

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Jodi Picoult is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of thirty novels, including [*Mad Honey*](#), [*Wish You Were Here*](#), [*The Book of Two Ways*](#), [*A Spark of Light*](#), [*Small Great Things*](#), [*Leaving Time*](#), [*The Storyteller*](#), [*Lone Wolf*](#), [*Sing You Home*](#), [*House Rules*](#), [*Handle with Care*](#), [*Change of Heart*](#), and [*My Sister's Keeper*](#), and, with daughter Samantha van Leer, two young adult novels, [*Between the Lines*](#) and [*Off the Page*](#).



Picoult's books have been translated into thirty-four languages in thirty-five countries. Four novels – [*The Pact*](#), [*Plain Truth*](#), [*The Tenth Circle*](#), and [*Salem Falls*](#) - have been made into television movies. [*My Sister's Keeper*](#) was a film released from New Line Cinema, with Nick Cassavetes directing and Cameron Diaz starring. [*Mad Honey*](#) is currently in development for a series/film. [*SMALL GREAT THINGS*](#) has been optioned for motion picture adaptation. Picoult also wrote five issues of DC Comic's *Wonder Woman*. Picoult is the co-librettist for the stage musical adaptation of her two Young

Adult novels, Picoult's two Young Adult novels, [*Between The Lines*](#) and [*Off The Page*](#), co-written with her daughter Samantha Van Leer, which premiered Off-Broadway in Summer 2021 and will be licensed through Music Theatre International during the fall of 2022. She is also the co-librettist of the musical BREATHE, which was inducted into the Library of Congress's Performing Arts COVID-19 Response Collection; and of the musical adaptation of THE BOOK THIEF by Markus Zusak, which will play at the Coventry Belgrade and the Leicester Curve in the fall of 2023.

Picoult is the recipient of many awards, including the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction, the Alex Awards from the YALSA, a lifetime achievement award for mainstream fiction from the Romance Writers of America, the NH Literary Award for Outstanding Literary Merit and the Sarah Josepha Hale Award. She holds honorary doctor of letters degrees from Dartmouth College and the University of New Haven. She is a patron of the Carole Shields Prize for Fiction which is awarded to female fiction writers.

Picoult lives in New Hampshire with her husband. They have three children.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What surprised you about Mad Honey? Did you have any emotional reactions? Discuss.
2. Both Olivia and Lily share a love for fun facts, especially about bees. What is the significance of having these bee facts in the book; is there one that particularly stood out to you?
3. Olivia's chapters move forward in time while Lily's move backward. How did this affect the story's narrative and the way information was revealed? Why do you think the authors specifically chose to focus the points of view on Olivia and Lily?
4. In many ways, Asher and Lily are two sides of the same coin. How does Asher's relationship with Braden (or lack thereof) mirror Lily's relationship with her own father and how does this contrast with the relationships they have with their mothers?
5. Do you believe someone who hits and abuses their partner can ever change? And if you were in Olivia's shoes, would you be worried about the potential cycle of abuse that could pass from parent to child? If so, what steps may you have tried to take to prevent this?
6. Did you agree or disagree with Olivia's decision to keep Braden's abuse a secret from Asher? Knowing what we know about the things Olivia and Asher hid from each other, does this ultimately do more to help or hurt Asher?
7. Do you believe that love between a parent and child can be unconditional? Are some actions, taken by either the parent or child, beyond redemption and deemed unforgiveable? Discuss
8. Was the volatility of Lily's relationship with Asher a red flag (a sign that a person will turn out to be—or is—a bad or problematic partner), or something that could be chalked up to a teenage relationship?
9. At one point Jordan snaps at Asher and says, "The truth has no place in a court of law, goddammit. . . . And since the prosecution's already painted you as an abuser and a liar, how good do you actually think your word is?" In what ways do the procedures of this trial—and the larger justice system—affect Asher and the other witnesses?
10. The court of public opinion impacts all the characters involved in the case, something we've seen continuously play out in contemporary society, especially with the popularity of social media and instant access to the news cycle. Do you think it's fair for casual observers to take sides and make assumptions about events they see and hear, and why do you think we, as a society, are so drawn to doing this?
11. What did you think when you learned that Lily was trans? And which societal factors in your life may have affected how you felt about this?
12. During Elizabeth's conversation with Olivia, she says, "You know what they say: if you've met one trans person, you've . . . met one trans person. What's true for Lily might not be true for someone else." Which other movies, shows, and/or books offer genuine depictions of the trans characters and stories featured?

13. How did you think Lily died before it was revealed in the end? Did you make certain assumptions about other characters and who was your prime suspect?
14. One of Olivia's beehives is attacked by a bear and she springs into action to save the bees, even as she knows it's a lost cause. What does this symbolize within the larger story?
15. What do you think about the prosecutor's decision not to charge Maya? Do you think Mike is correct in assuming that Ava prefers this as well? Why or why not?

Jodipicoult.com.

