

Dear Book Club,

Meet Jaya, Maria, and Lola. They want to go to the spring dance and love sharing frappes with their best friends after school. But there's one big difference between them and other eighth-graders: all three are daughters of maid and nannies. As tensions about immigrants start to erupt in the wealthy suburb of Meadowbrook, New Jersey, the small, fragile world that they call home collapses. Each of them must learn to find a place for themselves and re-imagine their relationships with their mothers.

Jaya, Maria, and Lola's story is an eye-opening story of friendship, belonging, and finding the way home. It is a story that unpeels the layers of the complex bonds between mothers and daughters—and the sacrifices they make for one another. This makes it an ideal mother-daughter book club read.

We've made it easy for you to organize a book club around this novel that *The New York Times* calls "a fresh perspective on suburban American life...elevated by writing that is intelligent and earnestly passionate." In this guide, you will find:

- A discussion guide with engaging questions and activities for your book club meeting
- A Q&A with the author
- Recommended paired readings
- Recipe cards for five delicious treats to make for your gathering

Happy Reading!

*"Moms and grandmothers, if you read **The Help**...you will appreciate that this book is along the same lines for contemporary adolescent girls...especially if you participate in a mother-daughter book club."*

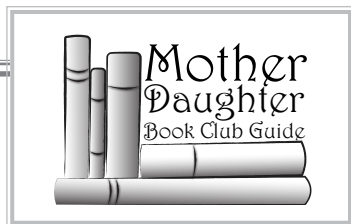
—Winston-Salem Journal



By Marina Budhos
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Author Chat!

Visit
www.marinabudhos.com
to find out how
Marina Budhos can attend
your next meeting!



Tell Us We're Home Discussion Guide

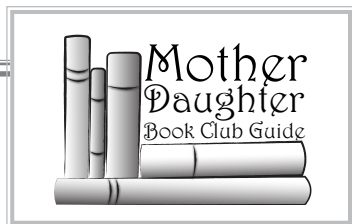
Book Trailer



Watch the book trailer for *Tell Us We're Home* which features Marina Budhos introducing the main characters of the novel.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LslvFI6mNGg>

See page 6 for a book club activity about hopes and wishes.

1. The three main characters in this book are best friends whose mothers are immigrant nannies or maids. Did any of them feel familiar or remind you of someone you know? Which of these characters do you most identify with? Why?
2. Because they are daughters of immigrant nannies or maids, the three girls have different boundaries and rules to follow than many of their classmates. What does “responsibility” mean to Jaya, Lola, and Maria? Do you see your “freedoms” differently after reading this book?
3. All 3 girls often have to be mothers to their own mothers. Was there a moment between a mother and daughter in the book that surprised you? Has there been a moment when you have had to be a mother even though you were still a young adult?
4. As you were watching the story unfold, what was your opinion of Mrs. Lal? Did you doubt her innocence (like Jaya) or were you convinced that she was innocent (like Lola)? Why or why not?
5. This book takes place in the suburban town of Meadowbrook, New Jersey. Did it make you look at your own town differently? What do you think the girls most want from this town?
6. Each of the girls in this novel has a “window” through which they see the other side of Meadowbrook. Jaya has Mrs. Harmon. Maria has Tash. And, Lola has Anthony Vitale and his family. What do they learn from these relationships and how does seeing Meadowbrook through different eyes change them?
7. “She’s trying to do what’s best for you,” Mrs. Harmon tells Jaya about her mother. How is what Mrs. Lal wants for Jaya the same or different than what Jaya wants for her life? What dreams do the mothers and daughters in this book have for one another?
8. What are the big and small changes in the three mother-daughter relationships in this book?



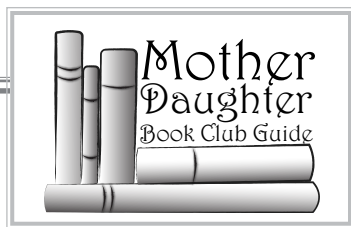
Activities

On a piece of paper, complete these two sentences, then share your responses.

I used to see my mother this way ...
Now I see her this way ...

Make a drawing of the “social constellations” of Meadowbrook.

What are the different groups? How does this compare to the social constellations of your town, school, or community? Share your drawings and talk about the labels you used.



Paired Readings



WATCH Spanglish

Flor and her daughter Cristina have recently emigrated to L.A. from Mexico

and are trying to find a better life. When she takes up a live-in housekeeping job with a family, Flor has to fight for her daughter's soul as she adjusts to life in a new country.

TAKE ACTION Not in our Town

Visit <http://www.niot.org/> to learn about starting a community or school-based campaign to stop hate, address bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all.

If you and your daughter enjoyed *Tell Us We're Home*, check out these books that explore coming-of-age through the lens of immigration, race, and class.



