

JACKPOT

ALL BETS ARE OFF.



**NIC
STONE**

**AUTHOR
OF
PEAR
MARTIN**

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This
-IS-
BIG
TICKET
LOVE.
ALL
BETS
ARE
OFF.



Grades 9 up
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet Rico: high school senior and afternoon-shift cashier at the Gas 'n' Go, who, after school and work, races home to take care of her younger brother. Every. Single. Day. When Rico sells a jackpot-winning lotto ticket, she thinks maybe her luck will finally change, but only if she—with some assistance from her popular and wildly rich classmate Zan—can find the ticket holder who hasn't claimed the prize. But what happens when haves and have-nots collide?

Nic Stone, the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Dear Martin* and *Odd One Out*, creates two unforgettable characters in one hard-hitting story about class, money—both too little and too much—and how you make your own luck in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Each question that invites readers to discuss, respond, or reflect may be answered orally or artistically. Readers may also respond in writing.

Before Reading

- What would you do if you won a million dollars? Create your wish list.
- Reflect on the opening quote from Mario Puzo: “Friendship and money: oil and water.” What do you think this means? Write about how you think this quote will connect to the book.
- Listen to songs that highlight the connection between money and friendships or other relationships. What lessons are prevalent in these songs? Some examples are:
 - “Mo Money, Mo Problems” by the Notorious B.I.G. feat. Mase and Puff Daddy: youtube.com/watch?v=gUhRKVIjJtw
 - “Money, Power & Respect” by the Lox feat. DMX and Lil’ Kim: youtube.com/watch?v=nnr7Yq5oBuo
 - “C.R.E.A.M.” by Wu-Tang Clan: youtube.com/watch?v=PBwAxmrE194
 - See the *Billboard* article “15 Best Songs About Money” for more songs: billboard.com/photos/7370491/15-best-songs-about-money

During Reading

- Describe Rico Danger and her homelife.
- The story opens on Christmas Eve. Describe the people Rico meets at the Gas 'n' Go as they buy lottery tickets. What does the woman in the Christmas sweater do before she leaves?
- Rico asks Zan Macklin to meet her at the park. Why? What does she tell him? Do you agree with her choice to disclose everything? Explain.
- What is your initial impression of Zan? What led you to this opinion?
- Unpack Rico's thoughts: "It bothers me no end that my successful immigrant entrepreneur boss is referring to my high school classmate as 'mister.' What the hell has *Alexander* done to warrant that kind of respect?" (p. 54) Why does she feel this way? Do you agree? To what larger societal issues does she allude?
- Why does Rico start to regret involving Zan in the search for the woman who bought the lottery ticket?
- Why is it offensive when Zan asks, "What are you, Danger?" (p. 75) What do you think of Rico's response? How is identity related to lineage?
- Rico recalls when her mother was upset about her wanting a blue-eyed, blond-haired doll. Why was her mother upset? What is meant by "*black by societal standards*"? (p. 76)
- Zan and Rico are talking about their different financial realities. Zan explains, "But I'm not [rich]: my *parents* are." (p. 81) Why do alarm bells ring in Rico's head?
- Discuss the argument between Rico and her mother. (pp. 90–93) Who do you think made a better point? Do you agree with Rico's decision to give her mother her holiday bonus? Explain.
- Rico and Zan have many conversations about access and privilege. Zan says, "People see the lotto as this Holy Grail . . . but it's really nothing more than an ugly

system preying on the hope of the poor and destroying lives." (p. 116) How do you feel about his assessment? Explain your answer.

- Rico was hesitant to befriend Jess. Why? How does their "first real *friendship* moment" affect Rico? (p. 224)
- Does Rico's idea of Zan change when she finds out he is biracial? Why does Zan say, "You'd be surprised how weird people get when they find out [that my dad is half Mexican]"? (p. 234)
- Zan invites Rico over to his home for family dinner. Describe the dinner. What are the dynamics of Zan's family? (pp. 244–251)

After Reading

- *Jackpot* delves into the realities faced by people without health insurance. Discuss the soaring costs of health care and insurance. Access to high-quality health care is not guaranteed to everyone. Reflect on the discussion and angst that Rico and her family had when Jax got sick.
- What is an overarching theme of this book? Explain your rationale for your choice.
- Nic Stone personifies items such as the lottery ticket, the \$100 bill from the Christmas bonus check, the house, and Jax's red Lego robot to advance the story and provide additional insight into the characters. Why do you think she chose this narrative technique?
- Describe Rico and Zan's relationship. Do you think that they will reconnect later in life? Imagine if they met again in five years. What would happen?
- Do you agree with Zan's decisions regarding the winning ticket?

STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.9

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, W.3, W.4, W.9

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1, L.3, L.5

PRAISE FOR *JACKPOT*

“**HARD-TO-PUT-DOWN**, enjoyable read.”

—*Booklist*

“Stone delivers **A THOUGHTFUL AND POLISHED NOVEL**
about class, privilege, and relative poverty.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

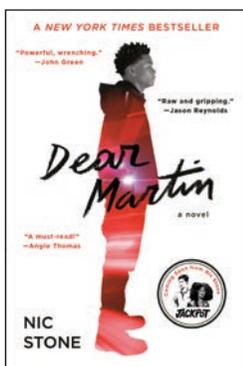
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



NIGEL LIVINGSTONE

Nic Stone is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling *Dear Martin* and the critically acclaimed *Odd One Out*, which *Booklist* called “essential reading” in a starred review. *Jackpot*, her third novel, is a life-affirming story about the humanity in people, no matter how little or how much is in their bank account. Nic lives in Atlanta with her family. You can find Nic at @getnicced on Twitter and @nicstone on Instagram. Visit her website at nicstone.info

ALSO BY NIC STONE



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The American dream
still runs skin deep.



PB: 978-1-101-93953-6

One story. Three sides.
No easy answers.