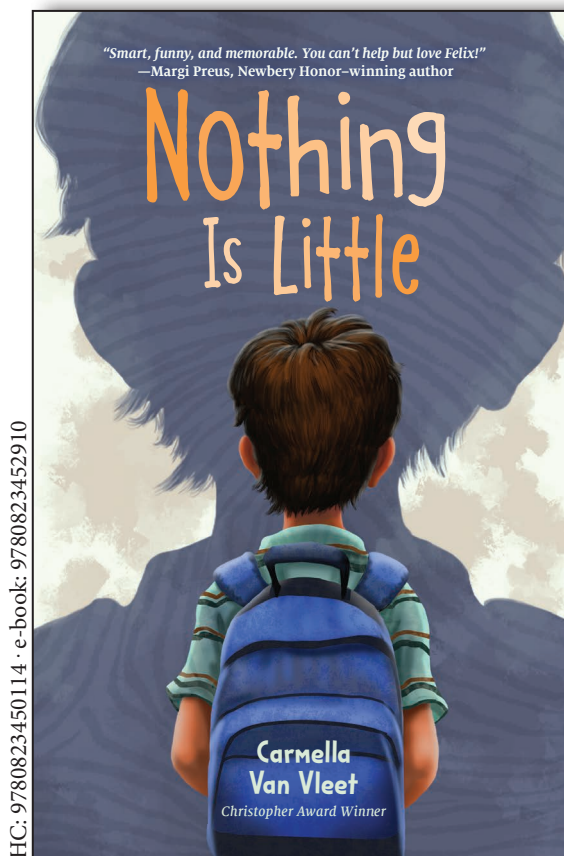


HOLIDAY HOUSE

READING GROUP

GUIDE



Nothing Is Little

by Carmella Van Vleet

ABOUT THE BOOK

The case of a missing father is hard to crack . . . even for Felix, a tiny kid with a huge heart and an eye for detail.

Eleven-year-old Felix likes being the smallest kid in school. At least he knows where he fits in. Plus his nickname, “Shortlock Holmes,” is perfect for someone who’s killing it in Forensic Science Club. To Felix, Growth Hormone Deficiency is no big deal. And then Felix learns that his biological dad was short, too. This one, tiny, itty-bitty piece of information opens up a massive hole in his life. Felix must find his father. He only has a few small clues to work from, but as Sherlock Holmes said, “To a great mind, nothing is little.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it natural for Felix to be curious about his dad? Explain why his mother has never given Felix much information. Discuss what she means by “He wasn’t ready to be a father” (p. 15). What physical features could Felix have inherited from his dad? Why does his mother make a point to tell Felix that she has his dad’s family medical history?
- Felix has always been small for his age. Discuss how he deals with being small, or “vertically challenged.” He is beginning middle school when the doctors discover that he has a growth hormone deficiency. Why hasn’t he told his friends about this condition? Discuss his reaction when he learns that the shots have helped him grow.
- Discuss why forensic science sounds so interesting to Felix and his friend Ray. Why does Ray have to lie to his father to join the club?

- Felix says that Paul knows everything, and he wonders if he could ever get away with lying to him. Discuss whether Felix lies when he doesn't confess to breaking the lock on Paul's cedar chest that his brother built. How does Felix justify the lie to himself?
- Explain how painful it is when a person's lie is discovered. What happens when Ray's father finds that his son lied to him? Discuss the pain Felix causes for himself when he lied.
- Describe Casey's family. Why is Felix so interested in Casey's relationship with her surrogate mother? How does Casey get Felix interested in searching for his father? What does she contribute as he moves forward with a plan?
- Mom and Paul have decided to combine their names, creating a new last name for them and the baby. Discuss how Felix reacts when they suggest that he change his name as well. Why doesn't this feel like a small thing to Felix? What causes him to change his mind at the end of the novel?
- Discuss each step of Felix's Operation Find Father investigation. His mother has never hidden his baby book from him. Debate whether it ever crossed her mind that he might question the missing pages. How do the missing pages make him more determined to engage in the search? What mistakes does Felix make along the way?
- Discuss the bad decision that Felix makes that keeps his forensic science team out of the tournament. How is this decision driven by his desire to find his father?
- What was Felix thinking when he revealed the T-shirt that he found in the cedar chest on a television story about his family? Explain the tense moments in their family after this big reveal. How is a simple "I'm sorry" not enough of an apology to Mom and Paul? At what point does his mom realize that it is time to tell Felix what she knows about his father?
- Boo, the baby that his mother is expecting, is born at home on the night of a huge snowstorm. What is Felix's role in Boo's birth? What is Boo's big surprise? Why do Felix's mom and Paul allow him to name the baby?
- Describe Paul's reaction when Felix reveals the name. What other decision does Felix make to symbolize that they are indeed a family unit?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carmella Van Vleet is a former kindergarten teacher and the author of numerous books for children, including *To the Stars!*, which was co-authored by astronaut Kathy Sullivan and named to the Amelia Bloomer list. Her debut children's novel, *Eliza Bing Is (NOT) a Big, Fat Quitter*, received the Christopher Award and was named to four state award master lists, including Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, and South Carolina. Just like Eliza, Carmella loves taekwondo—she has earned her black belt! She lives in Ohio and can be found online at CarmellaVanVleet.com