

A photograph of a swing set against a cloudy sky. The swing seat is a dark, curved wooden plank hanging from two metal chains. Below the swing is a wooden fence, and at the very bottom is a teal-colored mat. The text 'JP DELANEY playing NICE' is overlaid in blue, with 'NICE' in a larger font.

JP DELANEY
playing
NICE

Discussion Questions

1. What if the child you love—the child who you have raised for two years as your own—turns out to have been switched at birth with another?
2. In *Playing Nice*, JP Delaney throws in more than one impossible what-if situation. How many do you perceive?
3. Discuss the question that propelled the author to write this book: How far would you go to protect the child you love?
4. Discuss how gender roles play into the tensions between characters. How does the author subvert them?
5. To whom do you think Theo and David truly belong and why?
6. What does it mean to “belong” to someone else? Was the families’ attempt to co-parent naïve?
7. Do you think Miles truly believed his wealth could provide better lives for Theo and David or was he only interested in control?
8. Discuss how the novel explores nature versus nurture.
9. Can someone’s terrible actions be excused if they had a bad upbringing?
10. Is it possible that some people are just born bad? Is parenting defined by biology or by what comes from the heart?

Discussion Questions

11. List some of the signs that foreshadow the dark turn of events. Do you think you would have seen all the signs that Pete and Maddie missed about the Lamberts?
12. When it comes to family court, the concepts of justice and fairness can be quite complicated. How did the legal process work against the Rileys and at what moment did they decide to quit playing nice?
13. What did you make of the Riley family's dynamic after the revelation about Maddie's history of mental illness?
14. Did you sympathize with Lucy's decision to switch the children or was it selfish to involve the Rileys? What do you make of Maddie's doubts about what really happened?
15. "Sometimes I find myself wondering what, in the end, the difference is between pretending to be nice . . . and trying to be nice." What do you make of the revelation about Maddie's true personality?
16. Do you think that Maddie is genuinely capable of loving?
17. What, if anything, separates Maddie from Miles?