

Discussion Questions

The Measure by Nikki Erlick

1. If the box from *The Measure* arrived on your doorstep, would you open it? Is there perhaps a particular age or moment in your life when you would be most inclined to view your string?
2. Knowing the length of their string causes many characters to rethink their careers, their dreams, even their views on marriage and children. Some people quit their jobs and shutter their businesses; others travel to distant lands. How would knowing about your string—or not knowing about it — affect the way you lived your life?
3. Ben initially feels conflicted over telling his parents about his string, while Javier chooses to hide the truth from his. Do you think family members have a right to know about each other's strings?
4. In today's world, do you think the arrival of the strings would bring out the worst in people, or the best? Would you view the boxes as a gift or a curse?
5. The world of *The Measure* feels familiar to our own, except for one powerful twist. What is the benefit of setting a novel in a slightly altered version of our world? In what ways did this fictional society's reaction to the strings mirror the behavior of our own society? In what ways did it differ?
6. Do you think any members in the public arena — such as doctors, employers, or government officials — should be able to know the length of someone's string? Should short-stringers be able to publicly identify themselves in order to receive legal protections or government aid? Do you think political candidates should be able to use their strings during a campaign, like Anthony did?
7. In the support group, Maura argues that, "We never should have allowed them to start labeling people as 'long-stringers' and 'short-stringers.'" Do you agree with her? Do you think it would create more division or strengthen community in society?
8. Nina worries that if Maura were to enter the hospital, she might face multiple biases as a Black woman and a short-stringer. How does the experience of short-stringers in the novel reflect any of the past or present injustices facing historically marginalized groups? How do they differ?

9. Religion takes on varying degrees of importance in the characters' lives. Javier is Catholic, Nihal is Hindu, and other characters aren't observant. How do you think the arrival of the strings might impact a person's religious devotion, or lack thereof?

10. In the world of *The Measure*, people receive their boxes upon turning 22. Do you think that's too young to be facing such a choice? Or should the choice be offered to people even younger?

Questions source: Read with Jenna