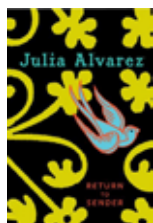
Ask Me No Questions, by Marina Budhos

For years since emigrating from Bangladesh, Nadira and her family have lived on expired visas in New York City, hoping they could someday realize their dream of becoming legal citizens of the United States. But after 9/11, everything changes.



Remix: Conversations with Immigrant Teenagers, by Marina Budhos

For two-and-a-half years, Budhos interviewed immigrant teenagers from around the country. This book contains 14 in-depth profiles of immigrant teens, told solely in the immigrants' own words.



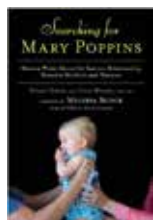
Return to Sender, by Julia Alvarez

A contemporary immigration story through the alternating viewpoints of two young people in Vermont: Tyler, an 11-year old son of a dairy farmer, and Mari, the daughter of an illegal migrant Mexican worker.



The Arrival, by Shaun Tan

This wordless graphic novel captures the displacement and awe with which immigrants respond to their new surroundings and a new way of life. It depicts the journey of one man, threatened by dark shapes that cast shadows on his family's life, to a new country.



Searching for Mary Poppins, edited by Susan Davis & Gina Hyams

A collection of 25 essays by bestselling and award-winning female writers about the intense relationship between mothers and nannies. Includes the essay "Sisters" by Marina Budhos, which inspired the novel *Tell Us We're Home*.



Q & A with Marina Budhos

Q. Why did you choose the lens of adolescence to talk about larger issues of class and immigration?

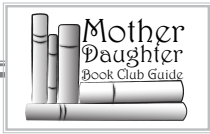
A. I am interested in contemporary stories that meld in larger issues, often of teenagers who might be invisible, or outsiders. When I became a mother, I hired a nanny, who was also the same background as me, on one side (Indo-Guyanese). At times, she was mistaken for my son's mother, or I was mistaken for being a nanny. I would melt into the side of the playground benches, where the nannies sat, and I could listen. We were something like sisters, but I was also aware of the stark differences. I interviewed quite a few nannies about their lives. Somewhere along the way I became fascinated by their children and how they felt. One day I was visiting a nanny in her home—which was, literally, a basement where my head touched the pipes--and her son came in and went to his bedroom behind a little curtain. I just could not stop thinking about this kid, and all the others, who are hidden behind the women who help us get on with our lives. This coincided with my moving to the suburbs, and noticing how much our lives here—in what feels like typical American suburbs—are dependent on immigrants.

Q: How did you decide to write *Tell Us We're Home* from three different points of view?

A: At the very beginning of working on the book I had tried it from Jaya's point of view, but that felt much too constricting. This story needed to be told 'in the round' as each of these girls gives you something different as a daughter of a maid or nanny. My challenge was to take you inside each girl's world as evocatively as possible, but allow you to move between them with a slightly wider angle. I read *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* because I admired how Anne Brashares moved in and out of the three girls in short bursts. In my process, this became like a kind of film cutting where I would move scenes around and see what kind of tension could be built with these parallel, developing stories. The structure then became the arc of each girl and how they cope with a difficult situation, how it exposes the frailties in their lives, and the little, important insights they gain along the way. The other thing I really enjoyed about writing the novel was the fact that I had three very different immigrant worlds to capture. It was great fun—sinking into each distinct setting with its own set of secondary characters, textures, memories.

Q. *Tell Us We're Home* focuses on finding the American Dream. What are some things that many citizens take for granted that immigrants find?

A. The most basic is simply a sense of home, of place, and belonging. From a teenage perspective, it's an ease in the culture, and a more easy-going attitude on the parts of their parents—they're allowed to do a lot more, even simply hang out after school. They may be experiencing their own teenage angst, but they basically know what the rules are, even what their future might look like. All of this is being invented by an immigrant family. Sometimes an immigrant teenager is the one who is paving the way for their parents. So they can't take for granted that their parents even know how to do simple things, such as deal with a government bureaucracy, or a school, or give them advice on what's ahead or even how to achieve the American Dream. For some immigrants, they are working so hard just to survive, to get their toehold, it's difficult to really see where the American Dream lies.

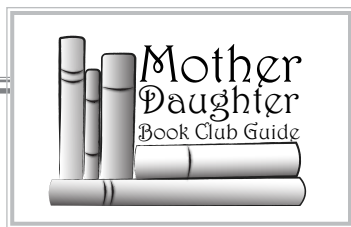


Name: _____

Hope and Wishes

Just like Jaya, Lola, and Maria, all mothers and daughters have expectations and hopes for one another. Over the course of *Tell Us We're Home*, they explore, discover, and discuss these dreams, wishes, and hopes. Now it's your turn! Cut and fill out these cards. Then, put them in a box and take turns picking at random to read and discuss. You can choose to sign your name or leave them anonymous.

