

Reproducible Activity Sheet

How to Start a Mother-Daughter Book Club

THE AUTHOR C.S. LEWIS ONCE SAID, “We read to know we are not alone.” For many girls, talking about books with their friends or parents is a way to both connect with the important people in their lives and explore big ideas about the world.

Book clubs have a long and storied past. Women especially have been creating book clubs for as long as there have been books to read. Books pull us out of the immediate drama of our own lives and bring us to worlds we couldn't have imagined ourselves; and book club discussions introduce us to people we would otherwise never get to know so well. In the novel *The Mother-Daughter Book Club*, by Heather Vogel Frederick, four girls and their mothers start a book club, reading Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* over the course of a year. The girls have their ups and downs, as do their parents. But the group stays together, pulled tight by the experience of reading the same book.

HOW TO START A CLUB

Choose some girls and their moms to join you. Four to six seems like a good number of mother-daughter pairs. (Part of the fun of a club is the other people and the points of view they bring, but a group that's too big can make it hard for everyone to be involved in the conversation.) Ask some people you know, as well as some you don't, because being in a book group together is a good way to get to know new people. It's best if members can really commit to meeting once every other month for a whole year. That way, everyone can take their time with the books, and there will be plenty of time to settle in and figure out how best to make your group work.

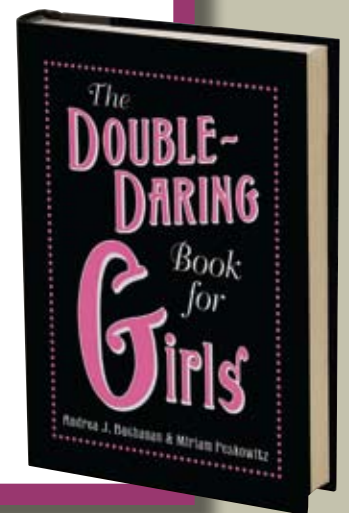
If you can't get enough people for a mother-daughter book club, you may consider other kinds of book clubs. You may start one for girls only, or for girls and boys, or for girls and their dads, or even for girls and their grandparents. It's also possible to have a short-term club, where a group comes together to read one or two books, and that's all.

It can take some time for a group to find its rhythm. Be patient. There are groups that start out strong and fade fast, and others that seem to take a while before everyone gets on the same page (so to speak). But some groups last from elementary school all the way through high school, providing a girl with a group reading experience that sustains her through girlhood and beyond.

Decide how often to meet. Every other month is good to aim for. It gives everyone enough time to read a book.

As for refreshments, book club meetings have been known to turn into elaborate events for which people spend a great deal of time preparing, cooking, and worrying. If doing this is truly fun for you, then go ahead. Otherwise, we suggest you steer clear of all that. It's about the reading, after all, and the camaraderie. Simple snacks are just fine.

With any luck the conversation will range freely and easily. For when it doesn't, here are some good go-around questions, which everyone in the circle can take a turn answering: *Who is your favorite character, and why? What was your favorite chapter, and why? What did you like best, and what did you like the least?* The best book conversations tend to be unpredictable and spontaneous, but starter questions such as these can get everybody's ideas flowing.

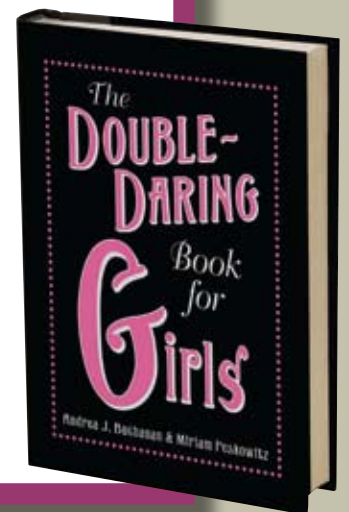


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And finally, choose a book. The original *Daring Book for Girls* has a long list of classic books. But there are scads of books that aren't on that list. What you choose to read will depend on your age, your reading level, and what you like to read. Teachers and librarians are great sources of information about books, and they are wonderful people to ask for advice about what to read next.

In some groups, each member takes a turn picking a book for the next meeting. In others, the members meet every so often to decide together on books for the next few months or for the year ahead. You may decide to include only books available in paperback or at the library so that they are affordable to everyone.

You may also decide on a theme, such as reading several books in a row by the same author. Perhaps your group will decide to read books of historical fiction, bringing to life the volcanic eruption of Pompeii, the Underground Railroad, medieval Mongolia, or San Francisco during the Gold Rush. The next year could be devoted to books of fantasy and fire-breathing dragons from *Eragon* to *Beowulf*. The year after that could be spent reading *Anne of Green Gables* and other girl classics. It is up to you and your fellow book club members.



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Books That Will Change Your Life*

W E PRESENT these titles for your reading pleasure, knowing there are endless books beyond this list to discover and love, too. We know you will read them in your own fashion and at your own pace.

