

Teacher's Guide

The Mother-Daughter Book Club

by Heather Vogel Frederick

About the book:

Even if Megan would rather be at the mall, Cassidy is late for hockey practice, Emma's already read every book in existence, and Jess is missing her mother too much to care, their new book club is scheduled to meet every month. But what begins as a mom-imposed ritual of reading *Little Women* soon helps four unlikely friends navigate the drama of middle school. From stolen journals to secret crushes to a fashion-fiasco first dance, the girls are up to their wellie boots in drama. They can't help but wonder: What would Jo March do? Acclaimed author Heather Vogel Frederick will delight daughters of all ages in a novel about the fabulousness of fiction, family, and friendship.

About the author:

When Heather Vogel Frederick was in the sixth grade, she used to ride her bike past Louisa May Alcott's house in Concord, Massachusetts, and dream of becoming a writer. Today the award-winning author of the Patience Goodspeed books and the Spy Mice series lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband, their two teenage sons, the family's beloved Shetland sheepdog, and three fun-loving chickens.

Before reading:

Share your experiences of book club. Have you ever been in one that met outside of school? What books did you read? Did drama outside the book ever interfere with the club itself? Why do you think book clubs exist?

Discussion Guide:

AUTUMN

Emma:

1. Why is Emma having such a difficult time in school? What do you think she should do about it?
2. Who does Emma like? Who does she dislike? Why?
3. What surprise does her mother have in store? How would you feel about being signed up for a book club without being consulted?

Megan:

1. Why does Megan think her mom is disappointed in her? Is she really?
2. When you read Megan's first chapter do you think you would want to be friends with her or not? Why?
3. What would Megan rather be doing? Would you want to join a book club? Why or why not?

Cassidy:

1. Why does Cassidy's sister yell at her?
2. Why is Cassidy having a more difficult time with the loss of her father than her sister?
3. What does Cassidy plan for the fabulous four at the Halloween party?

Jess:

1. Why do you think Jess and Emma are such good friends?
2. How would you feel if your mom left to pursue a career in film, television, or music? Is it better or worse than leaving for any other reason?
3. What causes the rift in the book club? Predict what you think will happen because of it.

WINTER

Cassidy:

1. How do Megan and Cassidy get along? Why? Do you think it will always be that way?
2. How do things get intense once more at the book club?
3. Would you want to attend and dress up for the Christmas party? Why?

Emma:

1. Describe the *Little Women* Christmas party. What do you think they'll remember about it?
2. What does Mrs. Delaney send in her absence? How would you feel in Jess's place?
3. What makes Emma hopeful that she and Megan might renew their friendship? Does it work?

Jess:

1. How would you feel if your mom or dad couldn't come to your most important event? Would you be able to forgive them?
2. Do you think Becca will grow up to be a battle-ax just like her own mother, Mrs. Chadwick? What makes you think this?
3. Explain what happens during the performance. How would you feel?

Megan:

1. Does Megan feel remorse for the goat incident or not? How has she been influenced by the other girls? Is it an excuse for her behavior?
2. Do you think this argument was necessary for the club to continue? What things are said that needed to be said?
3. How must Megan make it up to Jess? Is this enough?

SPRING

Cassidy:

1. What happens to Cassidy at the championship match?
2. How does her mother handle her worst fear?
3. What small detail reveals how the mother-daughter book club has changed?

Emma:

1. Why is Patriot's Day such a big deal in Concord? Do you have any local events which are very important to your community? Describe it.
2. Do you think reenactments are important for understanding history? Would you participate in one?

3. What happens between the fabulous four and the mother-daughter book club?

Megan:

1. How does Megan save Emma's outfit?
2. Do you think fashion is frivolous or necessary? Why?
3. Why does Megan think, "Nobody quite got what they wanted." (p. 181)

Jess:

1. What would be most difficult about having a parent gone?
2. How does Jess's dad embarrass her? Do all parents embarrass their children?
3. How does the mother-daughter book club react to his ideas? Are they true friends now, or not?

SUMMER

Emma:

1. How does Emma handle Becca Chadwick on the bus? What inspires her? Has a book ever helped you see things in a new light?
2. Describe Emma's birthday party. What was the best gift?
3. What should be included in a birthday party for you? What about for your best friend?

Megan:

1. What happens when they run into Becca on the train?
2. Describe the events at *FLASH*. How would you feel in Megan's shoes?
3. What surprise does Clementine share with the group?

Cassidy:

1. How difficult would it be to have a supermodel for a mom?
2. Would you be interested in having a makeover like the ones described in this chapter? Could you trust the designers or not?
3. Why is Jess so disappointed in the trip?

Jess:

1. What do they see at Orchard House with new eyes?
2. How has the reading of *Little Women* changed each of them?
3. What is the happy ending to the story?

Projects:

Art:

Design a bedroom, outfit, or scene for the movie adaptation of the mother-daughter book club for one of the characters. You can use any materials you like to bring it to life.

Music:

Choose the playlist for the movie soundtrack of the book. Or choose a soundtrack for one of the characters and explain your choices.

Food:

Create apple slump or one of the other yummy cookies or goodies mentioned in the story. Share with friends or book club members.

Just for fun:

Host a celebration like one in the story – either a time-period party (like the *Little Women* Christmas party) or a birthday party inspired by the honored guest.

Fill out the following character chart as you read the novel:

| Character: | Description: | Conflicts: | Relationship with her mom: | In the end: |
|------------|--------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Emma | | | | |
| Megan | | | | |
| Cassidy | | | | |
| Jess | | | | |

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.