



1. In this novel we get an inside look at the justice system, from arrest all the way through full integration back into society after release. Did you learn anything that surprised you?
2. On page 21, Toni says, “No one was going to get inside my rage.” How does Toni use anger as a coping mechanism? How do other characters such as Toni’s mother, her father, and Ryan cope with the grief, pain, or injustice they experience throughout the novel?
3. On page 84, Toni says, in reference to Ryan, “Even if we were freed one day, we weren’t going to be the same people after years inside. I’d changed, and no doubt he was going to change.” What moments in the novel—both inside and outside of prison—do you see as points that mark changes in Toni?
4. Reflect on the structure of the novel and how it affects your experience as a reader. How would the story have been different had it been told linearly as opposed to jumping between the present and the past?
5. How did you react to the relationship between Toni and her mother? Did you ever find yourself siding with one character over the other, and was your opinion consistent or did it ever change?
6. How does Toni’s relationship with her mother influence her relationship with other characters in the novel?
7. Margaret becomes an important figure in Toni’s life when she ends up in Rockland. What are some of the things that Toni learns from Margaret?
8. On page 268, Ryan says to Toni, “Haven’t you heard? No one grows up in prison.” What does he mean by this? Do you think this can be said of him and of Toni? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions



9. Did you have any guesses as to who murdered Nicole, and did your ideas about what really happened that night change as the story unfolded? Were you surprised when the truth was revealed?
10. Imagine what could happen in the lives of the characters after the point where the novel ends. What do you imagine the future holds for Toni? What about for Ryan and for Toni's parents?