



4th – 8th

Join Us for
The Missing Piece
Mystery Book Club

Mondays

@12:40-1:10 in the LMC

Bring the book & your lunch.





The Missing Piece Mystery Book Club

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Bring the book & your lunch with you.

October

Every Soul a Star

by Wendy Mass

November

Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School and Other Scary Things

by Lenore Look

January

The Small Adventure of Popeye and Elvis

by Barbara O'Conner

February

Revolution is Not a Dinner Party: A Novel

by Ying Chang Compestine

March

Waiting for Normal

by Leslie Conner

April

Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lightning

by Danette Haworth



How the Missing Piece Book Club Works:

4th-8th grade students please bring your lunch and a copy of the book as we read excerpts from the book. I ask each student to come prepared to discuss the book. Whenever you read a book you want to know what the book is really about, not what it's about on the surface, not the story, but what's underneath the story ... look for what the author is trying to say UNDERNEATH the story. Readers will focus on different aspects of the book, and everyone will gain new insights as a result. Questions will be used to guide the discussion and keep it on track. Please remember there are no right answers to the questions! Don't be afraid to criticize a book but try to get beyond the 'I just didn't like it' statement.

Book Discussion Questions:

Setting: What kind of place is it?

What do you think about the characters?

How would you describe them in one word?

What makes the main character different?

What does the main character want?

Why is it important to have dreams?

What are the various elements of the story ... plot, character, and conflict?

What genre is this book? (Fantasy, historical fiction, horror, gross book, mystery, sports, romance, biography, spy-fiction etc.)

Who is the protagonist in the story?

Who is the antagonist in the story?

Did the author play fair?

Did the author throw in characters or plot twists that didn't fit the facts?

Did the characters act honestly?

Were the characters too one-sided?

Did the ending seem faked somehow?

Did the author seem to understand what he/she was actually saying, or did the message seem to be different from what the author intended?

Book Summaries:

October: ***Every Soul a Star*** by Wendy Mass. Little, Brown & Co., 2008.

Three young teens witness a total solar eclipse and are changed forever in this novel, told in alternating narratives, that weaves exciting astronomy facts into the teens' personal lives. Ally, 13, is fascinated by the scientific event, as are 1,000 other people from all over the world who come to view the Great Eclipse at her family's wilderness site. Glamorous teen Bree has an opposite view and is appalled that her parents, both physics scholars, want to move to the site: how can she manage without the mall? Then there is Jack, who loves art and science fiction but is a failure at science and is brought to the site by his teacher. The anticipation building up to the great event brings thrilling changes in all three young lives. Bree's hilarious account of her experience as a glamour queen in the wilderness is right-on, but she moves beyond total stereotype and allows herself to release her inner geek, at least for a while, while Ally and Jack bond and also break their rigid character roles.

November: ***Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School and Other Scary Things*** by Lenore Look. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2008.

Alvin Ho is determined to make friends, even though he is afraid of any number of things and can't talk—at all—in school. Episodic chapters feature events at home, at school, and in his Concord, MA, neighborhood. Everyday adventures include being left stranded by his siblings during stretching

exercises that leave him upside down in a tree, being sent alone to the scary piano teacher's house, and deciding whether or not to hang out with the classroom bully.

January: ***The Small Adventure of Popeye and Elvis*** by Barbara O'Conner. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009.

Popeye thinks life is boring in Fayette, SC, where his grandmother keeps her mind sharp by reciting the kings and queens of England in chronological order and gives her grandson vocabulary words each week to keep his mind exercised. Life changes when a boy named Elvis and his nomadic, quirky family get their Holiday Rambler motor home stuck in red mud near Popeye's house. They meet and Elvis quickly names Popeye the senior vice president of the Spit and Swear Club. Popeye is impressed and longs for Elvis's interesting life. He, too, would like a paper plate with his name written on it in crayon and a mother who asks his opinion for rhyming words while writing her newest country-western tune. Elvis suggests they go on an adventure, which begins when they spot boats made from Yoo-hoo chocolate drink boxes floating down the creek carrying mysterious notes and they set off to track down the boat maker and the meaning of the notes.

February: ***Revolution is Not a Dinner Party: A Novel*** by Ying Chang Compestine. Henry Holt, 2007. Eight-year-old Ling, the spunky daughter of two doctors, lives in Wuhan, China; dreamy and idealistic, she often describes her world in metaphor (about her neighbor, Ling notes, Mrs. Wong was fragrant and warm like a red peony, which always welcomed visitors). But the lives of Ling and her family are disrupted when Comrade Li, an officer of the Communist Party, moves into their apartment. Difficulties mount as friends and neighbors disappear, Ling's father is arrested and she endures vicious tormenting at school because of her bourgeois background (At times I wished my family was poor and my parents worked on a vegetable farm... so I could have friends. But if my parents worked on a farm, who would treat their patients?). Although her father has been jailed, her family starved and their books burned, Ling fights to keep her long hair, a symbol of dignity and individualism to her, though her classmates see it as emblematic of Ling's privilege. Ling survives on wit, hope and courage until the death of Chairman Mao, after which she and her mother have a joyful reunion with Ling's father.

March: ***Waiting for Normal*** by Leslie Conner. Katherine Tegen Books, 2008.

12-year-old Addie, who lives with Mommers in a trailer on a busy street in Schenectady after her adored stepfather and half sisters move upstate. Mommers has lost custody of the "littles" because of neglect, and though she and Addie can laugh together, once Mommers hooks up with Pete, she is not much for good times—though she brings the bad times home. Addie finds solace in occasional visits to her sisters and in her neighbors, especially Soula, ill from her chemotherapy treatments.

April: ***Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lightning*** by Danette Haworth. Walker & Co., 2008. Eleven-year-old Violet Raines is no "shrinking violet," especially when it comes to girly girl Melissa Gold, whose family has just moved to her small Florida town in the 1970s. Violet's best friend, Lottie, is fascinated by Melissa and her talk of life in Detroit, "the *murder* capital of the United States." Violet, however, thinks Melissa is a "priss" and proves it by showing her the fish-head bucket at the Sunday fish fry (Melissa runs away to vomit). After Lottie's house is struck by lightning, she and her sisters stay at Melissa's big house, much to Violet's chagrin. While Melissa and Lottie talk movie stars, and makeup. Violet still enjoys squeezing into the tree cave, exploring outdoors, and hanging out with her childhood buddy Eddie.

Editorial Reviews From Booklist