

Welcome to a new year of Girls Leadership Girl & Grown-Up Book Club for 4th and 5th graders! In this first meeting, your group will get to know each other (if you don't already), you'll pick a group name, and, most importantly, you'll share your thoughts about this month's book, *Blended*.

For any newcomers (or anyone who'd like a refresher), let's go over the nuts and bolts of book club. Girls might want to read books independently, read to a grown-up, or listen as a grown-up reads the book to her. *Any of those options are totally fine*, as long as both the grown-up and girl read the book. In my experience, reading together provides the opportunity to discuss as you go, and can help some people feel more prepared for the group discussion. Even if you don't read together, it could be helpful to discuss prior to the book club meeting.

We do our best to select books that are well-written, age-appropriate, and thematically connected to the Girls Leadership mission. However, if the title we've suggested for the month doesn't work for your group for any reason, feel free to change it up. If you'd like ideas for other titles, you could check out the alternate titles we list at the end of every discussion guide, or look through the Girls Leadership book suggestions from other grades or previous years. You could also check websites like A Mighty Girl (amightygirl.com/books) or talk to your local children's librarian.

Most clubs meet in members' homes on a rotating schedule. Girl-grown-up pairs should take turns leading the meetings. This will involve choosing discussion questions to start off the meeting, drawing out quieter voices, and keeping an eye on the time. Don't worry too much if some participants are hesitant to share during this first meeting. Some people need one or two meetings to warm up.

This month, as you read Sharon Draper's wonderful book *Blended*, you might find that you and your girl are discussing questions of identity. You could ask yourselves, what are all the ways you identify yourselves? Can your identity change depending on who you're with? You could talk about ties in your life

when your identity has felt very strong, and times when you've been confused. Are there lessons to be learned from both of those times?

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.

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

Before girls and grown-ups arrive, the hosts might consider whether nametags might be helpful. If any of the people in attendance might not know each other, think about what you can do to put people at ease, and set a warm tone.

Leave a little time for a "soft start" during which people can arrive, snack, and catch up or meet each other.

Ice-Breaker, 10-15 minutes

Girl and grown-up pairs take turns "interviewing" each other with an icebreaker question. You could make up your own icebreaker or use one of our suggestions.

"What is something that you do to express yourself and your creativity?"

"Imagine yourself being introduced to a large crowd - now or at some point in the future. How would you want to be described? What kind of accomplishments would be listed?"

After pairs have discussed the question, take a few minutes for anyone who wants to share their answer with the group. Or, everyone could take a turn introducing their partner to the rest of the group by saying their name and

briefly talking about their answer to the icebreaker. (Try to give people a head's up in advance that they will be asked to remember what their partner said.)

If this is your first meeting together, gather the group for a quick **Book Club Mad Libs** activity (download the Mad Libs on the toolkit page). This will help get club members on the same page about expectations, particularly about privacy, and will also help you give your club a fun name.

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.

- Isabella's parents are divorced, and they don't get along very well. How does their relationship and custody arrangement impact Isabella's life? Do you or any of your friends have a similar situation?
- If Isabella was your friend, what advice would you give her about dealing with her family?
- What's your understanding of stereotypes? What are some times when Isabella deals with stereotypes? Which stereotypes might people apply to you or your friends? How does it feel when people make assumptions about you?
- Isabella says, "Mom is sensitive, so I have to be careful." What does Isabella keep to herself so that she doesn't make her mother feel bad? What are the consequences of trying to protect her mother instead of expressing her own needs and preferences? Have you ever been in a situation like this?
- When Isabella teases her father about ironing his jeans, he explains, "I think it's important we look our very best at all times." By "us," he means "people

of color . . . Black folks.” How does that make you feel? How does his approach to looking his best contrast with Isabella’s mother’s way of dressing? Why do you think that is?

- How does Isabella feel about Imani finding a noose in her locker? How does the school respond? What might you do to make Imani feel safer and respected at school and in the community?
- What do you think about the scene when the police pull Darren and Isabella over and accuse them of a crime? Why does that situation escalate so quickly? What does this scene show about racism? How could the police have acted differently?
- What role does social media play in identifying police violence? Are social media coverage and videos helpful in raising awareness and finding solutions? Can videos be harmful? How?
- Find examples throughout the book where Isabella uses music and musical terms, especially harmony, to talk about her blended family. Why is music a good metaphor for her life?
- Did this book change or surprise you? Did you learn anything?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Since this month's book is about someone who develops a more true and complicated understanding of her identity, take some time at the end of this meeting for book club members to reflect on their identities. This could be an informal conversation, pair interviews, or an art activity in which each person draws a picture of themselves that expresses their identity - maybe even multiple identities, some they were born with and some they chose for themselves.

Note: None of the parts of this discussion guide are obligatory in any way. Feel free to reshape, abandon, and reimagine as suits your group's needs. If, for example, your group doesn't have the energy for further discussion, you can always skip this last part or suggest it to people as a way of carrying their thinking about leadership into the next weeks. Girls and grown-ups could agree to share their identities in ongoing conversations at home, and/or members could come to the next meeting prepared to share their thoughts.

Closing, 5 minutes

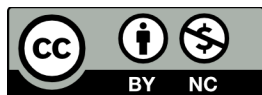
Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your November meeting. Happy reading!

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

The Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson - When Candice finds a letter addressed to her late grandmother, she can't resist attempting to solve the puzzle of a decades-old mystery that uncovers her town's racist history and the way her own family was caught up in it.

Front Desk by Kelly Yang - When Mia's parents find work at a motel, the family faces one challenge after another, from the motel owner's cruelty to racism from the police. But Mia's creativity and determination helps her family find community and satisfaction in their new home. This book, based on Yang's experience as a child, is full of heart and humor!



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