

# Mom And Me

Reading Promotion

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# Mom And Me

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## Reading Promotion

*The sweetest sounds to mortals given  
Are heard in Mother, Home, and Heaven.  
~William Goldsmith Brown*

Celebrate the wonderful attributes of motherhood and deepen the strong bond between mother and daughter. A *Mother And Daughter Book Club* is the perfect Mother's Day gift as it provides a chance to partake in the "bridge of sharing" – talking and sharing ideas and feelings provoked by stories of love and courage, loss and reunion, and sacrifice and redemption. The great potential for building relationships through the sharing of stories is the gift that will create memories long after the book is closed.

## Empowering Girls

Adolescence is marked by a search for their identity and their placement or "fit" in the world. Pipher (1994) argues that girls experience a bewildering and diminishing sense of self-worth and identity due to the persuasive interaction with others and the media. Reactions to negative messages often manifest in the withdrawal and effacing their passions, rebellion, engagement in risky behavior, and in self-harm. "The pressure of societal expectations, the role and influence of adults, influence of male and female peers, the pressure to look pretty, and physical and emotional changes that are a crucial part of adolescence (Keeling and Sprague, 2008). Pipher (1994) insists that girls require opportunities to discuss the tremendous pressures and traumatic experiences they have endured and concerned parents and educators must listen rather than suppress the voice. Literature, denoting a strong female role model, serves a rich forum to foster discussions of girls' issues and the social, emotional, and physical changes that occur in adolescence. The group reading of the text is a powerful channel for adolescents to acquire of a clearer perspective and sense of direction, and "to avoid being co-opted by societal and peer expectations into assuming a false identity" (Gilligan et al, 1990).

Keeling and Sprague (2008) identify that many of the issues facing girls parallel the experiences of adolescent boys. Literature can and should also be a vehicle for boys to explore developmental issues. For book clubs featuring a mixed-sex grouping of students, the suggested strategies and approaches could be easily adapted to foster a literature-based discussion concerning girls' and boys' issues.

## Establishing The Club

To evoke interest from the social girl as well as the avid reader, stress the interactive discussion between family and friends in addition to booktalking the chosen selection(s). Reinforce that a social atmosphere with a loose structure and the absence of overbearing rules govern the meetings. Ensure that nutrition is an integral part of the book club meetings. Serving culinary delights mentioned or described in the book can heighten the literary experience.

To develop a successful book club, *Scholastic's Dear America Mother-Daughter Book Club* (<http://www.scholastic.com/dearAmerica/parentteacher/club/index.htm>) offers the following suggestions:

- Formulate and state explicitly the overall vision of and expectations for the club.
- Establish the book selection process. It is advisable that the adolescents have a significant voice in the choice of reading selection.
- Outline the meeting dates and times, as well as the frequency of the meetings.
- Decide how discussions will be facilitated and fostered.
- Plan the length and flow of the meeting.
- Consider a suitable response if the book club members have not read the book or if a parent does not attend the meetings with their child.
- Determine whether the books are provided or if book club members are responsible for purchasing their own novel.

## Selecting The Novel(s)

If literature is an appropriate springboard for the discussion of adolescent girls' issues, then what are the specific texts that would help girls develop their self-worth and self-efficacy? Search for novels that illustrate the issues and depict females who are self-sufficient, decisive, and assertive are ideal.

Booklists from notable library services are invaluable resources for determining possible book club selections. The *ALA 2009 Notable Books* (<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/childrensnotable/notablechibooks/index.cfm>) lists the best in children's books for 2009 thus far. The Saskatchewan Young Readers' Choice Association's *The Willow Awards* (<http://www.willowawards.ca/>) promotes reading by granting a Willow Award to the Canadian books voted by students to be the best of those nominated in three categories: *Shining Willow (K-3)*, *Diamond Willow (4-6)* and *Snow Willow (7-9)*. YALSA ([www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists)) lists literary awards and booklists suited for the young adult audience.

*100 Books for Girls to Grow On* (Dodson), *Once Upon a Heroine* (Cooper-Mullin, 1998), *Great Books for Girls: More Than 600 Books to Inspire Today's Girls and Tomorrow's Women* (Odean, 2002), *Discovering Their Voices: Engaging Adolescent Girls with Young Adult Literature* (Keeling and Sprague, 2008) lists novels featuring courageous females who struggle to develop an identity and shape their own destiny.

Published literature guides and the Internet offer a general understanding of the selected novels, but the ultimate goal of the *Mother And Daughter Book Club* is to examine issues faced by the adolescent club members such as the impact of gender on developing voice, expression versus the suppression of voice, societal expectations, the influence of adults and peers (Keeling and Sprague, 2008).

Sprague and Keeley (2008) have created the following list of questions to determine if a literature selection might foster dialogue about the angst endured by adolescent girls:

1. Does the text feature a young female as a protagonist?
2. Does the text place the girl in a position where she is being asked to conform to certain expected behaviours due to her gender?
3. Does the text illustrate forces that attempt to limit her choices?
4. Does the text depict the girl struggling against those forces?
5. Does the ending reflect the girl's definition of herself as illustrated by her choices?

## Discussing The Novel

Dodson (1997) asserts that the *Mother And Daughter Book Club* is for the girls, and they have to take ownership of it. The open discussion is directed by the daughters, and the conversation navigates to the topics they deem important. The adults support the risk-free environment by listening respectfully, avoiding rebuttals and moral stances, and offering comments only to probe depth to a response through examples from the text or their lives.

In a safe and supportive climate, sensitive topics evoked by the text can be broached with greater ease. The novel provides a neutral avenue to confront their pressures, angst, and traumatic experiences. Mothers, in turn, gain valuable insight into the forbidden and never discussed world of their daughters. The relationship thus expands its common ground to allow for friendship between mother and daughter.

Extend the conversation while enriching the readers' perspectives of the book – watch the movie, embark on a field trip related to the book, and visit the author's Web site.

## Invitation

A sample invitation to join the *Mother And Daughter Book Club* is appended.

## In Conclusion

*The Mother And Daughter Book Club* is not merely about books. It is about mothers and daughters, girls and women, and how reading and talking enriches our relationships with one another. Through literature-based discussions the mother-daughter dynamic is reshaped to involve – *gasp!* – girls talking to their adults about their lives and issues in an attempt to define herself. That's Girl Power!

# MOM AND ME

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## Invitation



# *For My Mother*

Mothers and daughters are invited to participate in the  
*Mother-Daughter Book Club.*

The meetings will focus on the theme

\_\_\_\_\_.

Come prepared to read, discuss, and share.  
It is an experience that will create mother-daughter memories  
long after the book has closed!

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Time:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Place:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Book Selection (s):* \_\_\_\_\_

*Contact Information:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Nutrition will be served.*



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