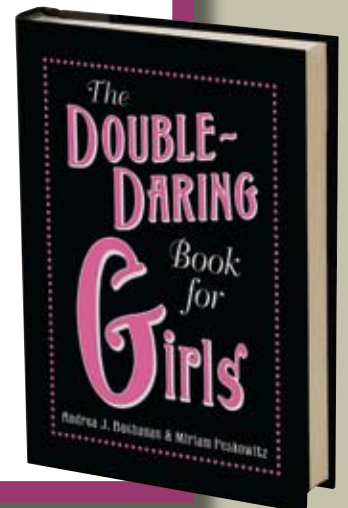
20 GIRL CLASSICS

- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, and her other books too.
- *Anne of Green Gables* (and *Emily of New Moon*) by L.M. Montgomery
- *Behind Rebel Lines: The Incredible Story of Emma Edmonds, Civil War Spy* by Seymour Reit
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
- *Caddie Woodlawn* (and the sequel, *Magical Melons*) by Carol Ryrie Brink
- *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
- *The Famous Five*, a series by Enid Blyton, with Dick, Ann, Julian, George (a girl!), and her dog Timothy.
- *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg
- *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh
- *The Illyrian Adventure* series by Lloyd Alexander
- *The Little Princess* (and *The Secret Garden*) by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *Keep Climbing, Girls* by Beah H. Richards
- *Little Women* and *Jo's Boys* by Louisa May Alcott
- *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder—the entire series.
- *Lizzie Bright* (and *The Buckminster Boy*) by Gary Schmidt
- *Mandy* by Julie Andrews
- *Matilda* (and *The BFG*) by Roald Dahl. Actually, make that anything by Roald Dahl.
- *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower* by Rumer Godden
- *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren
- *Ramona* by Beverly Cleary (the series)



OTHER FAVORITES

- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll
- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman
- *All of a Kind Family* by Sydney Taylor
- *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton
- *Call of the Wild* by Jack London

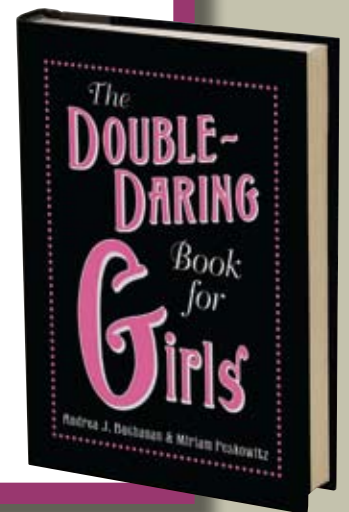


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- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. Seven classic novels from the 1950s, including the most famous, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
- *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck
- *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
- *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling. All seven, in time, and as you grow.
- *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency* and other madcap stories by Daniel Pinkwater
- *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, by Scott O'Dell, about a girl Robinson Crusoe. When you're done, read the original *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe.
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes
- *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery
- *Marjorie Morningstar* by Herman Wouk
- *Mary Poppins* by P.L. Travers
- *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, by Robert C. O'Brien
- *My Side of the Mountain* and *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George
- *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse
- *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster. Yes, another boy-hero-rescues-the-princesses plot (though here the princesses are Rhyme and Reason), but a great book nonetheless.
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith
- *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi
- *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. The original books, and the poems.
- *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare
- *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë
- *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by Frank Baum

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY BOOKS

- Lloyd Alexander's *The Chronicles of Prydain*
- Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* and *Robot* series
- Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* and *Fahrenheit 451*
- Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and all the books in the Ender series
- Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence
- Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, and *Messenger*
- Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Tombs of Atuan* and her *Earthsea* trilogy
- Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonsong* trilogy
- Robin McKinley's *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and the Crown*
- Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*



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CLASSIC GIRL-AND-HER-HORSE BOOKS

- *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell
- *Misty of Chincoteague* by Marguerite Henry
- *My Friend Flicka* by Mary O'Hara
- *National Velvet* by Enid Bagnold
- *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* by Paul Goble

MYTHOLOGIES AND FAIRY TALES

- *Bullfinch's Mythology* is a start. Some might say it's for grown-ups, but read a few lines to yourself out loud and you'll see whether or not it works for you.
- *The Complete Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Andersen
- *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*
- *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales* by Brothers Grimm
- *The Adventures of Robin Hood*
- *The Once and Future King* by T.H. White, about King Arthur's Court.
- *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* by Robin McKinley
- *The Odyssey* by Homer

OLD-FASHIONED GIRL-DETECTIVE SERIES

- *Nancy Drew* by Carolyn Keene. Starting with *The Secret of the Old Clock*, all the mysteries in River Heights end in Nancy's lap, and with her girlfriends George and Bess at her side, she always finds the secret passageways to solve them. The series began in the 1920s, and was revised twice, in the 1950s and the 2000s, each time becoming slightly less intrepid.
- *Trixie Belden*. An even better girl detective series is the *Trixie Belden* books, featuring Trixie, a teenaged, freckle-faced tomboy from upstate New York whose down-to-earth nature, pluck, and quick thinking aid her in solving mysteries with her friends Honey and Jim. Julie Campbell started the series in 1948 and wrote the first six books; after that the books were written by a series of writers using the pseudonym Kathryn Kenny.

NONFICTION

When we were young and bored, our parents told us, "Go read the dictionary!" We did, and look where it got us. One should never underestimate the pleasure to be found flipping through a dictionary, an encyclopedia, or an old science book.

*From the original *The Daring Book for Girls*

