

This month, 4th and 5th grade girls and their grown-ups will read about Malú, a girl who loves skateboarding, punk music, and, most of all, making zines (crafty homemade magazines) about her life. Life in a new town is looking up when Malú makes some friends and forms a band, but the school principal won't allow their band to perform at a school event. What's a punk girl to do?

As I read this book, I was thinking about how we parents and grown-ups can inadvertently give kids the message that the way they are is not enough. I'm guilty of asking my daughter to dress or speak a certain way to impress family members, neighbors, or other adults. In these moments, am I telling my daughter that I'm not proud of her, that it's best to put on a show or pretend to be someone else so that people will like you? I really appreciated the realistic dynamic between Malú and her mom in this book, and I think it could provide fodder for interesting conversations between girls and grown-ups. Malú's mom clearly loves her, but also pushes her to be more like the image she has in her head of who her daughter should be.

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 month, consider socializing and munching while doing a fun ice-breaker activity. Author Celia C. Pérez wrote this article all about making zines (<http://www.readbrightly.com/how-to-make-zine/>). The materials are things you probably have around the house - paper, scissors, pens, magazines, glue sticks, stamps.

Have supplies out (or ask people to bring some) as club members arrive. The group can catch up while they experiment with this fun new form of self-expression, then enjoy looking at all the different zines you've made!

## Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

In pairs or in a casual group setting, discuss diaries. **Who has kept a diary? What kinds of things did you write in it? Who still does keep a diary (or journal)? What purpose does it serve to write down memories of your day?**

Give a few minutes for pairs to discuss. If you'd like, give 5-10 minutes for pairs to share a bit about each other's answers.

## Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

These questions about *The First Rule of Punk* 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.

- When Malú is down, thinking about something big, or wants to say something difficult, she makes a zine to express herself. How do you express yourself in times like that? Do you have an easier time writing your thoughts down, or talking about them?
- What happens to make Malú feel happier in Chicago?
- Do you think Malú's mother really wants her to change (maybe into someone more like Selena)? Why does Malú think her mom wants her to be someone different? Have you ever felt that your family wanted you to change? How did you deal with that?
- Do you think anything will change between Malú and her mom after the end of this book?
- Malú feels frustrated because people expect her to be a certain way just because she's half-Mexican. Have you ever felt that people made assumptions about who you should be based on your appearance, your gender, or anything else? What do you do when that happens?
- Why was it important that Malú's band incorporated Mexican and punk music?

## Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

For this month's leadership goal, 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 running, dancing, music, drawing, making art? How can you make those wonderful parts of you an even bigger part of your life? You could make time every day to do things that bring you joy. Play your favorite music nice and loud, dancing and singing along; write poetry; take close-up photographs of spider webs. Whatever those things are, 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.

*Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper - Melody can't walk or talk due to cerebral palsy. Very few people know how intelligent she is, even though in her head her brain is on fire, thinking and remembering and wondering. When she attends an integrated classroom for the first time, it opens up her world in ways that are both beautiful and painful.

*The Mighty Miss Malone* by Christopher Paul Curtis - Young Deza Malone is destined for a great future, but the Great Depression hits her town and derails it. Deza's father leaves to find work, while Deza and her mother must hold their family together, using all their intellect and perseverance to survive the direst of circumstances.