

THE WONDER OF ONE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Nicknames play a significant role in the story. Vivien is known as Dhoola, Cielo, Poopface, and Patch. How do her various names affect her? How important are our names in our lives?
2. Did you have any sympathy for Bart, knowing what caused his hatred of Vivien? Do you believe as Boodo did that we are all born good until life takes its toll? Have you ever encountered someone like Bart? How did you deal with them?
3. “Sometimes the smallest thing changes the direction of our lives.” Do you think life is governed by predetermined destiny, or are our lives the result of a series of random choices and accidents? Do you have a sliding-door moment—a “breath of circumstance” that altered your course?
4. Vivien believes her motives are repeatedly misunderstood. Do you think that’s true, or do you think Vivien misunderstands why she symbolizes so much to so many? Is it like Boodo said that it is about the little person standing up against a system that seems unbeatable? Or were the sheriff and Dylan right and that, just by being her, a person with no ulterior motives, only unassailable genuineness and goodness, she became an emblem of something bigger?
5. How do you think Vivien’s life might have been different had she not been born with the nevus on her face? Do you think her life would have turned out as remarkable?
6. Vivien says people are naturally afraid of things they don’t understand. Do you think it’s fear or simply an opportunity to feel superior to those who are different? Is that where racism and prejudice stem from, our natural tendency to ostracize those on the outside?
7. Discuss Vivien’s relationship with Dylan. Do you think Dylan loved Vivien? How do you feel about Vivien not telling Dylan about Ivy? Do you think he was owed more consideration than a sperm donor, like Vivien’s own biological father?
8. Vivien says at one point that she collects people, keeping them in her life in whatever way she can. And at the end of the story, she says her greatest accomplishment was the unique and beautiful family she knitted together with their love for her. Have you experienced found family in your own life? How profound of an impact has it had on you?
9. Who do you believe had the greatest influence on Vivien and why: Boodo, Profe, Vivien’s mother, Bart, the great chief, or Meryl?
10. Do you believe in the spirit flame (also known as chi, aura, life force, élan vital, brio)? Have you ever felt your inner spirit rise up to allow you to do more than you believed you were capable of?
11. Did you have a theory of how the murder was committed? Who did you suspect?
12. How do you feel about Meryl killing Bart? Or about Vivien covering up the murder? Or about Meryl allowing Vivien to take the blame?
13. Do you agree with the sheriff’s decision to close the case after he discovers the truth?
14. How do you imagine the future unfolding for the characters?
15. Who was your favorite character? Why?
16. Movie time: Who would you like to see play each part?