

Discussion Guide for It Happened on Saturday

1. The novel begins at the barn the day that everything changes between Julia and Nori. Have you ever had a friend give you news that made you feel like nothing was the same any longer? Did you talk to your friend about how you felt, or keep your feelings to yourself, as Julia did? As you reflect on it, do you wish you'd done anything differently?
2. After Danielle gives Julia the makeover, Julia looks in the mirror and can barely recognize herself. It's like she's looking at a totally different person. Do you think that's a good or bad thing? How does this foreshadow later story events?
3. Even though she knows better than to talk with a stranger online, Julia is drawn to Tyler's comment and can't stop going back to it. Have you ever experienced a feeling like that, where it's as if a magnet were pulling you back to something, even though you knew it wasn't the best idea?
4. Julia isn't planning to talk to Tyler, but then she ultimately responds and has a conversation with him. Why do you think she changes her mind?
5. How does Tyler earn Julia's trust, both before and after they meet? Do you notice any "red flags" that Julia missed? What is the significance of the baseball caps? Why do you think Tyler (and Alex) wear them? At what point in the story did you realize that Julia was in serious danger?
6. When Julia and Bella are introduced at lunch, Bella seems to recognize Julia but isn't exactly sure how she knows her. What conclusions can you draw regarding Bella's involvement in the fifth-grade bullying that had such a huge impact on Julia's life?
7. Have you ever had an experience where it felt almost impossible that the rest of the world was going on unchanged around you when your whole life had been shaken to the core?

8. Why does Julia try so hard to avoid her friends once she's back at school? Why might she be resistant to attending the counseling group?
9. At the counseling center, Sheila writes down the suggestions the group comes up with for ways to relax. These suggestions appear on p. 207. Which of those ways can you relate to? What else might you add to the list?
10. Being around the horses gives Julia the feeling of finally being "home." Is there anything that gives you that feeling?
11. "My whole body goes numb. Tyler and Alex are in jail. They're all the way in Texas. It's over. I stumble up the last two steps and into my room, then collapse on my bed. Danielle bounds over. Mom's behind her, blowing her nose with a tissue. 'Do you understand what this means, Julia?' Danielle's grin is gigantic." (p. 187). What do you think Danielle is getting at here?
12. Julia and her friends all have very different personalities. Who are you most like? Why?
13. "Instead of joining them, I push the sliding glass door open and go into the backyard. At least now I can be outside by myself, since Tyler and Alex are in jail. But what have I done?" (p. 195). What do you think Julia is afraid of here?
14. Julia and her father are close, but she still finds it difficult to share her feelings with him. Why do you think that is, and what makes her finally decide to try to tell him what's really going with her?
15. How has Julia and Nori's friendship grown by the end of the story?

16. What does Julia realize about herself when she's lost in the cornfield?
17. How does Julia's final social media post show that she has changed?
18. Had you ever heard of trafficking before this? What are some things you can do so that you can stay safe?
19. Julia's mom tells her teachers as well as the stable staff what happened because she is concerned for Julia's safety. Julia is furious at her mom for sharing the worst event of her life. Who do you think is right in this situation? Or do they both have a valid argument?
20. If you are ever in a difficult situation like Julia, who are some trusted adults you can turn to for help?