

I hope you've had a festive and relaxing break, and lots of time with your loved ones. Now that we're back to book club meetings, we'll be reading and talking about the people in our lives who make up our families, communities, and support networks.

Nicole Panteleakos' debut novel *Planet Earth is Blue* is about a girl named Nova who is counting down the days until the space shuttle Challenger launch, when her sister Bridget had promised to return. Meanwhile, Nova is living with a new foster family and attending a new school, making connections for the first time without her sister. When it seems less and less likely that Bridget will return, Nova has to decide whether she will let new people into her life.

As you read, it might be interesting to talk and think about how we can open ourselves up to relationships with people who care for us. Sometimes these people are not biological family, but they become our family because of how they embrace us and see us for who we are, like Francine and Billy see Nova.

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 in the Girls Leadership Book Club Facebook group! 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

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.

- What's your favorite type of weather and why?
- Describe your current mood as if it was a kind of cake.

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 do you think of the author's decision to tell part of the story through Nova's letters to Bridget? How do these sections help you understand Nova's experience?
- Think about the relationship between Nova and Bridget. What makes it so important to Nova, and why is she so determined to be with her sister again?
- What is Nova's relationship with her new foster family like at first?
- Nova keeps trying to communicate with her classmates in their discussions about space exploration. How does she feel when they can't understand her? And how do others respond to her attempts to communicate?
- The social worker Mrs. Steele insists that Nova is less able than Francine and Billy. Why do they see her so differently?
- Why did it take so long for Nova to remember what happened to Bridget?
- Do you see any evidence in the story that Nova is starting to feel more comfortable with her foster family?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Think about a goal that you have (or maybe make one up right now!). This could be a life-long goal like Yasmin's, or a New Year's resolution, or simply something you want to accomplish in the near future. Who ever feels comfortable doing so can take a turn sharing the goal. Then, identify one or two first steps you could take to work toward that goal, and think about whether there's asking someone for support could help you reach that goal. See if you can take at least one step toward your goal before the next meeting.

Closing, 5 minutes

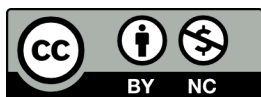
Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your February meeting. Happy reading!

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 for her late grandmother in the attic, she and her friend Brandon embark on a journey to solve a mystery that takes them decades into the past, and their town's secrets and racist history.

The Next Great Paulie Fink by Ali Benjamin - This entertaining story told through multiple viewpoints tells what happens when Caitlyn goes to a tiny, rural school where everyone knows everyone else. Stories about the infamous, larger-than-life former student Paulie Fink intrigue her to the point that she tries to learn all she can about this legend so she can judge a competition for who is best qualified to fill his shoes.



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