

***Roller Girl* by Victoria Jamieson**

Young kids form friendships for lots of reasons - they might be in the same class, or live nearby, or perhaps their parents are friends. As kids get older, they might find those early relationship bonds thinning. Kids mature, they change, and their interests change. Sometimes friendships have to change, too. This can be a painful process for all involved.

In *Roller Girl*, Astrid and Nicole have been best friends since the 1st grade. They still want to be friends, but have grown up into very different people with different interests. Astrid wants to dye her hair blue and play roller derby. Nicole wants to go to ballet camp instead. Being rejected by Nicole is so hard for Astrid that she paints her as a villain. It isn't until much later in the book that she starts to consider whether her expectations of Nicole had been reasonable. This scenario might create an opportunity for parents and daughters to discuss changing friendships and the importance of listening to people during conflict rather than shutting them down.

This story shows our character struggling so much with old and new friendships. But it also shows her strength: her resilience and determination. Astrid goes to roller derby camp on her own, with zero experience. She takes a lot of hits. But she keeps getting up and going back. She stays focused on her goal: to improve enough to qualify to skate in a real bout.

Now that you're in your third meeting, I hope that the structure of book club is starting to feel predictable and familiar. Maybe you're even noticing that your conversations are going deeper than before. At some point there will even be some disagreements amongst club members. As parents, we should allow these disagreements to happen - even encourage them. Speaking our minds is easy when we all agree. It's not as easy when we don't agree, but it's even more important. We need all the practice we can get.

In the following pages, you'll find suggestions for how your meeting could go.

**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.

**Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes**

Start with a check-in about leadership goals. Did anyone try public speaking over the past month? Give a few minutes to share experiences.

If there's time, pairs might ask each other a question, such as: *"Is there a book that you read over and over again? Why does that book feel so comfortable and interesting for you?"* Give five minutes for discussion. (These could be parent-daughter pairs, or you could decide to mix up pairs.) Then, give 5-10 minutes for sharing each other's answers.

**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. If you started with an open-ended question in the earlier meetings, you might ask the same questions this time or try a different one from the list below. Any question that gets parents and daughters sharing is a good question.

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?

### Questions About *Roller Girl*

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

- Astrid and Nicole have been friends since first grade. Now, their relationship is changing. Is it to be expected that people grow apart? Have you ever gone through something like that?
- How does Astrid react when Nicole says that she's not going to derby camp? What do you think about her reaction?
- On the first day of camp, Astrid is without her best friend, she's the worst skater there, and she feels like a failure. Were you surprised that she went back the second day? Why? What do you think makes her go back? Have you ever wanted something that bad?
- What are some of the ways the other girls support her and make her feel better?
- How does Astrid change from the beginning of the book to the end? How do her relationships change?
- Rainbow Bite teaches Astrid the mantra, "Tougher. Stronger. Fearless." Astrid ends up using this mantra beyond roller derby; she also uses it for hard life situations, like when she has to go apologize to Nicole. What are

some times in your life when you might use a mantra to remind you to be brave?

### **Leadership Goals, 15 minutes**

Pair off and talk about your leadership goals for this month. One possible goal would be to try to be aware of times when you are speaking (or not speaking) in order to fit in, and times when you are speaking in order to be honest and true to yourself. One first step to being more honest in life could be simply noticing the circumstances that make honesty hard.

Or, take a page out of Astrid's book: The next time you have a conflict with a friend, make sure to listen, rather than get mad and storm off. (Or, if you do get mad and storm off, make sure you come back, apologize, and then listen. Nobody's perfect.)

Parents should set goals, 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 February meeting. Happy reading!

### **Leadership Goals, 15 minutes**

If you really loved this book, and you'd like to read more 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 on our Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook page, so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

*Smile* by Raina Telgemeier - This is a super fun graphic novel about a girl whose struggles to make friends and fit in during middle school are made more challenging after she has an accident that does serious damage to her teeth. I also recommend Telgemeier's graphic novels *Sisters* and *Drama*.