

From the very beginning of this story, Ruby Booker jumps off the page. What an exuberant and joyful character! She has a positive attitude that is as powerful as it is purposeful. On the morning of her first day at a new school - when she might have been anxious and withdrawn - Ruby makes it a point to wake up to her favorite song, singing lyrics that make her happy. When she's getting dressed, she's not wondering what the other kids at school will think of her outfit. She picks clothes that make her feel fabulous - her favorite colors, the guitar bag that shows her love of music, her favorite earrings.

We don't always have control over our circumstances. But, like Ruby, we can each make decisions about how to respond. What are some ways we grown-ups deal with jitters or negativity? For me, dance music helps. So do chocolate, walks, and phone dates with friends. Making choices based on what makes us feel happiest and most uniquely ourselves is a healthy way of dealing with life's challenges.

Ruby oozes confidence. The only question for her is how she's going to share her gifts with her community when her brothers are such prominent personalities. She does not wait to be invited to share, but asks her teacher directly whether she can sing her favorite song for the class. When that doesn't work out, she seizes her chance to go even bigger: she sings her song over the school loudspeaker.

We don't all have to be performers like Ruby, but it's worth asking ourselves how we can share our talents, or push ourselves a little out of our comfort zones. Even though Ruby really wants to sing, she still gets nervous. Her palms get sweaty, she fidgets. But she sings anyway.

It's not necessary to "conquer our fears" before being brave. It's just necessary to not let fear and nerves get in our way. What is fear stopping you or your girl from doing? Raising a hand in class? Giving a presentation? Starting up a new club? Introducing yourself to someone new?

How might you do the thing that excites and interests you, anyway? The more we practice taking actions that scare us, the more our confidence grows.

I hope you enjoy this month's book and that your club's conversation takes you in many interesting directions. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook page! bit.ly/GLbookFB

Munch 'n' Chat, 20-30 minutes

As grown-ups and girls arrive, allow some time for snacking and catching up.

Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

In this month's book, Ruby wants to make an impression on her new school; she doesn't want to be known just as the little sister.

How do you want to be known? If you could be famous for something, what would it be? Your artistic talent? Your sense of humor? Your love of animals?

Everyone pair up and tell your partner the one thing you would most like to be famous for and why. Then, if there's time, go around the group and give an opportunity for each person to "introduce" her partner and their famous trait. For example, you could say something like,

"Everyone, I'd like to introduce you to Shannon, the famous storyteller. Shannon is famous the world over for her stories, especially the ones for kids!"

Book Discussion, 30 minutes or so

You might decide to start the discussion with every member saying her 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 discussion questions, or bring up any ideas that came up while you were reading.

- Ruby's first day of school is important, so she makes sure to start off singing and dancing to her favorite music. Can you name one or two ways that you might start off your day, if you want to help create a happy and positive mindset?
- How does Ruby's family see her? How does Ruby see herself?
- How do you think Ruby feels when she shows up at school with her brothers and sees how people treat them? What are some clues that show us Ruby's feelings?
- How does Ruby respond to kids who aren't nice to her, like Manny and Marquette? What do you think about this?
- How does the class treat Ruby differently once they find out who her brothers are? Have you ever had the experience of being treated a certain way because of who you know rather than who you are? How does that feel?
- What would you have done if your brother wanted you to cover for him, the way Ro asks Ruby to do?
- What do you think of Ruby's need to be in the spotlight? Do you like being the center of attention like Ruby?
- What do you admire about Ruby? What do you dislike about her?

- Why does Ruby sing on the loudspeaker even though she thinks she might get into trouble? What does that say about her? What do you think of the principal's reaction?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Since this month's book is about a girl with big dreams, it seems a good opportunity for book club members to share their big dreams with each other! What is *your* dream? Is it to learn how to sail? Write stories? Hike in every national park? Become a doctor?

This is a choose-your-own-adventure sort of activity. Here are some options:

- Pair up and share your dream. Be as specific as possible. Don't hold back! If there's time, everyone could tell the group about their partner's dream.
- Take five minutes and write a six-word story about you living your dream. Try to make it a complete sentence rather than a list of words.
- Draw a sketch of what it will look like when you live your dream. Leave the sketches out so everyone can go around and check out the "gallery."

Closing, 5 minutes

Since this is the last official Girls Leadership Book Club meeting of the year, it would be nice to say good-bye in a more ceremonial way. Everyone could say the best thing about being in book club this year, or name her favorite book from the year. You might want to make a circle and say a little cheer that features your club's name. Let the girls lead the way and wrap up the year in a way that feels fun to them.

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** bit.ly/GLbookFB so our community can keep growing our list of great titles.

The *Ruby and the Booker Boys* series by Derrick Barnes - Read more adventures about the spotlight-loving Ruby Booker.

The *Sylvie Scruggs* series by Lindsay Eyre - Sylvie Scruggs is athletic, competitive, and hilarious. These books are a great transition for kids who are ready to read short chapter books.

The *Sassy* series by Sharon Draper - Another fun short chapter book series! Sassy is the youngest in her family, which means feeling invisible at times. But Sassy is determined to prove she's more than just "Little Sister."



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