

In this month's book, Merci is caught between her childhood and teenage years. She wants to be included in grown-up conversations, especially about her grandfather's health problems, and given more independence. But, her parents want to shelter her from growing up too fast, or having to deal with challenges.

As you read, you might think and talk about ways in which your young girl can take on more independence and responsibility, and the ways in which the grown-ups in her life can better support her.

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.

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 is the place - real or imaginary - that you'd most love to visit?

If you were going to give a speech, who would you want to introduce you, and why?

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.

- Sometimes Merci seems to enjoy her family's unique setup, and other times it really bothers or embarrasses her. What are the things she likes and dislikes? How would she feel about living in such close proximity to your extended family? (Or, if you already have a similar situation, how do you like it?)
- Many of the kids in Merci's class, even Merci herself, look to Edna Santos for direction and approval. Why do you think Edna has that kind of influence? Have you noticed anything similar happening amongst your own friends?
- What are some of the clues that something is wrong with Lolo? Why does it take Merci so long to understand what's going on?
- Do you think it was right for Merci's family to keep Lolo's diagnosis a secret from her? Why or why not? How would you feel if you were in Merci's position?
- Merci notices some of the ways her class dynamics are changing compared to the year before. What are some of these ways?
- How does Merci change from the beginning of the story to the end? What are some ways she is showing more maturity, and taking on more responsibility?

Leadership Goals, 15 minutes

Merci wants independence that her parents aren't totally comfortable with (such as going to the movies at night with her friends). With your grown-ups, talk about one way in which you could have more independence and responsibility at home. Could you make a plan to try this out?

Closing, 5 minutes

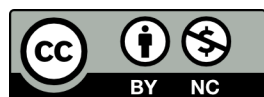
Before everyone goes off their separate ways, make sure you've chosen a date for your March meeting. Happy reading!

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.

All's Faire in Middle School by Victoria Jamieson - Imogene has grown-up in the wacky world of Rem Faires, homeschooled by her parents, then decides to attend public middle school. Turns out social dynamics at school are more dangerous than any joust or dragon hunt!

I Can Make This Promise by Christine Day - Edie's always been curious about her Native American heritage, but her white adoptive parents say they don't know the answers to her questions. Then, one day, Edie discovers that they know much more than they've told her, and knowledge about where she came from is suddenly within her reach.



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