

***Upside-Down Magic* by Sarah Mlynowski, Lauren Myracle & Emily Jenkins**

The desire to fit in, and the fear that we won't - is a huge motivator for people of all ages. Often, we find ourselves speaking or acting out of a desire to be accepted by others.

It's different - even more painful - when we feel we don't fit in with our families. Our families are the people that are supposed to love us no matter what, right? So, what happens when those people who are supposed to love us no matter what make us feel like we don't matter?

When Nory doesn't fit in with what her family values - having successful, normal magic - she is devastated. They don't defend her, they don't ask her about herself, they don't want to see what she can do. She spends a long time trying to trim away the "unsightly" parts of herself, to become someone of whom her family will approve. It takes a friend in need for her to embrace all the aspects of her magic. She realizes that making room for all of herself feels amazing and powerful.

Then Nory does something very important. She finds people who love and support her just as she is. For her, that means her aunt and her new school friends. No matter how old we are, we must surround ourselves with people with whom we can feel ourselves. I hope Girls Leadership Book Club is part of that support network for you.

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 third 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 practice a leadership skill since the last meeting? Maybe having a brave conversation with a friend, like Keena Ford in last month's book?

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.

- 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 *Upside-Down Magic*

- 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.
- Nory's siblings attend Sage Academy, and they have "normal" magic, like their father. Nory desperately wants to fit in with them, so she tries and tries to make her magic normal, too. Can you relate to this? Have you ever wanted to change something about yourself so that you would fit in?
- When something upsetting happens, Nory's family doesn't talk about it; they ignore it. Aunt Margo, on the other hand, says that it feels good to speak her mind. How do you usually handle difficult or upsetting situations? Do you clam up, like Nory's family? Or, do you want to talk things over, like Aunt Margo?
- What do you think of Ms Starr's teaching? What are some of the things that she does to help her students?
- What does Ms Starr mean when she says, "Things worth doing are usually hard?" Do you agree with her?
- At the end of the story, Nory realizes that Aunt Margo, Ms Starr, and her school friends make a supportive community. With them, she can be herself. With whom can you be most yourself?

### 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.

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.

*Sticks and Stones (Upside-Down Magic #2)* - In the second book about Nory and her classmates, the upside-down magic kids are blamed for strange happenings at school. How will they prove their innocence?

*Flunked by Jen Calonitas* - The first book in the Fairy Tale Reform school, in which Gilly is caught stealing and sent to reform school, where former fairy tale villains are the professors. Things are not what they seem, and Gilly has to work with her new friends to be show that villains can be heroes.

*Whatever After* series by Sarah Mlynowski - In this series, ten year-old Abby and her little bother discover a magical mirror that allows them to travel into fairy tale stories. The siblings must set the stories right and find their way back home.

*Babymouse* series by Jennifer Holm and Matthew Holm - An adorable and hilarious series of graphic novels about Babymouse, a glamorous little mouse with a big personality.