

HOLIDAY HOUSE

READING GROUP

GUIDE



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My Mechanical Romance

by **Alexene Farol Follmuth**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Opposites attract in this battle-robot-building YA romance from the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Atlas Six*.

Bel would rather die than think about the future. But when she accidentally reveals a talent for engineering at school, she's basically forced into joining the robotics club. Even worse? All the boys ignore Bel—and Neelam, the only other girl on the team, doesn't seem to like her either.

Enter Mateo Luna, captain of the club, who recognizes Bel as a potential asset—until they start butting heads. But as the nights of after-school work grow longer and longer, Bel and Teo realize they've made more than just a combat-ready robot for the championship: they've made space for each other and themselves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does telling the story in alternating points of view reveal the details of how Bel and Teo's lives come together?
- What is Bel's attitude toward school? Why does her mother enroll her at Essex Academy?
- Discuss what Bel means when she says the school is "like a weird laboratory for startup CEOs" (p. 5). Why does Bel resist applying to colleges and making plans for her future?
- Why does Ms. Voss transfer Bel to AP Physics? Discuss why she wants Bel to try out for the robotics team. Explain what she means when she tells Bel, "The world is not very helpful to a smart girl" (p. 18).
- In what other ways does Ms. Voss support and encourage Bel?
- Mac is the AP Physics teacher and sponsor of the robotics team. What is his attitude toward girls?

- Describe Bel's family dynamic. How does Bel react when she learns that her brother, Luke, wants to move in with their dad? Discuss Bel's struggle with loyalty to her mom and dad. At what point does she resolve her struggle?
- Why doesn't Bel tell her mom when she goes to her dad's place to borrow tools?
- Discuss why Bel doesn't tell her parents about the robotics team. What is Bel's reaction when Ms. Voss brings both her parents to the robotics national competition?
- Mateo Luna is the captain of the robotics team. How does it appear that he makes the team decisions? Explain why Mac doesn't give Teo a "teamwork" speech.
- Why does Teo think that Bel is a good fit for the team?
- Describe the other members of the team. Why does Neelam resent Bel? Explain why Bel tells Neelam she should be the driver at nationals? How does this change their relationship?
- Describe Teo's family. Why does he feel that his dad doesn't like him? His father is known in the industry for his "ruthless efficiency." How is this trait obvious in the way he deals with Teo?
- What happens during Teo's meeting with his counselor? Why does she ask him if everything is okay at home? Debate whether Teo's English teacher violated his privacy when she gave his counselor a copy of an essay he wrote. Explain the counselor's question, "You do know you're just a kid, right?" (p. 37).
- Teamwork is a central theme in the novel. Discuss reasons why Bel isn't good at working on a team. Debate whether being the "new kid" is a possible reason. How is robotics a team sport? Explain what Mac means when he says, "You will win like a team or you will lose like one" (p. 132).
- Teo has a party for the team. How is he a "jerk" to Bel at the party? Discuss his reaction when Bel tells him that his bot isn't going to work.
- Why is it so difficult for Teo to admit that he is wrong?
- At what point do Bel and Teo become a couple? How does their relationship explain the title of the book?
- Teo encourages Bel to apply to MIT. Discuss why she didn't get accepted. Explain how being on the robotics team has helped Bel think about her future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Photo Credit: Alexene Farol Follmuth



ALEXENE FAROL FOLLMUTH is a first-generation American, a romance enthusiast, and a lover and writer of stories. Alexene has penned a number of adult SFF projects under the name Olivie Blake, including the webtoon *Clara and the Devil* and the *New York Times* best seller and BookTok-viral *The Atlas Six*. *My Mechanical Romance* is her YA debut. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, new baby, and rescue pit bull. Find her at AlexeneFarolFollmuth.com.