

READER'S GUIDE

Melody
ELLISON™

No Ordinary Sound:
A classic featuring Melody





A READER'S GUIDE TO

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Melody's stories are set during a turbulent time in United States history—the 1960s. The civil rights movement was underway, and the nation was struggling with racial inequality. Melody's story touches on these subjects from a ten-year-old girl's perspective. Fictional characters like Melody can help children understand someone else's point of view, and spark meaningful conversations about the subject matter. We've worked with experts to develop thoughtful discussion questions to get the conversation started.



1. How would you describe the Ellison family? They don't always agree. Does that mean they're not a close-knit group? What are some disagreements that happen in the story? How are they resolved?
2. Melody loves to sing in the choir at church. Why, then, is she nervous about singing a solo? Are there things you like to do that also make you nervous? What other kinds of music influence Melody? How does her love of music shape her relationship with her brother?
3. Melody calls her grandmother "Big Momma" not because of her physical size but because she's the oldest mother in the family. The name is a sign of respect and affection. How do the names you use for your family members and friends show respect or affection?
4. Melody and her family discuss the different terms used to describe Americans of African descent (p. 17). What does Melody think of those labels? Are there other groups of people who are labeled? Could those labels be unfair or cause hurt feelings?
5. On Mother's Day, Yvonne surprises everyone by wearing an Afro hairstyle. Why do you think her family members react the way they do (pp. 60-61, 67)? When some women at church comment on Yvonne's hair, Melody is proud of her big sister for standing up for what she believes in. What does Melody do in the story to stand up for what she believes in?
6. In Chapter 7, Melody's cousins talk about having been treated unfairly when they lived in Birmingham because they're black. How are Val and her parents treated unfairly after they move to Detroit? How is Melody treated unfairly? How do Melody and her family members react?
7. Miss Esther tells Melody, "You're never too old or too young to stand up for justice" (p. 90). Why don't Val's parents want to participate in the Walk to Freedom? Why doesn't Dwayne? What do those characters do to stand up for justice? How do you stand up for what you believe in?



8. When she attends the Walk to Freedom, Melody is inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Who else influences Melody throughout her story? Who influences you in your life?
9. Dwayne tells Melody, “I have to use my talent to become a famous singer if I want things to be different” (p 105). What does he mean? Why does he think the music of Motown is his chance for freedom?
10. How does Melody’s relationship with Diane change throughout the story? Why does Diane tell Melody, “You’re braver than I am” (p. 158)? What does Melody do that is brave? Are there other characters in the story who are brave? What have you done that is brave?
11. After a church is bombed in Birmingham, Melody is afraid to go inside her own church in Detroit. What does she do to overcome her fear? What makes her feel better? Why is it important to Melody to sing at Youth Day? How do her friends and family help her accomplish her goal?
12. What does the title mean? When Melody sings “Lift Every Voice and Sing” at Youth Day, and the audience cheers, Melody says, “It was no ordinary sound” (p. 213). Does the title apply to other moments in the book? What about the Walk to Freedom?