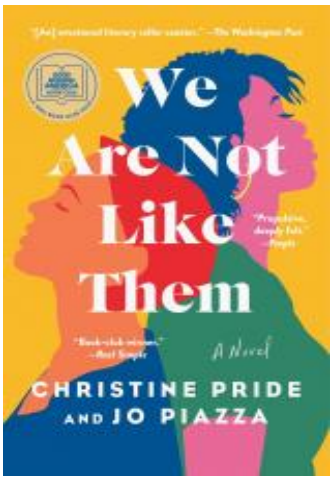
We Are Not Like Them

by Christine Pride and Jo Piazza



About the Book

Told from alternating perspectives, an evocative and riveting novel about the lifelong bond between two women, one Black and one white, whose friendship is indelibly altered by a tragic event --- a powerful and poignant exploration of race in America today and its devastating impact on ordinary lives.

Jen and Riley have been best friends since kindergarten. As adults, they remain as close as sisters, though their lives have taken different directions. Jen married young and is finally pregnant after years of trying. Riley pursued her childhood dream of becoming a television journalist and is poised to become one of the first Black female anchors of the top news channel in their hometown of Philadelphia.

But the deep bond they share is severely tested when Jen?s husband, a city police officer, is involved in the shooting of an unarmed Black teenager. Six months pregnant, Jen is in freefall as her future, her husband?s freedom and her friendship with Riley are thrown into uncertainty. Covering this career-making story, Riley wrestles with the implications of this tragic incident for her Black community, her ambitions and her relationship with her lifelong friend.

Like Tayari Jones? AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE and Jodi Picoult?s SMALL GREAT THINGS, WE ARE NOT LIKE THEM explores complex questions of race and how they pervade and shape our most intimate spaces in a deeply divided world. But at its heart, it?s a story of enduring friendship --- a love that defies the odds even as it faces its most difficult challenges.

Discussion Guide

1. What emotions did you experience while reading the prologue? Why do you think the authors chose to open with this scene?

2. How did you interpret Kevin?s behaviors after the incident? Did you feel any sympathy for him, and do you think he deserved everything that happened after? Who do you blame for what happened?

3. Did you find yourself torn over how to feel about any of the characters? reactions or decisions in the novel? What moments were particularly controversial to you, and how did they challenge your perceptions?

4. Discuss how this novel exhibits instances of prejudice based on privilege, class and race. What about instances of unconscious bias?

5. Riley says to Jen, ?I didn?t want to be the Black girl always talking about race. That?s no fun. And I don?t know what your reaction would be if I told you about all the shit I have to deal with because I?m a Black woman. What if you didn?t have the right reaction?? (page 246). How might we be able to more openly discuss our feelings about these sensitive issues? Do you think there?s ever a reason these things should be left undiscussed? Have you ever struggled to express a feeling or observation about race out of fear of being dismissed or misunderstood?

6. Did Jen and Riley?s alternating voices highlight any important similarities or differences about their experiences during the novel? Did you relate to one character in particular?

7. Riley and Jen are pulled between their friendship and their commitments to their careers, families and communities. Do you think they made the right choices? Have you ever felt caught between your obligations to others and yourself?

8. Jen struggles with supporting her husband and her complicated feelings about his actions and innocence. Do you think she?s too afraid of his family to question him more? How does family influence your descisions?

9. How did you interpret the reactions from the media and social platforms throughout the novel? How are these mediums helpful or harmful to the people at the center of the story?

10. The tragedy that sparks the divide in Riley and Jen?s relationship exposes some fault lines in their shared history. When is a friendship worth hanging on to, and when is it time to let go? How did their bond change by the end of the novel, for better or worse?

11. Were there parts of the novel that made you uncomfortable, and why?

12. What do you think of the book?s title? What does it encapsulate about this story? Who are ?We? and ?Them? in the title?

Author Bio

Christine Pride is a writer, editor and longtime publishing veteran. She?s held editorial posts at many different trade imprints, including Doubleday, Broadway, Crown, Hyperion and Simon & Schuster. As an editor, Christine has published many bestselling and critically acclaimed novels and memoirs. In addition to writing novels, she does select editorial work, proposal/content development, and teaching and coaching.

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