

For the second meeting of the 2017-2018 school year, grown-ups and girls will read *Babymouse: Queen of the World*, the first book in a super fun graphic novel series about a mouse who loves reading, cupcakes, and anything fancy.

Graphic novels are engaging almost any reader, and can be especially magical for struggling or reluctant readers. They are quick reads, and the illustrations provide lots of support for comprehension. There's data that shows that reading lots of books (of any kind) is key for developing strong reading skills, and is even better than reading just a few high quality books. Check out the book recommendations at the end of this discussion guide for more graphic novel suggestions.

In this story, Babymouse is so excited to be invited to Felicia Furrypaws' fancy sleepover party that she puts up with very unfriendly behavior and treats her own good friend Wilson badly. This is a good opportunity for grown-ups and girls to talk about what characteristics and behaviors we look for in our friends. It's more important to find good friends we can laugh and be ourselves with, for example, than to hang out with people because they're fancy or popular.

Most likely, your girl has had her own experiences about friends who didn't act very friendly. Did she realize that the behavior wasn't acceptable, and go hang out with someone kind, like Babymouse does in the story? This is a fantastic scenario to role play together.

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 grown ups and girls arrive, allow 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.

Check-In, 10-15 minutes

Mix up the group so that girls and grown-ups aren't sitting in pairs anymore. Everyone asks her neighbor a getting-to-know-you question, like: **“What do you look for in a true friend?”**

Give five minutes for pairs discussion. Then, give 5-10 minutes for pairs to share a bit about each other's answers. It might sound something like, “Jasmine said she likes friends who like to play the same games she likes.”

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

These questions about *Babymouse* 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.

- What kind of friend is Wilson? How does he show it?
- How does Babymouse feel when she doesn't get an invitation to Felicia's slumber party? Have you ever felt like that?
- Lots of the other kids seem to want to hang out with Felicia. Why do they want to be her friend? Is she a good friend to them?
- Why does Babymouse choose to go to the slumber party instead of hanging out with Wilson?
- How does actually being at the party compare to her fantasy about the party?
- What does Babymouse learn about true friendship?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Participants can talk to each other in pairs or as a whole group about these questions. Do you know anyone who doesn't treat you in a friendly way? Maybe he or she says hurtful things, or never wants to play things you want to play? Try to be honest with yourself and, if there is someone like this, spend less time with that person. Develop friendships with people who are kind and fun.

Closing, 5 minutes

Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your January meeting (there's no meeting in December due to holidays and school breaks). Happy reading!

Further Reading

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 Group, so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

Hamster Princess by Ursula Vernon - Harriet Hamsterbone is not your typical princess. One day, Harriet's parents tell her of the curse placed on her at birth, dooming her to prick her finger on a hamster wheel when she's twelve and fall into a deep sleep. For Harriet, this is most wonderful news: It means she's invincible until she's twelve! This fun illustrated novel presents a twist on old fairy tale tropes.

El Deafo by Cece Bell - This super funny graphic novel tells the story about Cece, who loses her hearing due to a childhood illness. She has to wear a powerful hearing aid to school, which she imagines gives her super powers and turns her from an ordinary girl into... El Deafo!

Zita the Spacegirl by Ben Hatke - Zita acts first, asks questions later. That's how she transports herself and her friend Joseph to another planet! She's determined not to leave without Joseph, but when she learns that the planet is about to explode, she knows it will take all her bravery, wit, and leadership to find him and get them both home. This is the first in a trilogy of graphic novels.