

Book review: Realities of racism in 'Small Great Things'

By Kathryn Reed

Color matters – even today. The reality behind the headlines tells us as much.

So it should come as no surprise that the world of fiction is also filled with stories about racism. Sara Picoult in her novel “Small Great Things” (2016 Random House) does not shy away from what some would call delicate subject matters.



This was my book club's May book, which most everyone liked and would recommend.

Instead of weaving the story of the various characters into one narrative, each is separated by his/her own chapters. This is a clever way to ensure their voices, thoughts and feelings are not lost.

A dead baby, a black nurse, a white supremacist dad, and a white public defender who thinks she's color blind. Their worlds collide across more than 400 pages.

For the most part the story rings true. At times I was angry –

at the characters and for representing them.

The legal aspect – more than medical – is most captivating. Predictably it was the trial where the fireworks come.

There were times when the story dragged, and then the end seemed rushed and not well developed. In some ways the twists at the end took away from what had been a good look at complexities of human relations. It almost became contrite.

At the end, Picoult could have skipped the multi-page explanation of why a white woman could write such a book. Authors write fiction every day from perspectives they aren't intimately involved in. That's what good writers do – and without calling attention to themselves. She should have let the book speak for itself.