



THE TROUBLE WITH ROBOTS

by Michelle Mohrweis

ABOUT THE BOOK

Evelyn strives for excellence. Allie couldn't care less. These polar opposites must work together if they have any hope of saving their school's robotics program.

Eighth-graders Evelyn and Allie are in trouble. Evelyn's constant need for perfection has blown some fuses among her robotics teammates, and she's worried nobody's taking the upcoming competition seriously. Allie is new to school, and she's had a history of short-circuiting on teachers and other kids. So when Allie is assigned to the robotics team as a last resort, all Evelyn can see is just another wrench in the works! Can Evelyn learn to let go and listen to what Allie has to say? Or will their spot in the competition go up in smoke, along with their school's robotics program and Allie's only chance at redemption?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The novel opens at Evelyn's very first robotics team competition. Why is winning so important to Evelyn? Discuss why the team is disqualified. How does Evelyn see this as a failure? Explain why she finds it "excruciating" to face Mama and Mum.
- Why is Evelyn made the leader of the robotics team? In what ways is she a poor leader? Explain why Mrs. Weir, the robotics teacher, is so willing to give Evelyn another chance. In what ways must Evelyn change her leadership style? Chart her journey to become a good leader. How does Allie keep Evelyn focused?
- Allie has a behavioral problem. What is the root of her bad behavior? How does Oma deal with Allie? Debate whether Principal Gilbert places too much emphasis on Allie's behavior and not enough on her as a person. Discuss Oma's reaction when he threatens to send Allie to Sunrise Junior High, a school for troubled kids. Why does he think robotics class is the place for Allie?
- Allie says, "The team was like a picture done in five unique styles, none of which matched" (p. 112). What is unique about each team member? Discuss the many times when the team members collide. What is Allie's role in pulling them together?
- Allie tells the team, "You guys are kind of a joke" (p. 117). Why does Evelyn think this is a mean thing to say? Allie is an excellent artist and sketches the team. How does her drawing reveal the chaos of the team? Explain the team's reaction when they see the drawing. Study the cover art of the book. Identify each member of the team. At what point in the novel does the team become unified? How might the team look to Allie at the end of the novel?

- How are Evelyn’s two moms supportive of her role on the robotics team? What sacrifices do they make so that Evelyn feels their support? Why does Allie wonder what her parents would think of her involvement with the team? Oma comes to the tournament. Explain how Oma’s presence keeps Allie focused on winning.
- Evelyn misses her friend Naiely. Why do the other students seem like strangers to her? How does this make Evelyn feel all alone? Describe the friendship that develops between Evelyn and Allie. How do they need one another?
- Allie overhears the principal talking about canceling the robotics class. What is Mrs. Weir’s plan to get him to reconsider? Allie thinks the robotics team is her chance to be good for Oma. Debate whether she doesn’t trust her behavior without the robotics class. How does this motivate Allie to find a way to help the team win the tournament? What makes Principal Gilbert decide to continue robotics?
- The team invites Allie to come to the park and fly a drone with them. How does this please Oma? Why is Allie afraid to have fun as the anniversary of her parents’ death is approaching? Discuss the conversation that Allie and Oma have about grief. How does it please Allie to realize the team treats her as “normal”? How does telling Evelyn about her parents help Allie deal with her grief? Discuss Allie’s reaction when she learns that Evelyn is autistic.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



Michelle Mohrweis is a STEM educator and space enthusiast. When not writing, they can be found launching paper rockets down the middle of their street. They live with their husband and two dogs in Colorado, where they enjoy hiking and hogging all the best spots beside the heaters when it gets too cold. Follow Michelle on Twitter @Mohrweis_Writes and visit them on the web at MichelleMohrweis.com.