

For the second meeting of the 2017-2018 school year, middle school girls and their grown-ups will read a beautiful historical novel in verse. If you're someone who doesn't feel like novels in verse are for you, please give this one a try. What I find about novels in verse is that it takes a little while to get used to the rhythm but once you get into it, the pages start to fly by.

Many of us, like the main character Mimi, have had the experience of moving somewhere new and dealing with culture clash. Moving from Berkeley to Vermont, Mimi leaves extended family and faces a cold climate and even colder community. Her new neighbors and classmates are openly hostile toward her and suspicious of her differences - her half-black, half-Japanese background and her interest in science at a time when girls were expected to only be interested in domestic arts. Rather than give up and go back to Berkeley, Mimi and her parents decide to stay in Vermont, using their positivity and determination to create a life for themselves.

You might talk about a time in your life when you felt like an outcast or unwelcome. Did you, like Mimi, meet a few people who made all the difference? Or, have you ever done your best to welcome someone who was new and needed a friend?

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 your club, 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. The more the girls can be involved with or even in charge of the meeting, the better. So, when it's your turn to host, remember to include your girl in decisions about what to serve.

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 was a time in your life when you felt you truly belonged? What made you feel that way?”**

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 loved going to drama camp, because they all had so much in common and it was really easy to hang out.” This is a great time to ask follow-up questions and share even more with each other.

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

These questions about *Full Cicada Moon* 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 person is Mimi? How can you tell?
- How do people in her new town respond to Mimi?
- Where does Mimi find comfort when she's having a hard time?
- What draws Mimi to Timothy and Stacey? How can she tell they're not like the other kids?
- Mimi says that journaling for her class assignment helped her know herself better. What do you think she means by that?
- Why does Mimi's family decide to stay in Vermont, even though the people aren't very nice?
- What are some of the small changes that show Mimi feeling more and more like she belongs in Vermont?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Participants can talk to each other in pairs or as a whole group about these questions. Who are the people who make you feel like you belong? Who do you know will be there for you no matter what? It's important to identify those people in our lives, because we all need help at one time or another.

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.

Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez - This historical novel is set during the Dominican Revolution of 1961. Using the strength and courage of her family, Anita must overcome her fears and fly to freedom, leaving all that she once knew behind.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith - This novel captures vibrant life in Brooklyn at the turn of the century. Francie Nolan, born into an Irish immigrant family, expresses her unique take on the world, and uses her intelligence and perseverance to carve out a place for herself.

What Momma Left Me by Renee Watson - When Serenity's father kills her mother, she and her brother Danny must go live with their kind but strict grandparents. Despite the difficulties of a new school, a new church, and a new neighborhood, Serenity gains strength from the family around her, the new friends she finds, and her own careful optimism.