



A Mighty Girl Book Club Organizing Guide

This guide was prepared by A Mighty Girl to help individuals interested in organizing or participating in a book club have a fun and enriching experience. For more book club-related resources, including recommended reading lists, visit A Mighty Girl's Book Club page at www.amightygirl.com/book-club

WHAT IS A BOOK CLUB?

Of course you've heard of book clubs where people come together to discuss books, but what exactly is A Mighty Girl book club? A Mighty Girl book clubs are ones where groups read books in which girls and women are the star characters rather than simply serving as sidekicks or damsels in distress. In A Mighty Girl books, girls are the ones saving the day, going on the adventure, finding the cure, or perhaps just successfully navigating middle school. The books we recommend for the book club are ones that honor girls and their diverse capabilities and interests.



There are many formats that A Mighty Girl book club can take. One of the most popular is the mother-daughter book club though father-daughter clubs, girl only groups, or clubs with both girls and boys are all possible. And, while much of the focus in this organizing guide will be on girls and the benefits they can derive from such groups, we believe that both book clubs and our selections can be just as beneficial and empowering for boys.

WHY ORGANIZE A BOOK CLUB?

Speaking of benefits, you might be wondering why exactly you would want to organize a book club? Parent-child book clubs are popular for any number of educational, social, and relational reasons. Book clubs can help improve a child's reading skills and self-confidence, as well as help her to learn valuable life skills such as learning how to articulate her opinion and present an argument. They provide a great social outlet for both parents and girls and help to build a supportive community of friends. Many parents also find book clubs a valuable way to stay connected with their daughters as they enter the tween and teen years and increasingly strive for greater independence from their parents. Moreover, book discussions can also help parents and their children broach difficult topics that might be challenging to discuss directly but can be explored in the context of a story. Finally, book clubs can be great fun for both parents and kids and a highly fulfilling creative outlet for years to come.



OKAY, I'M CONVINCED – HOW DO I GET STARTED?

There are a number of questions to consider as you start organizing your book club and here are a few to keep in mind:

1. What do you want your group to look like? Do you want to form a mother-daughter group, one with just girls, or something else?

Book clubs can take many forms – mother-daughter, father-daughter, girl only groups, or clubs with both girls and boys can be all options. You and your daughter will need to decide what's right for you. And, don't forget to give yourselves a catchy name – one of our personal favorites is the "Mighty Girls and their Moms Book Group."

2. How large do you want your group to be?

For parent-child groups, we recommend four to six pairs as eight to ten people is sufficient for holding a stimulating discussion yet not too large that some people won't be able to contribute. In general, it's a good idea to start smaller and add more pairs depending how the group dynamics are working.

3. How old should your daughter be before starting or joining a book club?

A Mighty Girl's recommended reading lists are divided into four age levels: 6 - 7, 8 - 10, 11 - 13, and 14 and up. Many people believe that age eight or nine is the ideal time for children to join book clubs because most girls are reading independently at that age yet are young enough to be excited by the prospect of hanging out with their moms or dads.

Book clubs can be enjoyed by younger children in the six to seven age range though discussions will likely need to be relatively short and more fun book-related activities should be incorporated into meetings to maintain the children's interest (see the last section for ideas). A Mighty Girl's recommendations for this youngest group include a mix of picture and chapter books to offer options for children to read alone or with a parent. Groups with very early readers may also opt to structure their meetings like story time at the library, reading a picture book together and then discussing it afterwards.

As the book club participants age, the selections will increase in complexity as well as in the breadth of topics addressed. For example, while A Mighty Girl's recommendations for older readers range from the serious to the light-hearted, many address more advanced themes such as relationships, body image, and social issues like racism, poverty, or war. These texts offer book clubs an excellent opportunity to explore many "big questions" related to topics ranging from self image to ethics that may otherwise be challenging to discuss with tweens or teens.

4. How will you recruit club participants?

The easiest way to recruit members is to reach out to friends or neighbors with girls who are reading books on a similar level as your daughter or to parents in your daughter's class at school. However, before inviting only current friends to participate, keep in mind that book clubs are a great way for both parents and children to meet new people and make new friends. Incorporating participants from outside your normal circles can also be a terrific way to bring more diverse perspectives to the discussions which can often make them more enriching for everyone.

To avoid having a book club centered around the initial organizer as the central node, you can also ask a friend to help recruit new members. If each person brings two new pairs to the group, both you and your friends will have a greater opportunity to meet new people through the book club. This can also help participants feel that it's more of a collective effort versus just one person's project, which can encourage greater accountability and engagement among the club members.



