

M or F?

Classroom Discussion Guide

About This Guide

This guide includes discussion questions intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of the book, which include friendship, family, honesty, sexuality and diversity, and loyalty.

About This Book

In *M or F?*, a case of chat-room mistaken identity catapults best friends Marcus and Frannie into a whirlwind comedy of errors. Co-authors Lisa Papademetriou and Chris Tebbetts tell the story from two different points of view—giving the reader he-said/ she-said insight into troublesome issues like lying by exclusion, the revolting idea of parental sex, coming out to your family, the humiliation of minimum-wage jobs, assumptions about sexuality, living with an embarrassing grandmother, what it means to be a “perfect date,” and the ever-pressing questions: Does this guy like boys or girls? M or F? Gay or straight? *What’s the deal???*

At the start of the story, Frannie and Marcus are both “boyfriend virgins,” but at least Marcus has an excuse—eligible gay boys are hard to come by in their small Illinois town. Frannie is desperate to get the attention of her crush, Jeffrey, but she’s way too shy to make a move. Marcus insists that Frannie chat with Jeffrey online, but Frannie won’t type a word without Marcus’s help.

In the chat room, Marcus and Jeffrey hit it off. The whole plan seems to be working! But the more Marcus writes, the more he’s convinced that Jeffrey is falling for him, not Frannie. But if that’s true, what does it mean for their friendship? This twenty-first-century comedy of errors culminates in Frannie and Marcus’s realization that friendship is at least as important as any romance. But romance is nice too.

For Discussion

1. Discuss Frannie and Marcus' friendship. How does it change throughout the novel? How do they change each other's lives? Who changes more?
2. Frannie and Marcus' relationship is both close and conflicted. Discuss what issues divide them and what maintains their alliance. Is one of them more "guilty" than the other? With whom did you side more frequently? Why?
3. Predict where Marcus, Frannie, Jeffrey, and Glenn will be in three/five/ten years. Whose life will be the most changed? Why do you think so?
4. How are Marcus and Frannie's family relationships different from each other? How are they the same?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of internet chat rooms? How does it make communication easier? More difficult?
6. There are many secrets kept in this book. Name at least one secret kept by each of these characters: Frannie, Marcus, Jeffrey, Glenn, Patricia. Were some of these secrets more justified than others? Why?
7. What challenges does Marcus face that Frannie doesn't face? What challenges does Frannie have that Marcus does not? Are there any challenges that are the same for both characters?
8. What reasons would a gay high school student have for coming out to his/her friends? To his/her family? What reasons might s/he have for *not* coming out?
9. Many times, friendships become complicated when one or the other friend finds romance. How do the romantic and platonic friendships in the book affect each other? Is this realistic? Why or why not?
10. What do you think is the theme of this book?
11. Discuss common stereotypes in books, movies, and TV. How does this book play against common stereotypes?

Projects

Changes in point of view can be used to reveal information about a character or situation. Choose a scene from the novel. Write it from the other character's point of view.

Choose at least one character and write a scene about him/ her/ them that takes place one year after the end of this book.

Write a chat room transcript where two characters are attempting to resolve a conflict. Communicate as much as possible about character and setting through dialogue only. See if you can bring the conflict to resolution by the end of the scene. (And remember: resolution doesn't necessarily mean that everyone is happy in the end.)

Create a collage. On one side, choose pictures that reflect your interests, beliefs, and self-image. On the other, choose images that represent a close friend. In the middle, collage with images that represent interests and qualities that you have in common. Choose a character from a book, movie, or television show that you feel is a stereotype. Write a journal entry from the point of view of that character, being sure to show another side to that character.

Imagine your life as a movie. Choose your genre—is it a comedy, action movie, mystery, fantasy, or drama? Make a cast list (and decide which famous actor would play you) and write the opening scene to your movie.