

GIRLS LIKE US

by GAIL GILES

ABOUT THE BOOK

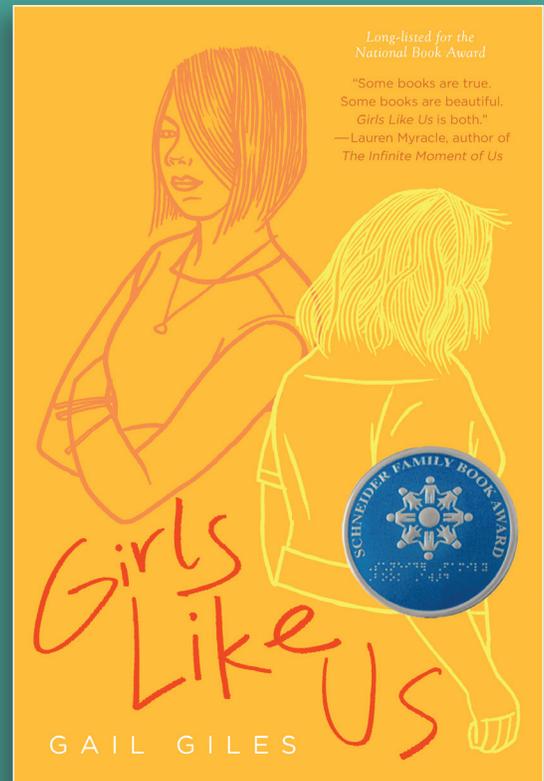
We understand stuff. We just learn it slow. And most of what we understand is that people who ain't Speddies think we too stupid to get out our own way. And that makes me mad.

Quincy and Bidy are both graduates of their high school's special ed program, but they couldn't be more different: suspicious Quincy faces the world with her fists up, while gentle Bidy is frightened to step outside her front door. When they're thrown together as roommates in their first "real world" apartment, it initially seems to be an uneasy fit. But the two of them realize that they might have more in common than they thought—and more important, that they might be able to help each other move forward. Hard-hitting and compassionate, *Girls Like Us* is a story about growing up in a world that can be cruel and finding the strength—and the support—to carry on.

"A sensitive and affecting story of two young women learning to thrive in spite of their hard circumstances." — *Booklist* (starred review)



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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL**), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL**). Questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work.

Discussion Questions

1. Biddu and Quincy were special education students, “Speddies.” What does that label mean to them? What does it mean to others?
2. Why is Biddu so enthusiastic about living with Quincy? Why is Quincy dreading it?
3. Biddu and Quincy were paired with each other, according to Ms. Delamino, because they have “strengths and weaknesses that kind of, well, fit with each other” (page 95). Do you agree? What are the important weaknesses of each girl? What are the special strengths?
4. Discuss the racial divides in this novel. Why does Quincy tell Lizabeth, “I’m mixed race, in case you wonderin’, but I live with white peoples before” (page 31)? Why is Biddu called “White Trash”?
5. Quincy, Biddu, and Lizabeth have all suffered great losses. What do you think was the greatest loss for each of them? Why?
6. Although the main characters are female, there are male characters in this novel, too. What role does each play in the lives of Biddu, Quincy, and Lizabeth? Who are the admirable male characters? Who are the despicable ones? Why do they behave the way they do?
7. “Seems to me,” Biddu thinks (page 61), “other peoples in this world got as much trouble learning as I do.” What does Quincy have trouble learning? What does Lizabeth? Which other characters are slow to learn important lessons?
8. “I think about the outside of stuff,” Quincy realizes, “and Biddu, she think about the inside” (page 102). What does Quincy mean by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?
9. Why does Biddu think that overeating and wearing a big coat will keep her safe? Is she right?
10. Quincy is quick to take offense when people make false assumptions about her, yet she is convinced at the beginning of this novel that Biddu is sexually promiscuous. Why? Why does Biddu’s grandmother call Biddu a slut? Why does Biddu blame herself for the attack?
11. Lizabeth calls herself “a meddling old fool” (page 190). Do you agree? Why does she buy new dresses for Biddu and Quincy? Why does she invite the judge’s wife to tea?

Discussion Questions

12. Why does Mama Duck matter so much to Biddy? Why are her ducklings so important?
13. Why does Quincy initially keep quiet about her attack? What makes her decide to press charges?
14. Quincy says, “Lizabeth, peoples like you count. People like me, it just different” (page 199). Why does Quincy believe that? Why is she wrong?
15. How do you think Biddy and Quincy would define “girls like us” at the beginning of the novel? How do you think their definition has changed by the end?

Praise for *Girls Like Us*

- ★ “Giles has constructed a unique, hard-hitting yet refreshing story with well-developed characters free from expected clichés or caricatures.” — *School Library Journal* (starred review)
- ★ “Giles’s background teaching special education students informs this blunt, honest, and absorbing story about two young women overcoming challenges that have less to do with their abilities to read or write than with how society views and treats them.” — *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- ★ “Compelling, engaging, and raw . . .” — *Booklist* (starred review)

About the Author



GAIL GILES is the author of several books for young adults. She has also worked as a teacher, including a time teaching remedial reading in the high school of a small town on the Gulf Coast of Texas. About writing *Girls Like Us*, she says, “There were stories everywhere in my classes, and I merged and melded because I wanted their stories told in a respectful way.”

Gail Giles lives near Houston, Texas.