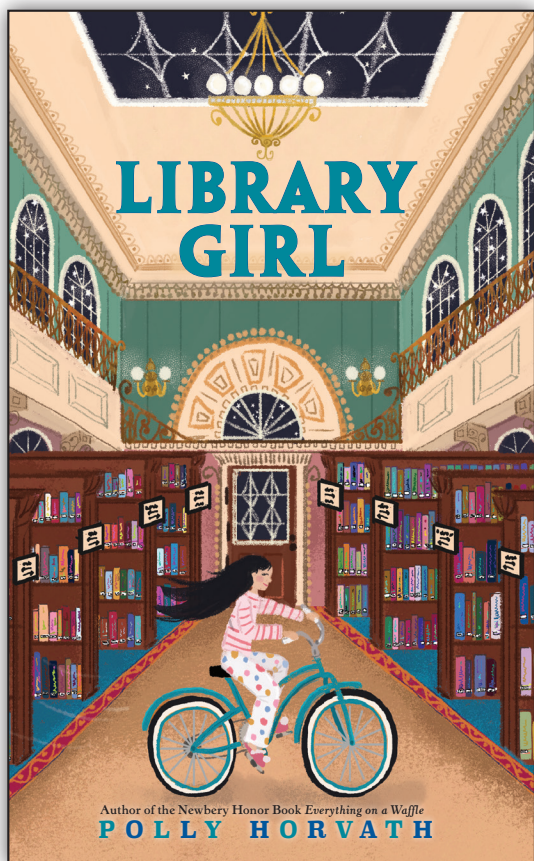


HOLIDAY HOUSE

READING GROUP

GUIDE



Margaret Ferguson Books

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Library Girl

by Polly Horvath

“A love letter to books and the dreamers who read them. Hand this charming story to precocious readers and fans of *Matilda*.” —*School Library Journal*

ABOUT THE BOOK

After living in the public library for the last eleven years, Essie must learn to adapt to a world that’s not as perfect as the stories she’s grown up with.

Essie has grown up in the public library, raised in secret by the four librarians who found her abandoned as a baby in the children’s department. With four mothers and miles of books to read, Essie has always been very happy living there.

But now that she is eleven, Essie longs for a little more freedom. She seems to get her wish when her moms let her go by herself to the mall, where she meets G.E., a mysterious boy who looks so much like her she can’t help but think they may be twins. But as she gets to know G.E. better, she learns that nothing is as simple as it seems in her stories—not even her own past.

With her signature warmth and offbeat humor, Newbery Honor author Polly Horvath invites book lovers to sit back in their own library nooks and check out a whimsical adventure perfect for readers trying to find their place in the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Lucinda, Doris, Taisha, and Jean-Marie are librarians at the Huffington Public Library. Describe each of them. How are they different? In what ways are they alike? What circumstances make each of the women childless? Discuss their thoughts when they find a baby in the children’s room of the library. What prevents one of them from taking the baby home?
- What process do they establish for naming the baby? What is the meaning of Essie’s name? The librarians suggest that she choose a last name. Why is this a hard decision for Essie? At first the librarians try not to get attached to the baby. When do they realize how much they have become attached to her? Debate whether this is the moment they become mothers to Essie. Which of the librarians is the most nurturing? Which is the most sensible in Essie’s upbringing? How does rearing Essie in secret interfere with the librarians’ attempts at romance?

- Describe Mr. Fellows, the head of the library. Why does the library board hire Ms. Matterhorn? Contrast her management style with that of Mr. Fellows. Explain the following statement: “Ms. Matterhorn was not interested in being welcomed. Ms. Matterhorn was only interested in prevailing” (p. 65).
- Why is Ms. Matterhorn a threat to Lucinda, Doris, Taisha, Jean-Marie, and Essie? How do they manage to keep Essie a secret from Mr. Fellows and Ms. Matterhorn? Cite the moment when the secret is discovered. Debate whether this is the climax, or turning point, in the novel.
- Discuss Essie’s education. What complications would arise if Essie’s mothers sent her to school? When Essie is eleven years old, Taisha worries that Essie isn’t seeing the world outside the library. How does Jean-Marie respond to Taisha’s worries? Explain their plan to broaden her world.
- Essie ventures out to the pedestrian mall near the library to spend her weekly allowance. Describe her first shopping experience at Hippie Haven and Fanny Farmer. She loves the small museum at the top of the staircase of the library. Now that she has an allowance, she can enjoy the museum shop. What does she buy? Why are these items a better purchase than the things she buys in the mall? Contrast Doris and Lucinda’s views regarding Essie’s allowance.
- Who is Oscar Steinberg? Describe the first conversation that Essie has with Oscar. What is his role in broadening Essie’s world? Ms. Matterhorn seems to be on Essie’s heels. In what way does Oscar rescue Essie from Ms. Matterhorn? Oscar says he doesn’t like bullies. How does Ms. Matterhorn bully Essie, Mr. Fellows, and her four moms?
- A boy that looks strangely like Essie follows her when she is shopping. At what point is she convinced that they are twins? What makes her decide that it is safe to tell G.E. about her four moms? Discuss the lies that G.E. tells Essie. How does she fall for his lies? When does she learn his true identity? Explain his explanation for the lies.
- Foreshadowing is a literary device that hints at events later in the book. Explain how Mr. Fellows’s unusual presence in the children’s room foreshadows the identity of the baby at the end of the novel. Cite passages from the book that hint at the relationship between G.E. and Mr. Fellows.
- Explain what Jean-Marie means by “There are lies that are betrayal and there is truth used to betray. One is no better than the other” (p. 218). Identify those who are betrayed in the novel. What truth is used to betray? Discuss what Essie and her mothers learn about betrayal. Debate how betrayals are forgiven.
- Doris says, “Forget what everybody did. What are we going to do now? That’s what I want to know” (p. 218). How does the last chapter, “The End,” answer Doris’s question?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Polly Horvath

Polly Horvath has written many books for children, including *Everything on a Waffle* (a Newbery Honor Book), *The Canning Season* (a National Book Award winner), *The Trolls* (a National Book Award finalist), and the middle grade novels *Pine Island Home*, *Pine Island Visitors*, and *Library Girl* with Holiday House. Polly is also the author of the picture book, *Not a Smiley Guy*, illustrated by Boris Kulikov. She lives in British Columbia with her family. Visit her at PollyHorvath.com.