

Gossip Girl and other “Glam Girl” Book Series — A Discussion Guide

1. Ask your kids what makes series such as *Gossip Girl* and *The Clique* novels so popular? What first made them want to read the books in the first place? Are their friends reading them? Do they relate to the characters? Why?

2. There's some pretty edgy material in these books: teens may find themselves reading about a student-teacher affair, or friends having sex in a hot tub. You might ask if your kids realize the difference between the fiction in these books and what their lives are really like.

3. Ask your kids if they think that parents who find the books offensive are over-reacting? Should we just be happy that they are reading?

4. What messages do girls get out of these books? Are they just simple, guilty pleasures? What messages about relationships between boys and girls are they taking away?

5. Talk about the amount of brand name products mentioned, from trendy alcohol brands to designer shoes. The first installment of the *It Girl* series even advertised the cover model's clothes on the inside flap. What sort of impact does all this label-dropping have on readers? Ask your teens: do these books make you crave more stuff — or feel bad about what you have?

6. Ask your kids to think about the heroines in other young adult novels. YA authors have traditionally focused on girls who are a bit on the outside — perhaps more sensitive and artistic than their peers. How are the protagonists in the glam-girl books different? How are you supposed to feel about them — envy them, hate them, feel sorry for them? Are they presented as role models?

7. Ask your kids to think about the girl friendships in these books. They exclude each other, feud, and struggle for power. Are these realistic portrayals of how girlfriends treat one another?

8. Parents could point out that the books are always told in the third person. How does that keep readers from truly connecting with the rich characters? What does it mean to always be on the outside of their glamorous lives?

9. What impact does the fact that kids smoke pot and drink and do drugs have on the kids? Does it “normalize” the behavior? Are the portrayals accurate?

10. What age do your kids think is the right age for this kind of subject matter? Why?