

Welcome to the second month of Girls Leadership Girl & Grown-Up Book Club! This month, we're reading books that deal with allyship, which means using one's privilege to support a marginalized group or individual. In Alex Gino's debut middle grade novel *George*, main character Melissa knows that she is a girl, and she struggles to tell her friends and family, who have always seen her as a boy.

Over the course of the book, other characters respond to Melissa in a variety of ways - some with support, some with denial. As you read, notice how the characters' responses affect Melissa. For example, how do Melissa's confidence and sense of her identity change when her best friend Kelly offers to let Melissa borrow some of her clothes?

Another interesting question to consider as you read, is whether Kelly is an ally to Melissa, or would you say that she's simply being a friend? Allyship and friendship aren't the same, but they can coexist between two people, and one can lead to the other.

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

Since this is only the second meeting of the year, it might be worth discussing how the last meeting went. What was great? What would you like to change? It's absolutely fine to experiment with different meeting structures. For example, you might to ask a question and then leave room for organic discussion. Or, you might want to give everyone a chance to share in turn to make sure that you're creating space for all voices.

Everyone pair up with someone other than your girl or grown-up. If possible, try to pair with someone you don't know very well. Pairs take turns asking each other an icebreaker question. You could make up your own icebreaker or use one of our silly suggestions.

"If you could make up a new holiday and make everyone celebrate it, what would it be?"

"If you were a ghost, who would you haunt?"

After pairs have giggled over the question, take a few minutes for anyone who wants to share their answer with the group.

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.

- What happens when Melissa tries to talk to her mom about being a girl? Is there anything her mom could have done to make that conversation easier?
- Is it fair that boys and girls can't try out for the same parts? Have you ever wanted to do something but been told you couldn't because of your gender?

- What do you think it is about the role of Charlotte that Melissa likes so much?
- What is Kelly's response when Melissa first tells her she's a girl? What does she do later to show her support?
- Why does Melissa's mom give her back her bag of magazines?
- What's the difference between the way Melissa's mom responds at the beginning of the story, and at the end?
- Why is Melissa so happy to pose for photographs on the day of her trip to the zoo with Kelly?
- Who are Melissa's allies?
- Talk about what being an ally means to you. How would you define it? How is it different from being a friend? Can someone be both? What would you say about Kelly - is she an ally to Melissa? Why?
- How is allyship connected to leadership?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

One of the best ways to define allyship is to observe it in the wild! As you're going about your life, see if you can spot examples of people using their privilege to support and amplify marginalized groups and individuals, people taking on the struggles of others as if those struggles were their own.

Maybe you'll have an opportunity to be an ally to someone. Remember that being an ally doesn't mean taking over a situation. First and foremost, an ally's job is to listen to another's experience, and to what kind of support they need.

Come to the next book club meeting ready to discuss.

Closing, 5 minutes

Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your January meeting (no meeting in December, unless your group plans its own event). Happy reading!

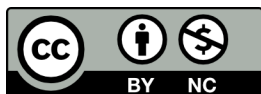
Further Reading

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.

You Don't Know Everything, Jilly P! by Alex Gino - Jilly thinks she has everything figured out. But when her sister is born deaf, she asks her friend Derek - a deaf Black ASL user - for advice. Along the way to figuring out how to become an ally, she makes plenty of mistakes, and learns just how much she doesn't know.

The First Rule of Punk by Celia C. Pérez - Malú has to move halfway across the country with her mother, leaving behind her dad and his record store that she's practically grown up in. Fortunately, she lives by her dad's advice: the first rule of punk, he told her, is to be herself. When Malú's band is banned from a school event, she's knows she has to stand up to the administration, even if she has to go full punk.

It Ain't So Awful, Falafel by Firoozeh Dumas - Zomorod's family moves around all the time. This time, she's determined to fit in with her classmates, starting with choosing a more American sounding name for herself: Cindy. But, in America in the 1970s, there's no distancing herself from the anti-Iranian sentiments in the news.



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