

Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream by Jenny Han

When you were a kid, did you ever have a lucky charm? Maybe a rabbit's foot, a lucky penny, or a special tshirt? At the heart of *Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream* is a girl who believes that her good luck dream will help her accomplish all her goals, from climbing the rope in PE class to riding a float in the Apple Blossom Festival parade. At first it seems that she does, indeed, have good luck. Everything is going her way! But when her luck changes, Clara Lee loses heart. She wonders if she should give up, now that luck is no longer on her side.

There's nothing wrong with believing in luck. But, as Clara Lee realizes, every day has some good and some bad parts in it. She decides to work hard and think positively - and hopes that her efforts are enough, with or without luck. I hope that this book gives your club lots of material for discussion.

Successful Book Club Tips:

Most book clubs will meet in members' homes, alternating each month. When you meet, the whole group will have already read the book. Parents and daughters might read together or independently; either one is totally fine. It's a good idea to have copies of the book on hand for reference if possible.

Parent-daughter pairs should take turns leading the meetings. This will involve choosing discussion questions to start off the meeting, drawing out quieter voices, and keeping an eye on the time. Don't worry too much if some participants are hesitant to share during this first meeting. Some people need one or two meetings to warm up.

On the following pages, you will find some suggestions for how your book club meeting might go. Feel free to use whichever of these questions and tips works for you, and substitute as you wish. The best book discussions develop organically as people listen closely and respond to each other.

Munch 'n' Chat, 20-30 minutes

As parents and girls arrive, think about allowing some time for snacking and catching up. Snacks don't have to be fancy at all; it can be as simple as a picnic blanket in the backyard, or sitting around the coffee table eating popcorn and lemonade.

Since this is the first meeting of the year, gather everyone before so you can go over ground rules. It's helpful if the club members are all on the same page about expectations, particularly when it comes to privacy. Our **Magical Mad Libs** can help with this, and will also help you give your club a fun name.

Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

Parents and daughters might ask each other a question, such as:

“What was the best book you’ve read recently and why?”

Give five minutes for pairs discussion. Then, give 5-10 minutes for parents and girls to introduce each other to the group and share a bit about each other's answers. It might sound something like,

“This is my mom. Her name is Shannon. The best book she’s read recently is *The Hired Girl* because she loved the main character.”

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are a good springboard to book talk because they allow readers to bring up any part of the book that made an impression, confused, delighted, or inspired them. Your club might even pick one open-ended question, and make it a tradition to start with that question at every meeting.

Remember, readers are always allowed to “pass” if they'd rather not share their thoughts. Book club is meant to be fun, not stressful. In my experience, people will share in their own time.

Here are some useful open-ended questions:

- What was your favorite part of the book? If you have the book with you, read a paragraph or two of your favorite part aloud. Why was that particular part so powerful or memorable?
- Which part of the book felt important or gave you a Big Idea?
- Was any part of the book confusing? Was your confusion cleared up by the end of the book or not?
- How is the main character like you, and how is she different? Would you have handled the situations in the story differently than she did?
- What did the main character learn in this story, if anything?

Successful Book Club Tip:

If you are the pair that is leading the meeting this month, take a look at the questions in advance. If you decide to start with an open-ended question, I recommend that you tell all the pairs the question a few days in advance. For those of us that clam up in a group, having time to think about our idea and plan how we'll express ourselves takes away some of the pressure of public speaking.

Questions About Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream:

These questions about *Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream* might help you begin your book talk. Some groups might have time to get to all of these questions, but many groups will pick one or two questions and spend the whole meeting discussing those. **Feel free to write your own discussion questions.**

- Does your city or town have special traditions, like Bramley's Apple Blossom Festival? What do you like about your hometown?
- Clara Lee says that there are certain things she is brave about, like the high dive and speaking up in class. But, giving a speech "just isn't my cup of cocoa." What are you brave about? What are you not so brave about?

- Clara Lee is able to conquer the climbing rope in PE class. She thinks her success is due to her luck. What do you think?
- Clara Lee talks her problems through with her grandfather when she has a bad day, and he usually helps her to feel better. Who do you talk to when you are having a bad day? What kinds of things make you feel better?
- After giving her speech, Clara Lee decides that it was actually really fun. Have you ever tried something you were scared of, or didn't you think you were going to like, only to be surprised by how much you liked it? What was it?
- Clara Lee decides that every day has some good and bad things in it. What do you think? Have you ever tried making lists of good and bad things that happened to you?
- What do you think about Dionne, the girl who thinks that she should be Little Miss Apple Pie? Is she a bad person? How does Dionne feel at the end of the story? What makes you think that?
- What do you think Clara Lee means when she says, "From then on, I was making my own luck?"

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

One of the most important scenes in the story is when Clara Lee makes her speech in front of the whole school. Ask the group to think about public speaking. **Is it easy or challenging for you? Do you get a lot of practice at it?** For this purpose, we can define public speaking as speaking in front of any kind of group, even if it's a small group of classmates.

Participants can talk to each other in pairs or as a whole group. Think about setting a goal for the next month. For instance, you might try to find three opportunities to practice. This goes for parents, too! Report back to the club next month.

Closing, 5 minutes

Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your November meeting. Happy reading!

Further Reading!

If you really loved this book, and you'd like to read more books like it, here are some suggestions. If there are other books you would like to recommend, we'd love to hear them! Please share them with our [Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook Group](#) so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/GirlsLeadershipBookClub/>

The Clementine series, by Sara Pennypacker - This series follows the impulsive, spirited Clementine as her well-meaning actions get her into a whole heap of trouble. These are great books to read aloud to kids who love humorous characters.

Gooney Bird Greene, by Lois Lowry - This book (and its sequels) feature an unusual girl named Gooney Bird Greene, who teaches her friends to find excitement and marvels all around them.