointed structure? Are there any disadvantages?

Summary and Discussion Questions from the publisher