

BOOK CLUB KIT

AGAINST ALL ODDS

A novel by Little Moses Jones

Discussion questions, themes, characters, the soundtrack, and how to invite the author to your group.

mosesjones.net/book-club

ABOUT THE BOOK

One record deal. One impossible choice.

Xavier Jones is 22, lives with his grandmother Mama Ruth in Apartment 4C in East Cleveland, and has spent ten years making music in a corner of their living room. He fixes cars at Pete's Auto Shop. He has seven hundred songs nobody has heard. When the building manager says they must pay something by Friday or the eviction starts, they have $143.

A producer named David Chen gives him studio time. A small Cleveland label, Northside Records, offers a $5,000 advance. And a Nashville hitmaker offers to turn his song into a hit, as long as it stops sounding like him.

Against All Odds is a musical drama about family, caregiving, and what success is worth when the thing you made is no longer yours. The author also wrote and recorded the songs Xavier writes, released as the 15-song *Against All Odds Soundtrack*.

Themes to talk about

Integrity vs. success
What we keep, and what we give up, to get heard.

Family and caregiving
Mama Ruth raised Xavier; now he is trying to keep a roof over her head.

Music and identity
A song as the truest version of who you are.

Second chances
For Xavier, for his mother, and for a neighborhood that needs one.

Who's who

Xavier Jones
22, self-taught musician, East Cleveland. Works at Pete's Auto Shop.

Mama Ruth
73, the grandmother who raised him.

David Chen
Producer at Frequency Studios who gives Xavier off-hours studio time.

Marcus Williams
Owner of Northside Records, a Cleveland independent label.

Marcus Trent
Nashville hitmaker who wants the song radio-ready.

Pete
Owner of Pete's Auto Shop, offering the safe road.

Contains spoilers in the discussion questions. Best used after finishing the book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Talk it through

1. The novel opens with an eviction notice “bright as a warning flare.” How does the threat of losing Apartment 4C shape every choice Xavier makes?
2. Mama Ruth tells Xavier, “Talent don’t pay rent.” Is she discouraging him, protecting him, or both?
3. Xavier has seven hundred songs nobody has heard. Why do you think he kept writing for ten years with almost no audience?
4. David Chen asks, “What’s the song really about?” Why is that question a turning point for Xavier as an artist?
5. Northside Records offers $5,000, but the label owns the masters and approves who he works with. Would you have signed? What would you have asked a lawyer to change?
6. Pete offers a steady management job. Is the safe road a failure, or a different kind of courage?
7. In Nashville, Marcus Trent says, “Distinctive doesn’t get played. Radio-ready gets played.” Is he wrong? When have you been asked to sand down what makes you different?
8. “Do you want to be right, or do you want to be successful?” How does Xavier answer, and what does it cost him?
9. How does the novel portray caregiving, and the weight young people carry for the elders who raised them?
10. Xavier’s mother, Sarah, returns after fourteen years. How did you feel about her return, and about how Xavier responds?
11. By the end, what does “success” mean to Xavier? Has your own definition of success changed over time?
12. The author wrote the songs Xavier writes. Listen to the soundtrack together. Did hearing the music change how you read the story?

THE SOUNDTRACK

Press play while you read

Little Moses Jones wrote and recorded the music in the story. Play the album at your meeting. Search “Against All Odds Soundtrack” on Spotify, Apple Music or any streaming service.

1. Late Night Situations
2. Cold Night
3. Against All Odds (ft. Don Q)
4. Nashville Lights (ft. Mr Big Shoe)
5. Crazy Love
6. 2nd Chances
7. Pressure
8. The Hardest Thing to Do
9. Apt 4C
10. No Time to Wait
11. Cold Night, Caught in a Crossfire
12. Neighborhood Dreams
13. Mama Ruth
14. Play Their Game
15. This Is the Vibe of the City

Host a meeting with the author

Little Moses Jones visits book clubs, libraries and schools, in person in Colorado and virtually anywhere. Request a visit at **mosesjones.net/contact** or email **moses@mosesjones.net**.

From page to screen

The story is in development as a feature film. The author wrote the screenplay and is attached to play Xavier.

Get the book

eBook and paperback at Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo and more: **books2read.com/b/m287r1**. In Spanish: *Contra Todas las Probabilidades*.

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