

For this month's book club, 2nd and 3rd grade girls and their grown-ups will read the first book in a series about Lola Levine, a half-Jewish, half-Peruvian second grader with a zest for life and a love of soccer.

Lola plays soccer every chance she can get, including at recess. One day, while determined to guard the goal, Lola performs a slide tackle and accidentally kicks a classmate. This incident leads her school principal to remove her from school games, and her peers to dub her Mean Lola Levine.

As I read this book, I was thinking about the different ways we tend to speak with girls and boys about their behavior. Sometimes boys are allowed and even expected to be aggressive. If the soccer incident had occurred to a boy, would people have called him *too* competitive? Or would they have admired him, wanted him on their team?

You and your girls might notice that, while Lola struggles with feelings of confusion and loneliness, she doesn't lose confidence about who she is and how she plays the game. She comes back with enthusiasm when she convinces her classmates that they should let her play again. You might also notice the ways her family and her best friend support her, and assure her that she's great just as she is.

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, spend some time catching up. The host family might put out snacks and drinks. When possible, include the girls in the decisions about what to serve and how to set up for the club meeting.

## Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

Is your book club full of soccer lovers like Lola? Maybe instead of a verbal ice-breaker, you could start with a quick game - girls against grown-ups. Playing sports is a fun way to bond without having to share verbally.

If soccer is not your thing, you might discuss some other sports-related question, for example: What is your favorite sport or moment in this year's Winter Olympics? What sport do you like most to play? Who sport do you like to watch? Which female athlete do you most admire?

## Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

These questions about *Lola Levine Is Not Mean* might help you begin your book talk. Some groups might discuss all of these questions, but many groups will use only one or two questions to get their conversation going. Feel free to write your own discussion questions.

- What characteristics set Lola apart from other people? What makes her unique? And, what makes YOU unique?
- Sometimes other characters tease Lola - about being best friends with a boy or being named Dolores, for example. How does she deal with being teased?
- When Lola has something difficult to say, or when she wants to convince someone of something, she writes a letter. How do you communicate when you have something difficult to say? Is it easier to write it down or talk it out?
- Kids at school call Lola mean because she's such a competitive soccer player. What's the difference between being competitive and being mean?
- How do Lola's family and friends support her? What do they do that makes her feel better? What kinds of things do your friends and family do to cheer you up?
- Does Lola have leadership skills? Why or why not?

## Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

For this month's leadership goals, practice being the best and most unique YOU you can be. Spend a little time talking - either at your group meeting or with your grown-up alone - about what you love about yourself. What makes you happy? Is it playing and running, music, drawing, making art? How can you make those wonderful parts of you an even bigger part of your life? Maybe you can't paint bright red flowers on your door like Lola does, but you could make art work to hang on your walls. Play your favorite music nice and loud, dancing and singing along. Simply doing the things that make you feel happiest and most yourself is a way to be a leader, because others might notice and decide that they'll do the same.

## Closing, 5 minutes

Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your April 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 on our Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook Group, so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

The rest of the *Lola Levine* series by Monica Brown - of course!

*Dory Fantasmagory* by Abby Hanlon - When Dory's older siblings won't play with her, she goes on adventurous romps through her imagination. Super funny, illustrated chapter book.

*Lulu and the Duck in the Park* by Hilary McKay - An irresistible short chapter book about a girl who tries to get her teacher to appreciate animals. This is the first in a series about Lulu.