

# Small Mercies Discussion Questions



Things (large and small) to think about:

1.

a) Why do you think Mercy found the instruction to do a dance from her own culture so difficult?

b) If your teacher gave you an instruction like that, what dance would you do? (You can do the dance if you want.)

2.

a) Mercy sees people in her class being bullied. How do you think it makes her feel?

b) In any bullying situation there might be four different kinds of people. Which kind of person do you think you are?

\* the bully

\* the person who is bullied

\* the bystander

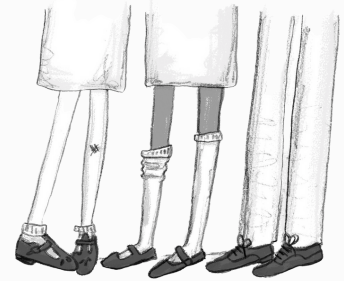
\* the helper

(Or have you been all four at different times?)

c) Why do you think people bully others?

d) Make a list of things you wish grown-ups knew about bullying.

e) What happened towards the end of the book which helped to solve the bullying problem in Mercy's class?



3.

a) Mercy collects ornamental birds in a shoe box. Do you collect anything?

b) Dr Waku tells Mercy that 'they will be rescued by birds'. How does this come true?

4.

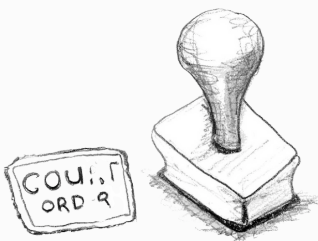
a) Write down 3 things that Aunt Flora does in the story that tell us that her brain is not working properly.

b) Do you know anyone who suffers from Alzheimer's disease?

5.

a) Why is Mercy so afraid of the social worker?

b) Do you have something or someone that really scares you? You can say it out loud if you want, or you can keep it a secret.



# Small Mercies Discussion Questions

6.

- a) Why do you think Mercy and the Aunts trusted Mr Singh as soon as they met him?
- b) How do we know that Mr Singh is a devout Hindu?
- c) When Mr Singh takes Mercy to visit his old friend Mohandas, where do they go?
- d) Why do you think Mr Singh admires Gandhi so much? Pick from this list:

- \* He was very famous
- \* He always tried to tell the truth
- \* He made other people feel bad when they acted unfairly
- \* He was willing to suffer for telling the truth
- \* He lived simply
- \* He was always angry whenever he was confronted with injustice
- \* He was born brave



7.

- a) Why does Mercy find it so difficult to explain what she was doing in the classroom alone on the night of Parents' Evening?
- b) Mrs Pruitt says that 'truth is neither pure nor simple'. Do you think that's true?
- c) Why does Mrs Pruitt believe Mercy's story?
- d) What does Satyagraha mean?

8.

What do the bees teach Mercy? Pick the answers you think are right from this list:

They work very hard

All the worker bees want to become the Queen bee

They are dangerous and should be killed

Their work results in the pollination of fruit and vegetables

Each bee contributes a tiny amount of honey to the hive and those tiny quantities add up to enough honey for all the bees.

9.

Which character in the book said:

One small act can make other, much bigger things happen. We don't always know what that is going to be ...

It's in the tiny little circles of life where the sweetness lives.

I will never let something as silly as going to school get in the way of your education...

Don't just do something. Stand there.

Tell the truth. Even if your voice shakes.

In French we say 'Je m'en fouts ...It means not giving a rat's buttocks ...