

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDE

HEY, WHITE GIRL

1. Compare Nell's personal world in 1969 to what was going on in the news in that year.
2. Why did Nell's mother allow her to be bused? Why did she change her mind?
3. Compare Nell's experience with Sally's experience at Stonewall. What made them different?
4. Nell's mother thought that putting her in a private school was the right thing to do. Should Nell have been part of that decision? What is a parent's responsibility when it comes between what a child wants and what a parent believes is best for them?
5. What would Margorie Randolph need to do to understand her daughter and the changing cultural climate? What if she believes Nell's behavior and interests go against how she wants to raise Nell?
6. How are communication patterns different today from how people communicated then? How are they the same? Is one way better than another?
7. What is it about Nell that makes her more comfortable with her Black friends than with her childhood friend, Sally?
8. Nell and Fergy become unlikely friends. What is it that makes their relationship authentic? Could they have been a successful couple?
9. In what ways did Nell protect Donald? Was what she did wrong? Could she have supported him in a different way that would have brought the family together?
10. There are scenes in the novel where Nell is comfortable with her own race, even when she is with her Black friends, and there are scenes where she feels the discomfort of her race. What makes the difference for her?
11. Do you think Nell's choice of a college is a brave decision or an escape?
12. Fergy's choice of a college is thwarted. How might the story have turned out differently if Fergy had been able to go to his first choice of colleges or does it not matter where a person goes to college?
13. Is Father Richard a character that unites the community or one who divides it? How? What do you think of his involvement with Donald's decision?

14. Nell's relationship with her mother and her brother is distanced at the end of the book. Was that inevitable or could she have done something differently?
15. Do you think Nell will return to Richmond? If she did, can one person make a difference? If so, how?
16. Like other southern cities, Richmond, VA took down its Confederate statues in 2020 and 2021. Do you think that was a symbolic act or has real change occurred since the setting of this novel? What feels more equitable or less equitable?
17. Think about the title. How does its meaning change from the beginning of the book to the end?