The Clique



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TCM Teacher Created Materials

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CHAPTER ONE



The New Group

Jayden couldn't remember the first time he met Mia. Their mothers had been best friends since before they were born. They used to go to the park together, his mother told him. They played on the swings and the merry-go-round while their moms talked. They dug in the sandbox and

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built castles together. They had been friends ever since.

Every day at lunch, they ate their matching peanut butter sandwiches and carrots next to each other and made funny faces together during quiet reading time in class.

But things changed as they grew up. Now, Jayden and Mia were in fifth grade. It was the last year of elementary school. Over the summer, Mia had made new friends at the community pool. Now she was inseparable from Hallie and Steph.

They all had matching long, shiny hair and rainbow backpacks. Jayden was pretty sure he would not fit in with these new friends.

One Friday at lunch, Jayden sat with Mia. Hallie and Steph joined them. The three girls discussed their weekend plans.

"So, my dad is driving us to the movie," Hallie chirped, "and just so

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you know, I told him we're seeing that cartoon one, the dumb one about the family of birds, you know? But we'll go to the superhero one instead. He's going to give me money for tickets and the mall after, so make sure you guys bring money too."

"You're coming, right, Jayden?" Mia turned to him lazily. "My mom can drive you."

"Oh my gosh, Mia, you're inviting a *boy*!" screeched Steph, and she and Hallie put their heads together and giggled.

"Um, I can't go, anyway," Jayden admitted. "I have to help my mom on Saturdays, remember?"

He felt embarrassed. He and Mia were friends. Why did they always have to make a big deal that he was a boy and she was a girl?

"It's so funny that you still do that!" said Mia. The comment stung, as Jayden didn't see what was funny about

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helping his mother around the house on weekends. With three younger siblings, Jayden knew that his mother needed all the help she could get.



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CHAPTER TWO



Birds of a Feather

As it turned out, Jayden's mom had to take his three sisters to a birthday party on Saturday.

"Why don't you see what Mia is up to?" she asked him. "You don't see her nearly enough these days, and I know I ask a lot of you around the house. Go and have fun, and give Mia our love!"

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Jayden wasn't sure he wanted to spend the day with the girls, but he didn't want to tell his mom that. So he called Mia. She seemed pleased that he could come. He wondered whether she really liked Hallie and Steph that much.

Steph was tall and looked the oldest, so she collected everyone's money and went to buy the tickets. All the girls had brought more money than Jayden and decided to get popcorn, candy, and slushies. With a smile, Mia handed Jayden a packet of Reese's Cups—his favorite since they were little. Maybe today wouldn't be so bad after all.

As they walked toward their theater, Jayden caught sight of Joshua, another boy in fifth grade. He was small, with white-blond hair that made his eyebrows and eyelashes almost invisible. Jayden knew Joshua wasn't the most popular, but they had always been friendly to each other at school. Joshua and his parents were leaving the animated movie Hallie had made fun of

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Book Club Questions

1. How would the story change if it were told by Joshua or Mia?
2. After the incident at the movies, Jayden's mom says, "New friends don't change what's right and wrong." Explain why you agree or disagree with her.
3. Do you think Steph and Hallie view themselves as bullies? Why or why not?
4. Explain the main message the author is trying to express.
5. How do you think Mia feels about participating in bullying Joshua?
6. What would you have done in this situation if you were Jayden?

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