A Reading Group Guide for

***In a World Just Right***

By Jen Brooks

**Prereading Questions**

If you could create one world “just right” for you to live in, what would it look like?

If there was no limit to the number of worlds you could create, and you could bounce around them as much or as little as you liked, what other worlds would you create?

**Discussion Questions**

1. In Chapter 1, Jonathan says, “How would she [real Kylie] feel to know that in another world not only does Jonathan Aubrey love her but she loves him right back? . . . It’s sick, I know, what I’ve done. But it’s all I have for happiness.” Given what you know of both Kylies in the story, how do you think each would have felt about the truth had they known it in Chapter 1? Is Jonathan’s assessment of “It’s sick” one that you agree with? Given what you know of Jonathan and his circumstances, why or why not?

2. List the similarities and differences Jonathan notices between the two Kylies. What do you think could account for these similarities and differences? What does Jonathan think about these similarities and differences once he notices them?

3. In Chapter 7, Jonathan says, “I’m cheating on my girlfriend with my girlfriend.” Would you consider his relationships with the two Kylies a love triangle? What are some love triangles you’ve seen in other books, and how are those similar to or different than this one with Jonathan and the two Kylies?

4. In Chapter 8, Jonathan says, “All I want right now is what’s real. And what’s real is a Kylie who barely knows me, an uncle who’s still not home, and a family who’s still dead.” Then, in Chapter 9, Jonathan finds himself feeling an increasing need to be “real.” In the context of the story, what does it mean to be “real”? Do you define “real” differently than Jonathan does? Do you think Jonathan is living up to his own definition of what is “real”?

5. Chapter 9 contains some examples of literary allusion. Find two examples and explain the allusions.

6. In Chapter 9, art and creation are brought together when Jonathan and Kylie visit the art museum. There are many additional references to art and creation in other parts of the novel. Find three such references and explain how each contributes to the themes of art and creation in the novel.

7. At the end of Chapter 12, while playing hypothetical questions, Jonathan says to Kylie, “If you could ask your future self, say twenty years from now, any question, what would you ask?” Kylie’s answer: “I’d ask if I should have gone to Mexican Station tonight with Jonathan Aubrey.” Does this exchange signify a turning point in the story? If yes, how so?

8. Chapter 15 shows both Kylies acting out of character. What context clues suggest that the Kylies are starting to take on each other’s traits?

9. In Chapter 19, Jonathan says, “A mixed-up love and a merged love aren’t the same thing as real love, and neither is fair for Kylie.” Think about your answers to Question #4 above. In your opinion, is either Kylie’s love for Jonathan “real”? Is Jonathan’s love for Kylie “real”?

10. There are many references to God in this story. What is Jonathan’s attitude toward God for most of the novel? Why does he have this attitude? What is Jonathan’s attitude at the end? What has caused the change?

11. In Chapter 20, Jonathan parks outside his uncle’s church and prays. What does he pray for? What does he receive? How much of what happens in this book is the result of divine intervention? Is the answer clear?

12. In Chapter 20, Jonathan and Tess argue about living in “a world just right.” What position does each of them take? In Chapter 26, what choice does Jonathan actually make regarding this issue? Do you believe Jonathan makes the right choice?

13. In Chapter 21, what steps does Jonathan take to make girlfriend Kylie understand what has to be done to save her? How does she take the news? How do you think real Kylie would have taken the news if Jonathan had told her instead? Should he have told real Kylie? Why or why not?

14. Several scenes in the novel are set in Jonathan’s creative writing class (Chapters 2, 5, 11, 15, 17, and 23). How does each creative writing class contribute to the development of the plot and/or Jonathan’s character?

15. The big reveal about Jonathan’s worlds begins with the note from Tess in Chapter 23. Did you guess the truth prior to the reveal? What other theories were you forming about what was really going on? Looking back, what clues in the story hinted at this revelation?

16. Tess’s true identity is revealed in Chapter 26 by Rosemary. What foreshadowing was there in the story that Tess was not the person she was pretending to be? How would you describe Tess’s character? Why does she act the way she does? Do you think she ultimately made things better or worse for Jonathan? Why do you think so?

17. One commonly used technique in plotting a novel is to bring a character to the lowest, darkest possible place they can go just before things start turning around. What is Jonathan’s “lowest, darkest” moment? Look at the events leading up to it. How do these events contribute to the emotions—both Jonathan’s and the reader’s—in that moment?

18. At the end of the book, Jonathan repeats a poem that he wrote called “The Lighthouse.” What was your reaction upon reading it the second time? Has the meaning deepened or changed because of the events of the book? Now go back to Chapter 2 and review Kylie’s analysis of Jonathan’s poem. Has Kylie’s analysis proven to be true?

19. What do you think is the greatest lesson Jonathan has learned by the end of the story? Where in the text do you see this lesson articulated? What other lessons has he learned? Provide examples from the text to support your answer.

**Activities**

**A Different Point of View**

In Chapter 20, Tess says she “earned her stripes” to become a world-maker. What does this mean? Write a short story about what you imagine happened to Tess, in order for her to have earned the world-making power. Alternatively, rewrite a scene from the novel from Tess’s point of view.

**Quotation Collage**

Go back through the novel and pull out quotations that either have special meaning for you or significant meaning in the story. Type them up, cut them out, and create a collage along with any images you can find that reflect the content of the quotations.

**Similar Theme**

Read *Frankenstein*, *Pygmalion*, or other creation myths. Compare and contrast these stories with *In a World Just Right*.

**Music for Readers**

Create a playlist for *In a World Just Right*. Organize the playlist by chapter, character, or some other method. Explain what led you to make each song selection.

**Breaking the News**

In the Epilogue, Jonathan says that in the past year he has been anything but invisible. He goes on to explain that newspaper coverage is one of the ways he’s been put in the spotlight. Imagine you are a reporter covering the story immediately after the events of Chapter 26. Choose which characters in the book you would like to interview. Make a list of two to four questions you would ask each character and write their imagined responses. Then write an article about Jonathan’s story, filling in whatever details you want for events occurring after Chapter 26.

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