5. Once the core group is established, how often should you meet?

Many book clubs choose to meet once a month; others more frequently – your group will have to decide what makes sense for you. Regardless of your schedule, it's often helpful to set-up a shared online calendar to help with coordination.

Generally, groups choose to rotate club meetings from house to house and, depending on the group, the host may be deemed responsible for providing refreshments. To add an extra fun element to your gatherings, try meeting in new locations like library meeting rooms, parks, or even coffee shops.



6. How should you select books for your group?

Book clubs have many different approaches on how to select their books. In some groups, the mother-daughter pairs will take turns choosing the book for that month. In others, the next month's host will bring several proposed books to a meeting for the girls and mothers to examine. The group can then vote on which book to read for the following month or select a book based on group consensus. Another approach is to give the girls a copy of A Mighty Girl's recommended reading list and have each one select the book that most interests them.

7. What type of format is best for your meetings?

Just like selecting books to read, there is not one right answer for how best to run your book club meetings. The age and attention level of the girls will greatly influence how much time you will want to devote to focused discussion versus social or fun activities. In general, most groups like to start their meetings with a socializing period where the girls and moms have a chance to hang out on their own before getting down to business. Once the discussion starts, it's often helpful to have a facilitator selected in advance to help manage the conversation and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Additionally, it's highly recommended that adults prepare open-ended questions in advance about the reading to keep the discussion moving forward and also to probe any important themes or issues raised in the book that you'd like to explore with the group. Alternatively, that month's facilitator could be responsible for preparing the questions for a specific book. With groups of older girls, the girls themselves could also bring a question to each month's discussion about a facet of the reading they would like to explore. Older girls could also serve as the facilitator on a rotating basis although it's recommended that an adult models good facilitator behavior before girls start taking on this role.

8. Are you going to select a group coordinator or secretary?

Book clubs may also find it helpful to select a group coordinator or secretary to send out reminders about upcoming meetings and maintain the calendar. While the initial organizer of the group often takes on this role by default, groups may opt to actively select a coordinator or divide up these responsibilities between multiple people. Additionally, in some groups, the coordinator or secretary will write a brief summary of the group's thoughts on that month's book. Over time, these summaries essentially become a club history that reflects the growth and increasing maturity of the participants.

MY BOOK CLUB IS UP AND RUNNING AT LAST! NOW HOW DO I HELP ENSURE THAT IT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL FOR THE LONG HAUL?

A Mighty Girl offers this list of tips for helping your book club stay vibrant and active for years to come!

- Stay connected to the latest book club-related news and resources by signing up for A Mighty Girl's book club list at www.amightygirl.com/book-club-sign-up.
- Spicing up your group meetings by incorporating book-related activities along with your discussions is especially important for younger girls but all groups of all ages will enjoy diversifying the agenda. A few book-related activities ideas include cooking food together related to a book's theme, holding a sleepover and watching a movie version of a book the group read together, having everyone dress up as their favorite book character, acting out a favorite scene from a book, volunteering together on an issue related to a book's theme (for example, volunteer at a soup kitchen after reading a book that addresses poverty), or taking a field trip to book-related location (for example, go on a visit to a botanical garden after reading "The Secret Garden").
- Help spread your love of reading and teach your girls a lesson in generosity at the same time! To make it easy for each parent-daughter pair to read and discuss the book, buy two copies. At the end of each month, each girl can keep one copy for her personal library and then the group can collect and donate the additional copies to a school library or community group in a needy area. Over time, your group could have a tremendous impact on improving the reading options available to other children.
- Use the internet as a resource for meeting planning. If you're looking for discussion planning ideas, try searching online for 'discussion questions' for a specific book. You'll find that many of the books on our recommended reading list have discussion questions available online.
- Help support A Mighty Girl by purchasing your book club selections via our website and encourage your fellow club members to do the same. A Mighty Girl can only continue to exist and provide all of our girl empowering resources with your support. By purchasing your books via the Amazon.com link found on each A Mighty Girl product page, we receive a small commission from the sale as no additional cost to you. If you or members of your book club choose to borrow your books from the library or purchase them elsewhere, please consider making a donation via our website to help support the site and initiatives like our book club site.
- Finally, stay in touch! We'd love to hear how your book club efforts are going and if you have any feedback or recommendations on A Mighty Girl's book club page and resources. Feel free to drop us a line at any time at bookclub@amightygirl.com.



ABOUT A MIGHTY GIRL

A Mighty Girl is the world's largest collection of books and movies for parents, teachers, and others dedicated to raising smart, confident, and courageous girls and, of course, for girls themselves! Visit us online at www.amightygirl.com.