

READERS GUIDE

The Seventeen Second Miracle

1. Why do you think most people blame Rex for Flick's drowning? Do you think that is a fair assessment? Why or why not?
2. Losing a child is an emotional hardship. Do you think Flick's mother was so unforgiving of Rex because she thought he could have prevented Flick's death, or is there something more to her ire?
3. Forgiveness can be a slow process. Discuss why Sparks and Rex stay together even after everything that's happened in their relationship, and to her family. Did you ever doubt they would be able to make their relationship work?
4. Why do you think Sparks was so quick to forgive Rex and help him heal?

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5. Discuss the significance of Cole and Jade's porch and how it becomes a point of contention when Jade considers it *Cole's* porch, but also how it becomes a haven for them and others.
6. Jade and Cole cannot have children and Jade has come to feel defeated by God. At one point, Jade says, "I won't feel sorry for myself and blame God. I won't. I'll just live a different life from the one I dreamt of" (page 121). Discuss how this tests their faith and marriage.
7. Rex "knew no strangers" (page 136). How does this work in context with his life's work in performing, witnessing, and collecting Seventeen Second Miracles?
8. Jade gives Cole braids that symbolize the past, present, and future, and encourages him to remember what the Discussions are really about. Why do you think it took so long for Jade to have this conversation with him? How do you think it changed how Cole led the Discussions from then on?
9. Would you consider the incident with Travis on the mall a failed miracle? Why or why not? Are there other examples throughout the novel where the characters are confronted with a failed miracle, only to have their faith see them through?
10. At the end of chapter 31, Cole says, "I retrieved Travis's watch. It worked, but it was badly beaten" (page 161). How is this symbolic of what just happened in the story? Were Travis's actions toward Cole justified after the incident?

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11. Why do you think Jade is willing to give up Paper Gems if they can't arrest the arsonist? How does this exemplify the type of person she is?
12. As an apology to Jade, Cole buys three dozen roses and tucks a card into each vase, telling her to open them in any order. Discuss the symbolism and significance of the order in which she opens them: "You. I. Love" (page 219).
13. Cole and Jade fight on their honeymoon because Cole is performing a miracle after Jade asks him not to get involved. Is it ever possible for a miracle to be detrimental?
14. At one point, Cole contemplates that his father raised him in Seventeen Second Miracles. Do you think there is any truth to this?
15. Do you think that Cole was better prepared for the Discussions by not following in his father's footsteps? Why or why not?
16. Discuss the difference between "being good" and being a "goody-goody" (page 238) in the context of the story and Rex's life.
17. Have you ever performed or experienced a Seventeen Second Miracle?