



Fish in a Tree

by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

TIPS FOR FAMILY BOOK CLUB:

Fish in a Tree forces readers to think about what being “smart” really means and how to embrace, not just tolerate, each other’s differences. As you discuss the book together, think about how each character grows and how they support each other in their own journeys.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read the Albert Einstein quote shared by Mr. Daniels: *“Everybody is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid.”* What does this quote mean to you? How does it relate to Ally? Why does the author use this as the basis for the book’s title?
2. Do you or anyone you know have learning differences like dyslexia? **Try reading this passage** to experience what it might be like to read with a learning disability. How did you feel? Did you get frustrated or discouraged?
3. Discuss how Ally reacts when Shay bullies her and others. Why does Albert not stand up to the boys who pick on him? Have you ever been bullied or been a bully to someone else? Discuss how it felt and what you might do differently next time.
4. Discuss what is happening with Ally and her family that others don’t know and how this impacts her. How about for Albert or Shay? Does knowing these things give you more empathy for how they act at school? What do classmates not know about you?
5. Ally compares her being called a “slow reader” to people thinking she is like “a can of soup, and they can just read the list of ingredients and know everything about me.” How do we label each other? How do you label yourself? Discuss how labeling can help us make sense of the world but also limit our view of others and ourselves.
6. How does the friendship between Ally, Albert, and Keisha benefit each one of them? Contrast their relationship with the friendship between Shay and Jessica. What friendships help you be your best self?
7. What does Mr. Daniels do to encourage and motivate Ally? What teachers have had a significant impact on your life? How?
8. Ally talks about having a “Silver Dollar” day or a “Wooden Nickel” day. What would a Silver Dollar day look like for you? How about a Wooden Nickel day?
9. There’s a lot of talk these days about the importance of grit and having a “growth mindset.” How does Ally show a growth mindset? Discuss a situation where you have shown a growth mindset and when you have shown a fixed mindset. Why is a growth mindset important in your life?
10. Read more about **author Lynda Mullaly Hunt** and **why she wrote** this story. Why is this book so important to her?