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Best-selling Picoult and Boylan team up for this timely, gripping story about a teen accused of murdering his girlfriend. Olivia McAfee fled her abusive husband, hoping to protect their then six-year-old son, Asher. Olivia brings them to the New Hampshire farm where she was raised, and Asher grows up to be a thoughtful, popular teen. When Asher starts dating a new girl in town named Lily, Olivia is happy for him, until she gets a horrific call from Asher who tells her that Lily is dead after falling down a flight of stairs. Suspicion immediately lands on Asher as he was the only person at the house with Lily when she fell while the two were in the middle of an argument. Asher is swiftly arrested, and Olivia calls in her brother, Jordan, a defense attorney longtime Picoult readers will recognize from some of her previous books, including *Nineteen Minutes* (2007), to defend Asher. The courtroom drama makes for gripping reading; a reveal about Lily at the midway point adds another dimension to the case, and Olivia grapples with the possibility that her son could take after her ex-husband more than he does her. This timely and absorbing read will make readers glad these two powerful writers decided to collaborate. **HIGH DEMAND BACKSTORY:** Perennially popular novelist Picoult and Boylan, known for her fiction and seminal works about the transgender experiences, will bring in droves of intrigued readers.

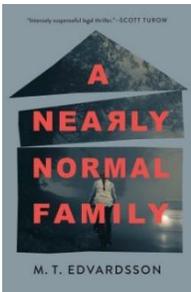
Publisher's Weekly

Picoult (*Wish You Were Here*) joins forces with novelist and transgender activist Boylan (*Long Black Veil*) for a spellbinding yarn involving a teen's trial for murder. Beekeeper Olivia McAfee fled her abusive husband in Boston for New Hampshire with her six-year-old son, Asher. Twelve years later, Asher is charged with murdering his high school girlfriend, Lily, a newcomer to town. The story unfolds from Olivia and Lily's viewpoints (Lily's before the murder), and centers on the budding relationship between Asher and Lily and the subsequent court case against Asher, who is represented by Olivia's older brother, Jordan, a high-profile defense attorney who has appeared in previous Picoult novels. Both teens have troubled relationships with their fathers, and the authors painstakingly explore the impact of physically and emotionally abusive men on their families. After a big reveal in the second half, the canvas stretches to include a primer on transgender issues, and the shift is mostly seamless though sometimes didactic. More successful is the atmospheric texture provided with depictions of Olivia harvesting honey and the art of beekeeping, and the riveting trial drama. Overall, it's a fruitful collaboration. (Oct.)

Kirkus Reviews

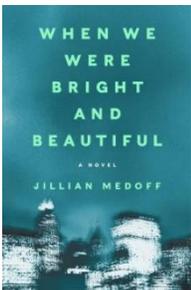
The shocking murder of a teenager thrusts a small town into the headlines and destabilizes the lives of everyone who knew her. Olivia McAfee, a professional beekeeper and single mother, fled Boston and an abusive husband to try to give her son, Asher, a better life in small-town New Hampshire. Things go well for their first 12 years in Adams. Asher is a well-liked senior and captain of the high school hockey team; he barely remembers his abusive father; he and his mother have a great relationship; and he's preparing to go off to college. Then he meets Lily Campanello, a new girl who, like his mother, has fled a troubled past. Things get very serious quickly; then, one afternoon after they've had a fight, Asher finds Lily dead at the bottom of her basement stairs. Before he even has time to grieve, he's arrested and charged with her murder. What follows is a long and public courtroom trial in which everyone's secrets are exposed and even his own mother begins to question his innocence. Told in two storylines--one Olivia's, in the present, and one Lily's, going backward from the day of her murder--the novel is well plotted but sometimes feels long-winded, including characters who don't have much significance and details that don't seem relevant. It takes a while for the book to get moving, but once the trial begins, it becomes more compelling, and the courtroom scenes are where the writing shines brightest. The characters aren't as well developed as they should be, though, often feeling wooden or monochromatic--some always say the right thing while others always say or do the wrong thing--and the ending is predictable. A well-paced story that highlights several timely issues, with a stimulating courtroom trial that makes it worth reading. Copyright (c) Kirkus Reviews, used with permission.

SOLITO READALIKES - FOOTNOTES



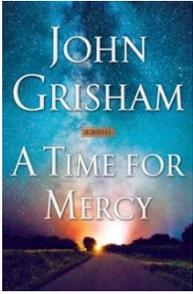
***A Nearly Normal Family Street* by M.T. Edvardsson**

A legal thriller told in three acts follows the trial of a 17-year-old girl from an upstanding family who has been implicated in the murder of a shady businessman, testing the limits of her father's faith and mother's ethics



***When We Were Bright and Beautiful* by Jillian Medoff**

When her brother, a junior at Princeton, is arrested for assaulting his ex-girlfriend, 23-year-old Cassie Quinn, as reporters converge on her family's Upper East Side landmark building, vows to prove his innocence, which means exposing her own darkest secrets to the world.



***A Time for Mercy* by John Grisham**

Court-appointed lawyer Jake Brigance puts his career and the safety of his family on the line to defend a 16-year-old murder suspect who is facing the death penalty.