

Book Discussion Guide for THE 9:09 PROJECT **by Mark H. Parsons**

1. Do you perceive this primarily as a character-driven or plot-driven novel? Why? (Also: Is there a firm delineation between these two structures, or can a story be somewhere on a continuum between them?)
2. What do you see as the watershed event that starts J on his journey?
3. Why was it so difficult at first for J and Assi to create an honest friendship...with the potential for more? What was the common ground this was eventually built upon?
4. In the book there is a short excerpt from the novel Assi is writing (about a French girl named Astrid). Which aspect of her own life do you think Assi was metaphorically exploring with this scene?
5. How has J grown by the end of the story compared to when we first meet him? In what ways is he similar? (Also: Who would you say helped him the most in his growth?)
6. J and Ollie's father's hobby of restoring antique machinery is first seen by J as a waste of time. What does J eventually come to realize about his dad and his restorations?
7. What is the thought process that eventually leads J to wanting to get his dad his "perfect yellow" antique motorcycle?
8. Does J make us feel like his synesthesia is a disability? Why or why not?
9. There were two iterations of holiday celebrations—several weeks apart—which bookended J and Assi's 'courtship.' Discuss the different way these events ended, and how that led to changes in J and Assi's relationship.
10. What method(s) did Ollie use to deal with her grief over the loss of her mother?
11. J's perception of Ollie changes as they navigate the events of the story. Discuss the ways in which his assessment of his sister evolves.
12. Early on Kennedy seems like a stereotypical "mean girl." How does what we learn about her add to our understanding of her behavior?
13. How does learning about the author's experiences during the creation of a book (from the author note) impact the overall reading experience for you?
14. What do you feel the Dorothea Lange quotes (which start each chapter) contribute to the overall work? Did you have a favorite quote?
15. What was your favorite scene in the book? Why?
16. Which scene had the most emotional impact on you? Why?
17. How can art help us navigate rough patches in our lives? (Optional: Do you have an example you'd like to share?)

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