Those People Next Door
Kia Abdullah

You can choose your house. Not your neighbours.
About the Author

Kia Abdullah is a bestselling author and travel writer. Her novels include Take It Back, a Guardian and Telegraph thriller of the year; Truth Be Told, which was shortlisted for the Diverse Book Awards; and Next of Kin, which was longlisted for the CWA Gold Dagger Award, and won the Adult Diverse Book Award in 2022. Her most recent novel, Those People Next Door, was Waterstones Thriller of the Month in August 2023. Kia has also been selected for The Times Crime Club.

Discussion Questions

The front cover: What are your thoughts on the front cover design? Does it give you any ideas as to what the story may be about?

Chapter 1:
- What are your first impressions of the neighbours?
- The chapter ends with further details on Bil and Salma’s son Zain being the reason for the family’s move. What do you think might have happened?

Chapter 2:
- What do you learn about Zain and Jamie in this chapter?
- Zain feels ‘hopeful’ after Jamie gives him his phone number. Why do you think he feels this way?

Chapter 3:
- Salma feels uncomfortable with Zain displaying the ‘Black Lives Matter’ banner in a noticeable position. Using clues from the text, why do you think she feels this way?
- Why does Salma decide to ‘speak her mind’ the next time she has a conversation with neighbour Tom?
Chapter 4:
- What clues are there to show that Jamie and Zain are bonding with each other?
- What is the business idea that is going to make Jamie and Zain ‘millions’?

Chapter 5:
- What did Tom do to make Salma ‘not quite understand what she had just seen’?
- Why do you think Bil believes Tom meant nothing unfriendly with his actions?
- The chapter ends with Salma repositioning the banner. What effect do you think this will have? Is Salma right to ‘ignore her own nerves’?

Chapter 6:
- What does Willa reveal to Tom? How does he react?
- What do you think Willa means when she says, “Things will be so much better this time”?

Chapter 7:
- Why is Bil wary of making accusations against Tom?
- ‘Because I’m tired of people like you ruining our neighbourhood.’ What do you think Tom meant by this? Was Salma right to post pictures of the incident and her thoughts on Twitter?

Chapter 8:
- Why is Salma proud of Zain?
- What caused Tom to panic during his outburst?
- Compare Tom and Salma’s reactions during the confrontation. What do you think will happen next in the story? What does Tom warn Salma not to do?
Chapter 9:
- For what reasons does Tom lose his job? Do you feel he deserved this?
- Why does Tom panic?
- Tom is angry with Vanessa at the end of the chapter. What do you think of his character at this point in the book?

Chapter 10:
- Do you think Salma was right to automatically assume Tom had something to do with Molly the dog’s disappearance?
- Why was Salma surprised to learn about the neighbourhood Whatsapp group?
- What did Linda reveal to make Salma’s ‘stomach drop’?

Chapter 11:
- Why do you think Zain and Jamie decide to continue their friendship, despite the differences between their parents?
- What did Zain suggest to cause the disagreement?
- What does this chapter reveal about the character of each boy?

Chapter 12:
- Why is Bil worried about having squatters at the restaurant?
- How do you think Molly the dog came to be at the restaurant with the squatters?
- What did Salma ‘decide’ for Bil?

Chapter 13:
- Why did Salma ‘jolt with fright’ when she saw the sticker on the boy’s phone?
- Do you think Salma had enough evidence to accuse Tom of giving the family dog to Rich?
- What happened to cause Willa to ‘shriek’?
Chapter 14:
- What did Linda reveal to make Salma’s ‘jaw drop’?
- How do you think Tom will react in this situation, given that his wife has now lost their baby so soon after the incident?
- Why was Salma ‘caught off guard’ by Linda’s concern?

Chapter 15:
- What did the police arrest Zain?
- What made Salma accuse Willa of being behind the accusation?

Chapter 16:
- How do you feel about the questions the police asked Zain?
- What do you learn about Zain’s reason for being removed from school?
- The chapter ends with happy news for Zain. How would you feel in his position at that moment?

Chapter 17:
- Do you believe Jamie when he says his father had nothing to do with Molly’s disappearance?
- Why does Jamie want the friendship to continue?

Chapter 18:
- What do you think happened to Zain?

Chapter 19:
- Why is Tom in court? What is he accused of?
- Do you think Tom pushed Zain off the balcony?

Chapter 20:
- What did Salma’s tweets about white women suggest? Why do you think the defence barrister decided to highlight this in court?
- Why did Salma feel robbed ‘of her chance at justice’?
Chapter 21:
- What could the witness, Josephine, not do that could cause doubt on Tom’s guilt?

Chapter 22:
- What is your reaction to Tom’s testimony in court?
- How does his recollection of events differ to Salma’s?

Chapter 23:
- How does Tom come across in this chapter? Do you believe his version of events?
- If Tom didn’t push Zain, then who did?

Chapter 24:
- What effect is the trial and Zain’s hospitalisation having on the marriage of Bil and Salma?

Chapters 25 and 26:
- What is revealed during Jamie’s testimony? What effect do you think this will have on the jury?

Chapter 27 and 28:
- Why is Salma shocked by the death of the teenager in the Ilford stairwell?
- The jury return their verdict. Do you think they made the correct decision?

Chapter 29:
- Salma finds a phone, five months after the trial has ended. What is the significance of the events revealed in this chapter?

Chapters 30, 31 and 32:
- In the final three chapters, secrets and confessions are uncovered. Were you surprised by the story conclusion? Did you think the ending was satisfying?