

B O O K



C L U B

*The Kindest Lie* plays with the distinction between a lie and a secret. Would you characterize Ruth's omission of the truth more of a lie or a secret?

When Ruth travels home to finally solve the mystery of what happened to her child, she falls back into old, familiar family dynamics, while also trying to claim some ownership of how things used to be. Do you think Ruth has a right of the ownership of these memories?

*The Kindest Lie* explores how a person's whiteness often makes them unable to differentiate their own economic struggles with the privilege of being a white person. What is your hope for Midnight as he grows up? Why was reading his perspective important?

Ruth's elasticity of perception and forgiveness varies in her relationships with her grandmother, her brother Eli, and her friends. Seeing and accepting the differing perspectives of those closest to us can often be challenging. What aspects of the narrative drove Ruth's growth in this respect? Could she have found peace without this growth?

How is Midnight's sense of loss the same or different from Ruth's?

Share your thoughts on Xavier's reaction to Ruth's secret. His overall role in the narrative is minimal, why might the author have made this choice? Do you feel it enhances the narrative?

Put yourself in Ruth's shoes. Would you have traveled to Ganton? Pressed for the truth? Contacted Corey? How were Ruth's choices driven by her limited understanding of the dynamics of her family's decision to live with this secret?

Time and distance have greatly impacted Ruth's understanding of and relationship with her brother Eli. How does her attachment to the past prevent her from fully understanding the present for Eli?

Ruth and Midnight form an almost mother-son connection in a very short period of time. How are each served by this connection? And what are its limitations?

Midnight and Corey draw differing conclusions about “the gang” and its offer of financial assistance. How do their race and socioeconomic differences inform their perspectives and decisions?

Midnight, Corey, and Ruth experience a traumatic event that will have ripple effects well after the final page is turned. What is your hope for each of the characters once you finished the novel?

Ruth visits Corey’s home and has a frank conversation with his mother. Do you think it was fair of Ruth to do so? Do you think Corey’s mother’s response was understandable?

The racial divide in Ganton mirrors the reality of many American communities. What steps can we take to fight racism in our communities and heal the divide it creates?

Conversations about police brutality, and the conversations we have with our children, are examined in the event between Ruth, Corey, and Midnight. Ruth is urgent for Midnight to understand the impact of his decisions. How did you feel about her accepting his apology without forgiveness for his actions?

One of Jill’s favorite quotes from the text is:

*"A lifetime of lies never added up to anything good. A lifetime of doing the wrong things for the right reasons. A lifetime of lies that started small, like a nick in the windshield, then eventually shattered the glass."*

How do the events of Ruth, Eli, Mama, and Midnight’s narratives appear through this prism?

The book is set in 2008. Why do you think Nancy chose this time? What has changed and remains unchanged?

Although the setting of Ganton, Indiana is fictional, it feels as if it exists within the story as a character. Discuss.

The Great Recession hits Ganton hard. Were there aspects of this that resonated with or surprised you as you read it?

While the country was experiencing an overwhelming sense of change and hope at the start of the novel, Ruth's reality hasn't changed. She is not progressing in her career the way she wants to be and she finds she can no longer keep this secret. How do you think the change happening around Ruth in a macro sense helped motivate her to make changes in her own life by seeking truth?

In our interview with Nancy Johnson, she mentioned she began writing this book in the middle of President Obama's second term. How does this change or affect your experience in reading it in 2021?