<p>My dream for my daughter is that she ...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>My dream for my mother is that she ...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What I wish my mother could learn from me is:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>What I wish my daughter could learn from me is:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What my mother has taught me is ...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>What my daughter has taught me is ...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Book Club Treats

Whip up these simple recipes from Trinidad, Slovakia, and Mexico, the “home” countries of Jaya, Lola, and Maria. They are the perfect tasty treats for your book club meeting.

Trinidad

Quick Potato and Pea Samosas

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1 pkt. Pepperidge Farm puff pastry
- ½ stick of melted butter
- 3 potatoes (boiled, peeled & mashed)
- ½ cup green peas, blanched
- 1-2 green chilies, finely chopped (optional)
- ½ tsp ginger, grated
- 1 tbsp. cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- Chopped cashews (optional)
- Raisins (optional)
- Salt to taste
- Red chili powder to taste

Directions

For Stuffing: In a bowl add mashed potatoes and add salt, chili powder, lemon juice, green chilies, ginger and mix well. Add green peas, cashews and raisins and mix well. Add cilantro and keep aside.

Cut puff pastry sheet crosswise into 6 (roughly 12- by 2 ¾-inch) strips. Put a heaping teaspoon of filling near 1 corner of a strip on end nearest you, then fold corner of phyllo over to enclose filling and form a triangle. Continue folding strip (like a flag), maintaining triangle shape. Put triangle, seam side down, on a large baking sheet and brush top with butter. Make more triangles in same manner, using all of puff pastry.

Bake triangles in middle of oven until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes, and then transfer to a rack to cool slightly.



Courtesy: Rama Ginde, Wanna Bee Chef
(www.wannabeechef.com)



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Mexico

Mexican Hot Chocolate

Ingredients (Serves 6)

3 ounces (tablet or cone) Mexican chocolate or bittersweet chocolate

3 cups milk

2 tablespoons sugar

¼ c. raisins

1 drop of vanilla extract

Pinch salt

whipped cream, for serving

6 cinnamon sticks (preferably Mexican Canella), for serving

Directions

Using a sharp knife, break up the chocolate into smaller pieces. In a saucepan, combine the chopped chocolate, milk, sugar, raisins, vanilla and salt over medium-low flame. Heat and stir until the chocolate is completely melted and milk is very hot, but not boiling, about 10 minutes. Place mixture in blender, till blended.

Remove from blender and divide the hot chocolate among big mugs, top each with whip cream, and serve with the cinnamon sticks as stirrers.



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Mexico

Mexican-Style Green Mango with Chile or Lime

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 1 green or half-ripe mango, preferably Nam Doc Mai or other Asian mango or Keitt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure chile powder or ground cayenne, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice, or to taste

Directions

Peel the mango. Cut the flesh away from each flat side in thick slices, cutting as close to the pit as possible.

Cut the slices into long ½-inch wide sticks. Place in small bowl and toss with the sugar, chile, salt, and lime juice. Serve chilled at room temperature, arranged in shot glasses, standing up like breadsticks.



Reprinted with permission from *Gran Cocina Latina: The Food of Latin America*, by Maricel Presilla (W. W. Norton & Company, 2012)



Book Club Treats

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Slovakia

Slovak Pancakes with Berries

Ingredients (Serves 4)

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
1/2 cup milk
3 large eggs
2 tablespoons unsalted butter,
melted and cooled
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup strawberries, sliced
1/2 cup blueberries
Confectionary sugar

Directions:

In a blender or food processor blend the flour, 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons water, the milk, the eggs, the butter, and the salt for 5 seconds. Turn off the motor, with a rubber spatula scrape down the sides of the container, and blend the batter for 20 seconds more. Transfer the batter to a bowl and let it stand, covered, for 1 hour. (The batter may be made up to 1 day in advance and kept covered and chilled.)

Heat a crepe pan or non-stick skillet measuring 6 to 7 inches across the bottom over moderate heat until it is hot. Brush the pan lightly with the butter, heat the pan until it is hot but now smoking, and remove it from the heat. Stir the batter, half fill a 1/4 cup measure with it, and pour the batter into the pan. Tilt and rotate the pan quickly to cover the bottom with a thin layer of batter and then turn the pan to the heat, loosen the edge of the crepe until the underside is browned lightly. Turn the pancake, brown the other side lightly and transfer the pancake to a plate. Make pancakes with remaining batter in the same manner, brushing with butter as necessary. (The pancakes may be made in advance, stacked, wrapped in plastic wrap, and chilled for up to 3 days or frozen.)

Place one pancake on a plate, add berries. Dust with sugar.



Recipe courtesy: Rama Ginde, Wanna Bee Chef
(www.wannabeechef.com)