



HALF MOON SUMMER

by Elaine Vickers

ABOUT THE BOOK

Two seventh graders discover it takes more than grit and a good pair of shoes to run 13.1 miles. You've got to have a partner who refuses to let you quit.

Drew was never much of a runner. Until his dad's unexpected diagnosis. Mia has nothing better to do. Until she realizes entering Half Moon Bay's half-marathon could solve her family's housing problems. And just like that, they decide to spend their entire summer training to run 13.1 miles. Drew and Mia have very different reasons for running, but these two twelve-year-olds have one crucial thing in common: hope. For the future. For their families. And for each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is significant about the opening chapter titled "Birth Day"? Discuss how this chapter establishes a connection between Drew and Mia. Mia's family moves from Half Moon Bay when she is very young. What are the circumstances of Mia and Drew's reunion? How does their friendship evolve?
- The novel is told in first person and alternates between Drew and Mia's point of view. Mia tells her story in free verse. How is this an effective style for her? Conflict in a novel is the problem to be solved. Identify the conflict in Drew and Mia's stories. The resolution to a conflict doesn't guarantee a happy ending. Discuss how Mia's story is resolved. Drew's situation cannot be resolved in the way he would like. How does he learn to confront his problem? Discuss the hope in each of their stories.
- Compare and contrast Drew and Mia's families. How do their dads play an important role in the novel? Explain how Drew and Mia's moms demonstrate strength in the midst of a stressful situation. Mia has two younger brothers, and Drew a little sister. What roles do Drew and Mia play in caring for their younger siblings?
- What is the first hint that something is wrong with Drew's dad? Define conflicted. How is Drew conflicted about wanting to know what is going on with his dad? What is Drew's response when his dad tells him he has ALS? How does knowing about his dad's illness cause Drew to approach his summer vacation with a greater purpose? Explain his dad's request, "Promise you won't ever stop yourself from living your best life because I'm not there" (p. 197). How does this reveal the central theme of the novel?

- Drew and Mia are plagued by loneliness. How does drawing help Drew deal with his loneliness? How does Mia deal with hers? Discuss how Pete, Drew’s dad, helps both characters confront loneliness. Why does running feel so lonely to Mia?
- Drew’s dad, a furniture designer and builder, runs a shop that has passed down through generations of his family. Drew is uninterested in eventually owning the shop. Instead, he simply wants to draw. How is Pete proud of his son’s artistic abilities? Why does Drew say that “drawing” is a weird cousin that doesn’t belong? Discuss Drew’s reaction when he realizes that his dad’s shop may one day be sold.
- Mia’s grandmother takes her to see *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. What is the purpose of attending this particular production? Why does Mia cry at the end of the play? Discuss the quote from act III at the beginning of the novel. Explain how this quote applies to Drew and Mia during their summer together. What does each character realize about life by the end of the novel?
- Who is Lucas Martin? Explain why Mia is so sure that Lucas Martin will talk to her. Discuss what Drew means when he tells Mia that she is borderline stalking Martin. How does this make her determined to carry out her plan? What is Martin’s initial reaction to Mia? Explain why he changes his mind.
- Drew spends the summer missing Isaac, his best friend. How is it difficult to maintain a long-distance friendship? Drew’s parents are strict about virtual games. Explain how he convinces his parents to allow him to play TitanIAM with Isaac. Drew tells Isaac about his dad. How does Isaac know the appropriate way to respond? Discuss how this is a sign of true friendship.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



Elaine Vickers is an award-winning author of picture books and middle grade and young adult novels. She grew up reading, running, and exploring in a small town in Utah. Several years and one PhD later, she found her way back to her hometown, where she spends her time writing, teaching college chemistry, and exploring with her family. Visit her at ElaineVickers.com.