The Double-Digit Club

Marion Dane Bauer ◆ Teachers' Guide ◆ Book Group Discussion Guide

Holiday House

ISBN 0-8234-1805-7

You'll find more Teachers' Guides for Marion Dane Bauer's books online at mariondanebauer.com

This teaching guide was prepared by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer. tracievaughnzimmer.com

About the Book

This summer, nine-year-old Sarah is dreading the first day of summer vacation. It will be her best friend's birthday, and stuck up Valerie Miller will ask Paige to join her silly Double-Digit Club, a group that ignores girls who are not ten yet. If Paige says yes, Sarah will have no friends for the whole summer because her birthday isn't until the end of August. Even though Sarah and Paige have promised to be "last, best, and only friends," Sarah is not sure Paige will be able to pass up the chance to be accepted by the most popular girls in school.

In this heartfelt novel, a girl discovers the meaning of true and honest friendship and learns to face the future as a wiser and more open person.

"Middle-graders will sympathize with how seemingly innocuous errors in judgment can snowball into serious trouble and respond to Miss B.'s gentle but firm guidance as Sarah learns the simple but very complicated truths about growing up."

—Booklist

About this Guide

This guide includes discussion questions and projects intended to extend the use of the novel into classrooms, book clubs, and literature circles. It should promote discussion on the issues and themes of the novel including friendship, forgiveness, belonging, and growing up.

Discussion Guide

The Double Digit Club explores both close friendships and small groups of girls. Do you think friendship between boys and girls are different? How? Why? Is there anything girls could learn from boys' friendships? What could boys learn from girls' friendships?

Paige isn't upfront with Sarah about being invited to join the DDC. Sarah isn't honest with Paige about how she acquired the doll or with Miss B about borrowing it. Paige also doesn't reveal how she feels about Sarah's bossy behavior. Which of these untruths do you think is the most harmful? Are there ever any good reasons to lie? When? Could honesty have saved this friendship?

Would you like to be a member of the Double Digit Club? Why or why not? Why do you think girls often form these exclusive clubs? Do you think it is more about letting people in or keeping others out? Why do you think these clubs get started? What can you do if you're faced with being left out?

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Discuss these famous quotes on friendship

"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."

— Helen Keller

"Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?"

— Abraham Lincoln

"A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out."

— Walter Winchell

"Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.
Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.
Just walk beside me and be my friend."

— Albert Camus

More discussion questions

There is an old Hasidic saying that "One who looks for a friend without faults will have none." What could Paige have done or said to Sarah about how she was feeling before abandoning her? Can true friends talk about the other's faults without ruining a friendship? How? Is it important to know what faults you might have? Why?

Sarah asks Miss B, "Does growing up always have to be so hard?" Miss B answers that, "I'm afraid it does, my dear. Growing up is just plain hard work." (p. 112) Do you agree with Miss B? Why? What do you think is the most difficult part of growing up? Why do some girls want to grow up and others put it off as long as possible? What parts about growing up are exciting? What parts are scary?

Miss Berglund doesn't act like most adults. She doesn't try to deny Sarah's feelings, contradict her emotions or reassure her with false hope. Instead, she is often quiet or agrees with what Sarah has said. Why do you think most adults (especially parents) try to deny how kids feel? Would you really like your parents to act like Miss B with her complete honesty? What might you lose if they did?

Do you agree with Miss B's assessment that: "I guess there's always a bit of hate in every kind of love." What does she mean by this statement? How is this true of Sarah and Paige? Of Miss B and her father? Is it true in any of your own friendships? How?

Sarah offers to make amends for breaking Nancy/Collette. She offers to read to Miss B or wash her dishes, anything she wants her to do. But Miss B

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More discussion questions

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declines because it wouldn't fix the crack or change anything. Why do you think Miss B feels this way? Do you agree? Does she want her to remember what she's done and not feel like it's over? Will Sarah be able to fix the crack in her friendship with Miss B or Paige either? Can some things never really be fixed between people? When?

What do you think of Sarah's idea to start a Growing Up Club where anyone who wanted to be a friend could join? "You wouldn't have to be a certain age. Or a certain anything, for that matter. No one would have to be like anyone else or have to do what anyone else said." (p. 116) Do you think the idea could work? Could it work for you? How?

Projects

- Write a classified advertisement for a friend. You have only twenty words so choose carefully. Here are some words you might consider for your ad: funny, silly, quiet, shy, honest, likes to play basketball, soccer, board games, etc. loves camping, swimming, playing outside…
- Using one of the famous quotes on friendship, or creating one of your own, develop a piece of art inspired by it. Share it with your friend.
- Write a letter to an old or new friend.
- As a group, brainstorm a list of things that friends do for one another. Using various markers, let students write their responses directly onto bulletin board or butcher paper. When the discussion is over, add in large block letters:
  BE A FRIEND TODAY for an instant bulletin board.

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