Reading guide for Renée Watson’s *Piecing Me Together* (2017)

1. There are instances when Jade’s lack of money causes her to keep secrets from people in her life. Why does she choose to do this? What might be the impact on her relationships when she’s unable to be honest about her reality?

2. Jade thinks, “Always the realist, I think. Always the poorest.” What skills does Jade have that perhaps her wealthy classmate Kennedy or her mentor Maxine may not have?

3. How does the gap between Jade’s experience and that of more affluent people distance her from them?

4. How does Jade feel when she recognizes her shared identity with Sam? How does this recognition affect their relationship?

5. How does Mrs. Parker try to help Jade, but also ends up stereotyping her?

6. Author Jason Reynolds said that this book “somehow gets the toxicity of sympathy.” What do you think he means? How are sympathy and empathy different?

7. Jade collages with everyday things she finds in her neighborhood. What does that say about how she views her neighborhood?

8. When does Jade experience herself as “too black” or check her behavior so she won’t be seen that way? Are there times Jade might experience herself as “not black enough”? How might that impact her relationships and her feelings about herself?

9. Why is it so hard for Sam and other white people in Jade’s life (school staff) to see the ways in which Jade experiences mistreatment as a black girl?

10. Break down Jade’s experience at the mall store. What does it feel like for Jade to see that she’s being mistreated and to be sure that it’s because of race, but to have Sam and the other shoppers ignore, deny, or explain it away, to tell her she didn’t actually experience what she experienced? How could everyone have acted differently?

11. Why does Sam not knowing about Natasha Ramsey hurt Jade? Why would the news reach Jade, but not Sam? What could that say about the frequency of violence against black women and its impact on Jade?

12. Why are Jade and Lee Lee so distressed to hear about the assault on a girl they do not know? Why are so few other people aware of the incident, or disturbed by it?

13. If Jade feels Natasha’s attack deeply, how do you think that affects her feeling of safety? How do you think that changes her behavior?
14. Jade is embarrassed that she has never thought about Thanksgiving as “celebrating that our nation was stolen from indigenous people.” Can we be thankful on a national holiday while at the same time acknowledging the reality of what our nation did to native people?

15. Sports team logos are long-term symbols of our pride in our community’s teams. When that logo is offensive to marginalized people, should it be changed?

16. Do the Dairy Queen boys know Jade? Why do the boys feel they can rank girls and comment on their bodies? How do their comments affect Jade’s belief that she is both plus-sized and beautiful?

17. Do girls comment on boys’ bodies and looks? Is it different? If so, how?

18. Maxine is not taking her own advice to put love of self before love of boyfriends. Jade sees this clearly. How does that show Jade’s belief in her own value?

19. Jade eventually tells Maxine that her inattention to Jade and attention to her ex-boyfriend is hurtful. How does this conversation help both of them?

20. In the book, how does art (collage, poetry) help Jade and her friends piece their lives together?