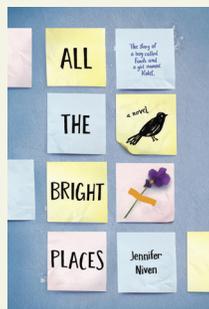


# In Reading Groups

Book Discussion Guide from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

by Jacque Stouffer



## *All the Bright Places*

by Jennifer Niven

(Young Adult) Violet and Finch are high school seniors who meet on the roof of their high school's bell tower. As soon as you know why they are each on the roof, you understand just how sad they are ...and how unique, challenging, and complicated. This is their story of seeking bright places together.

1. Consider the title – *All the Bright Places*. Why do you think the author chose this for her title? Do you think Finch and Violet find the ‘bright places’? If so, where? Do you think they leave bright places behind them?
2. What truth do you see in the Ernest Hemingway quote at the book's beginning?  
“The world breaks everyone, and afterward, many are strong at the broken places.”  
Was Violet strong at her broken places? Was Finch? How can we be among those who are strong at the broken places?
3. Under the chapter titles for Finch, the “Awake” days are counting upward, while Violet's chapters begin with a countdown toward graduation. Did these chapter subtitles add to the reading experience for you? How did they affect your impression of the two main characters from the start?
4. Why do you think Violet is counting the days to graduation when she has no plans?
5. What does Finch see in Violet that prompts him to make such an effort to be her friend – especially when he goes out of his way to provoke or irritate so many others in her friend group?
6. What role did Finch's friends – Charlie and Brenda – play in your understanding of Finch? Did they make him more or less likeable to you?
7. How did you feel about Finch's mom? Does she have any similarities Violet's parents? What, if anything, makes her an empathetic character?
8. On page 78, Finch decides to put back the sleeping pills because he thinks, “But who's going to check on Violet Markey to make sure she's not back up on that ledge?” How important is our role as caretaker in others' lives to our sense of purpose and self-worth?
9. On page 155, Finch says, “There's a built-in ending to everything in the world, right?” Do you agree? If so, how do we live with that reality?
10. On pages 167-168, Finch flips through the books his sister cut up, and “clips out some of the best lines and the very best words.” ... “What if life could be this way? Only the happy parts, none of the terrible, not even the mildly unpleasant. What if we could just cut out the bad and keep the good?”  
First – what are the best lines and very best words you would clip out; of this book or others?  
Second – how would life be different if we could cut out the bad and only have the good? Is there any value in having the bad along with the good?

11. On page 178, Finch sees the hooded crane in the water as “wandering” – just like Finch and Violet are doing. What does this say about Finch’s character?

12. How did the scene depicted on page 190 between Violet and her mom – and the Pearl S. Buck quote about growth containing a germ of happiness – change the story for you? Did it change your expectation for Violet’s future?

Do you like the name Violet chose for her new magazine? Why or why not?

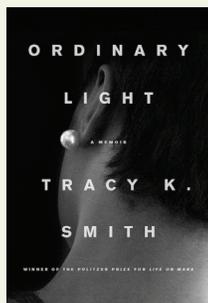
13. At some point, Violet’s chapters stop listing a countdown to graduation. Why?

14. What were your impressions of Finch’s father? How does their relationship affect Finch?

15. In the Acknowledgements section, the author says she wanted to write “something edgy, something contemporary, something tough, hard, sad, but funny.” Do you think she succeeded? Why or why not?

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## NEXT MONTH



### *Ordinary Light: A Memoir*

by Tracy K. Smith

Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Tracy K. Smith tells her remarkable story, giving us a quietly potent memoir that explores her coming-of-age and the meaning of home against a complex backdrop of race, faith, and the unbreakable bond between a mother and daughter.