

This month, 4th & 5th graders and their grown-ups will read the humorous graphic novel *Be Prepared*. Based on Brosgol's childhood summer camp experiences, this story might remind you of your own summer camp experiences - *the horror of the outhouse! the excitement of capture-the-flag!* - if your camp required everyone to speak in Russian and served borscht. When Russian summer camp doesn't quite live up to Vera's expectations, she's got to figure out how to fit in... and realizes that, instead of making herself into a shape others will like, she can she make room for the real version of herself.

Be aware that this book includes a couple of scenes that could be inappropriate for younger readers - one in which Vera discovers two older campers kissing and one in which a girl runs a pair of stained underwear up the flagpole. Book clubs looking for a more challenging title should check one our other book recommendations at the end of this toolkit.

As always, it's perfectly wonderful to swap any title that doesn't work for your club. This is a chance for you to read and discuss books of your choosing with your community. You can look through the Girls Leadership book suggestions from other grades or previous years. You could also check websites like *A Mighty Girl* or talk to your local children's librarian.

The theme for Girls Leadership Book Clubs this month is getting outside to enjoy the many benefits of engaging with nature. Consider whether your book club could tie this theme into your November meeting. Perhaps you could go for a hike together, or hold your meeting in a park. Or, if your group includes creative types, you could make some nature-inspired art. The crafty blog *The Artful Parent* lists several super simple project ideas using fall leaves (bit.ly/2yCieyW). Alternately, go outside with blank paper and make nature drawings, just like Vera and Kira do!

Munch 'n' Chat, 20-30 minutes

As grown-ups and girls arrive, think about allowing some time for snacking and introductions or catching up.

Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

Everyone in the group should pair up with someone new (not the person you came with!). Pairs then ask each other questions and discuss for five minutes. Then, give 5-10 minutes for pairs to introduce each other and share a bit about each other's answers. Try to ask a question related to this month's theme. You could use one of the following examples, or make up your own:

- What is your favorite place to visit in nature?
- What kinds of things do you most like to do outdoors?
- How do you feel when you're outdoors?

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

You might decide to start the discussion with every member saying their favorite part of the book before reading discussion questions. 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 come up with your own questions, or discuss any ideas that came up while you were reading.

- What is Vera's social life like back at home?
- What happens when Vera tries to follow the "recipe" for a good party?
How do you think she feels about the way her birthday party turns out?
- Why do you think Vera wants to go to Russian summer camp so badly?
What does she believe it will be like?
- How does Vera feel when she actually arrives at camp?

- Talk about a time when you felt disappointed about something that you'd thought was going to be great.
- Why do Vera's troop mates suddenly start treating her like a friend? Do they genuinely like her? How do you know?
- What do you think Vera's counselor means when she says, "friends you buy aren't as good as friends you get for free?" Do you agree with her?
- The big hike and camping trip seems to make a big impression on Vera. How does she behave differently after the hike? How do you explain these changes?
- How is Vera's friendship with Kira different from her relationship with her cabin mates?
- What are some of the things Vera does at the end of camp that help her enjoy the experience?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Let's talk friendship. Whether you're in a new school or simply hoping to bond with someone new, making friends can be tough. Think about whether there's someone you want to get to know. What are some ways you could reach out? Invite them to play at recess? Strike up a conversation about something you're curious about?

Or, is there someone who might be feeling lonely and left out? Could you reach out to that person to make your community more inclusive and welcoming? What are some actions you could take?

Girls and grown-ups might decide to share out loud, going around the circle so everyone has a turn or giving time for anyone who wants to share can do so. If people feel shy about sharing these personal goals, maybe they could jot them down on paper. Whether through writing or out loud, articulating our plans and goals helps us achieve them.

Closing, 5 minutes

Due to busy schedules, we don't suggest a December book title. Before everyone goes off their separate ways, choose a date for your January 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 Evolution of Calpurnia Tate by Jacqueline Kelly - 11 year-old Calpurnia Tate is a naturalist. All she wants to do is stay outside with Grandfather, studying animals and learning about the new theory of evolution. But, a girl in 1899 has many obligations, and Calpurnia struggles to make her traditional mother understand her.

Bayou Magic by Jewell Parker Rhodes - When Maddy goes to visit her grandmother in the bayou, her sisters warn her that their Grandmere is mean, weird, and boring. But, Maddy soon finds that the bayou - and her grandmother's magical world - call deeply to her. An oil leak threatens to destroy the area, and Maddy has to call on her own magic to protect what's most dear.