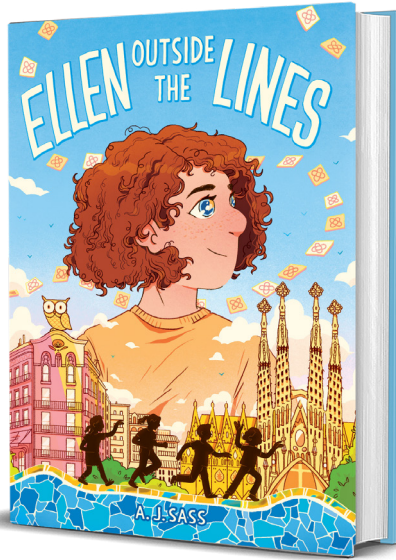


ELLEN OUTSIDE THE LINES

BOOK CLUB GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Ellen Katz feels most comfortable when her life is well planned out and people fit neatly into her predefined categories. She attends temple every Friday and Saturday. Ellen only gets crushes on girls, never boys, and she knows she can always rely on her best-and-only friend, Laurel. Laurel has always made Ellen feel like being autistic is no big deal. But lately, Laurel has started making more friends and spending less time with Ellen. A school trip to Barcelona seems like the perfect place for Ellen to get their friendship back on track.

Except it doesn't. Toss in a new nonbinary classmate whose identity has Ellen questioning her very binary way of seeing the world and this trip is anything but what Ellen planned. Making new friends and letting go of old ones is never easy, but Ellen might just find a comfortable new place for herself if she can learn to embrace the fact that life doesn't always stick to a planned itinerary.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Señor L refers to Isa being nonbinary as “unique circumstances” (p. 20). Why does he phrase it in such a vague way? Do you think it was rude?
2. Why is Ellen nervous when she first hears about the scavenger hunt? Do you think her dad should have told her about it? Why did he decide not to tell her?
3. On page 61 Laurel is surprised to hear Andy reads graphic novels because, “he’s a super popular basketball player” but Ellen doesn’t understand why she would think that. How does Ellen’s confusion show that Laurel’s judgment isn’t based on any facts? Why can assumptions like Laurel’s be harmful?
4. Sometimes when situations are overwhelming and hard, Ellen puts things in categories as a way for her to cope. Why does this task help Ellen? What are ways you help yourself cope in overwhelming situations?
5. Ellen is disappointed when she is assigned a different group than Laurel’s group. Discuss why being put into another group might be good for Ellen.
6. Laurel suggests Ellen ask her father about switching groups (p.104). Does it seem like Ellen wants to switch groups or does Ellen only agree because it is what Laurel wants?
7. Isa says, “White people only seem to think it’s cool if other white people can speak multiple languages. No offense” (p. 197). What does Isa mean by that? Why does Abba agree and mention a “double standard?”
8. Ellen goes back to La Rambla with Laurel’s group even though she doesn’t want to return. Why do you think Ellen went? Why does she find it so hard to say no to Laurel or to tell Laurel what she actually wants?
9. Ellen and Laurel’s friendship changes over the course of the novel. Discuss how their relationship is different at the end of the story, and why changes in friendships can be hard.
10. Why do you think it is easier for Andy, Isa, and Gibs to embrace the things that make Ellen different than it is for Madison and her friends to do the same?