

## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need is a little bit of organization and some  
friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

**The best way to find people to be in your reading group is to ask your friends.**  
Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your reading group, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

**Figure out when and where you want to meet.**

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

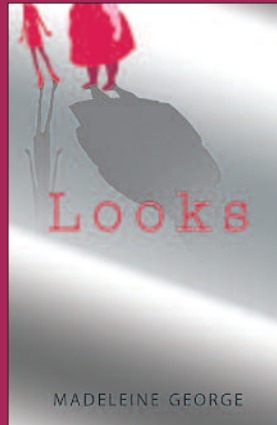
**Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.**

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a reading group. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

## Have you ever felt invisible?



### Looks

by Madeleine George

ISBN: 978-0-670-06167-9 (HC)  
Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up • \$16.99

### Meet Meghan Ball. Meet Aimee Zorn.

Read *Looks*, and watch them unite  
to create the most unlikely pair to ever plot against  
the social hierarchy of Valley Regional High.

As elegantly written as a poem and  
as painfully honest as a diary,  
*Looks* will draw you in, make you think,  
and follow you for days after you turn the last page.



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Discussion Guide ISBN: 978-0-670-01722-5 (bundles of 10)

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



## ABOUT THE BOOK

Come, get to know Meghan Ball better than anyone else does at Valley Regional High.

No one sees beyond the obvious—that she’s the largest student in the school. In spite of her size, people mostly don’t see her at all. Ignored and invisible, Meghan sees and hears all kinds of gossip and personal information, shared right in front of her as if she wasn’t there. Then, Meghan sees Aimee Zorn, who is as thin as Meghan is big and as outwardly angry as Meghan is inwardly sad. Something about Aimee makes Meghan want to befriend her; perhaps she recognizes a kindred spirit in another person using her body to say what she cannot: I’m lonely. But Meghan doesn’t have an easy time with friendship. Aimee doesn’t have an easy time with anything. When these two very different-looking girls join together to get revenge on the one person who hurt them both, something changes for each of them.

Take a closer look at what happens to Meghan Ball and Aimee Zorn. Let Madeleine George’s painfully honest look at the power play being acted out in one high school give you more insight into invisibility and empowerment, betrayal and revenge, loneliness and friendship than you could ever anticipate or forget.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MADELEINE GEORGE is an award-winning playwright and a founding member of the playwriting collective 13P. She is also the director of the Bard College satellite campus at Bayview Women’s Correctional Facility in Manhattan. Ms. George lives in New York City. You can visit her at [www.madeleinegeorge.com](http://www.madeleinegeorge.com)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who is Meghan Ball? Who is Aimee Zorn? Describe each of their appearances as well as their personalities and characters. What three words, other than the obvious ones regarding their sizes, would you use to describe each of them?
- Compare and contrast Meghan’s and Aimee’s home lives. How do their home lives affect who they are?

- Mr. Handsley states that adolescence is “ethically complicated” (p. 59). Do you agree? Explain. Mr. Handsley further relates his class’s work with the play *Julius Caesar* to “the endless drama” that plays out in the school hallways (p. 61). What dramas are played out in this story? How are they similar to and different from the dramas played out in your school?
- As Aimee talks about her first day of high school over the phone to Bill, she describes what she saw J-Bar and his friends doing to Meghan in the hallway. Aimee tells Bill that she “couldn’t believe no one was making them stop” (p. 30). Why was no one making them stop? Who could have, and what could they have done? Who is to blame for the bullying Meghan suffers at school? Why?
- Why is Meghan so invisible to others? Why isn’t she invisible to J-Bar and his friends?
- Meghan collects information or as she considers it, “Facts about People.” Why? What does this do for her? What message do you think Madeleine George sends regarding “facts” about people? Explain.
- What do you think about Mr. Handsley’s advice to Meghan to stand up to her tormentors (p. 219–220)? Do you agree or disagree that Jonah is better off for speaking up for himself? What do you see as Meghan’s options for handling this bullying? What advice would you give her?
- Aimee feels tricked by Cara’s poem “Autumn Elegy” (p. 101–103). Why? Did you feel tricked? Explain your reaction. What do you think about Cara’s assertion that “It’s poetry . . . It’s art, right? As in artificial? You’re allowed to make things up” (p. 103). Is art—poetry or any other form—artificial? Explain.
- Aimee claims that “No one has your exact same experience. Every single person’s story is different” (p. 107). Cara claims that “You think you’ve had some special unique experience that only you can describe but actually a million other people have had that same experience, and they might describe it just the way that you would. . . . If we were all totally unique and special we wouldn’t ever understand each other when we talked or wrote” (p. 152). What do you think? Who do you agree with?
- Does anyone own an idea? Explain. Look back at Cara’s explanation of the ownership of ideas in the Photon collective on pages 44–45. Explain how this does or does not relate to Cara’s defense of her award-winning poem when she tells Aimee, “. . . nobody owns ideas. Ideas belong to everybody” (p. 152). Do you think Cara stole Aimee’s poem? Defend your opinion.
- What happened between Mr. Handsley and J-Bar in the *Julius Caesar* performances? Do you agree with Dr. Dempsey’s feeling that Mr. Handsley should be disciplined for his actions? Why or why not?

- Discuss Mr. Cox and Mr. Handsley’s ongoing feud. Have you noticed a similar push and pull between athletics and academics in your own school? Is one really more important than the other?
- What power did Cara have over Meghan in seventh grade? How was Cara able to make Aimee feel happiness? Why do you think Cara betrayed each of them? Was Meghan and Aimee’s revenge on Cara and J-Bar justified? Explain. What were other ways, if any, that Meghan and Aimee could have handled their pain?
- As Meghan suffers from the memories of her younger friendship with Cara, the narrator reveals that she learned “that all promises are fictions, all friendships are games with winners and losers . . . every human being has a value assigned to them that they are helpless to change no matter what they do . . . people trade each other like baseball cards: three cheap friends for two valuable friends, a whole group of worthless friends for one popular friend” (p. 143–144). What do you think about these ideas? Do you see people treating friendships this way?
- Does Aimee have an eating problem? Does Meghan? Discuss their relationships with food. Are they acting out their emotions through their bodies? What in the story leads you to these answers?
- Throughout the novel, Aimee experiences what she calls allergic reactions and symptoms, indicating the onset of reactions. How do you understand these reactions? What is she reacting to? Why can she safely eat bread at Meghan’s house (p. 200)?
- Who do you like in this novel and why? If you could have a conversation with any character in this story, who would you talk with, and what would you say to him or her?
- Envision Meghan and Aimee in ten years: Who are they? What do they do? What do they look like? What makes you picture them in this way?
- What does this story say about friendship? Revenge? Appearance?
- Madeleine George uses a writing style that brings the reader into the novel in Chapter One as an active observer who then reverses this entrance at the end. Why do you think she chose to do this? What does this do for you as a reader?
- Why do you think the novel is entitled *Looks*? What does the title mean? What other titles would you suggest for this story?