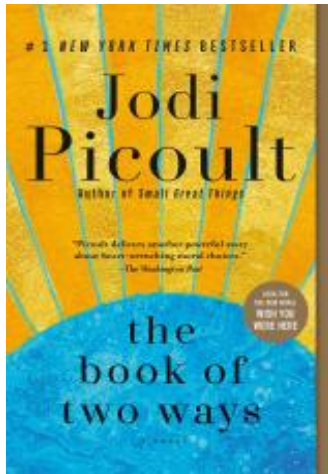


# The Book of Two Ways

by Jodi Picoult

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## About the Book

**From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *SMALL GREAT THINGS* and *A SPARK OF LIGHT* comes a riveting novel about the choices that alter the course of our lives.**

Everything changes in a single moment for Dawn Edelstein. She's on a plane when the flight attendant makes an announcement: Prepare for a crash landing. She braces herself as thoughts flash through her mind. The shocking thing is, the thoughts are not of her husband but of a man she last saw 15 years ago: Wyatt Armstrong.

Dawn, miraculously, survives the crash, but so do all the doubts that have suddenly been raised. She has led a good life. Back in Boston, there is her husband, Brian, their beloved daughter and her work as a death doula, in which she helps ease the transition between life and death for her clients.

But somewhere in Egypt is Wyatt Armstrong, who works as an archaeologist unearthing ancient burial sites, a career Dawn once studied for but was forced to abandon when life suddenly intervened. And now, when it seems that fate is offering her second chances, she is not as sure of the choice she once made.

After the crash landing, the airline ensures that the survivors are seen by a doctor, then offers transportation to wherever they want to go. The obvious option for Dawn is to continue down the path she is on and go home to her family. The other is to return to the archaeological site she left years before, reconnect with Wyatt and their unresolved history, and maybe even complete her research on *The Book of Two Ways* --- the first known map of the afterlife.

As the story unfolds, Dawn's two possible futures unspool side by side, as do the secrets and doubts long buried with them. Dawn must confront the questions she's never truly asked: What does a life well lived look like? When we leave this earth, what do we leave behind? Do we make choices...or do our choices make us? And who would you be if you hadn't turned out to be the person you are right now?

## Discussion Guide

1. The book asks: "Who would you be, if you hadn't turned out to be the person you are right now?" If you had to pinpoint the one person or thing you left behind, what or who would it be? Do you wonder: *What if?* How might your life be different if you had taken that different route?
2. Had you ever heard of a death doula before reading *THE BOOK OF TWO WAYS*? What did you think of this care practice and the way it is incorporated in the novel?
3. Both Egyptian mythology and quantum physics are explored in the book, and they are often presented as two opposites in Dawn's life. Do you think they're as different as Dawn perceives them to be, or are there ways in which they actually overlap?
4. In what ways do Dawn's two potential careers mirror each other?
5. Do you think Dawn's decision not to return to Egypt after her mother passes away is ultimately a selfish or a selfless choice?
6. Dawn and her daughter, Meret, have a close but challenging relationship. What do you think causes them to clash so often? What do they learn from one another by the end of the book?
7. Picoult plays with the idea of parallel universes and alternate timelines as we see Dawn's narrative unravel in both Boston and in Egypt. Were you surprised when it became clear which timeline Dawn truly exists in?
8. What responsibility do you think Brian and Wyatt each hold for how Dawn's path in life progressed?
9. Do you think it's possible to experience multiple loves, as Dawn and Win both describe?
10. What did you think of Dawn's decision to deliver Win's painting to Thane Bernard?
11. The novel also explores the concept of fate versus free will. Do you think we determine our own destiny through our choices, or are we always heading toward the same fate no matter which path we take to get there (as *THE BOOK OF TWO WAYS* suggests)?
12. If you were in Dawn's shoes, would you choose to stay with Brian or to pursue a life with Wyatt? Or is there another path you would take instead?

13. What do you think makes for a good legacy? Are certain things --- like one's career, contributions to science or culture, or family --- weighed more heavily than others when considering what constitutes a "good life"?

## Author Bio

Jodi Picoult is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 30 novels, including *BY ANY OTHER NAME*, *MAD HONEY* (co-authored with Jennifer Finney Boylan), *WISH YOU WERE HERE*, *THE BOOK OF TWO WAYS*, *A SPARK OF LIGHT*, *SMALL GREAT THINGS*, *LEAVING TIME* and *MY SISTER'S KEEPER*, and, with daughter Samantha van Leer, two young adult novels, *BETWEEN THE LINES* and *OFF THE PAGE*. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband.

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