



Book club 5: Family & identity

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4
by Sue Townsend

Rules

In this book club you will discuss *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4* by Sue Townsend in a group of 4-6 readers. You will start a conversation by responding to discussion questions about the text. The book club opens with a brief introduction that one of you reads out loud. The book club then continues in four rounds

- 1 Round 1 consists of 5 quiz questions about the text. One of the group members acts as the quiz master who reads each question out loud, after which everyone (including the quiz master) writes down their answer. The correct answers will appear on the screen after you have turned over the final question card. You may then check your answers and calculate your scores.
- 2 Round 2 consists of genuine questions that you have. Each group member consults the group about a part of the text that they thought was unclear. Together, you try to find answers to the questions that are raised. After everything has been cleared up, your group is ready to proceed to the next round.
- 3 Round 3 consists of questions for discussion. There are two categories to choose from. The person with the most correct answers to the quiz questions gets to be the first to turn over a card and respond to the question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas. Take turns until all cards are flipped.
- 4 Round 4 is when you get to review the text. How many stars would you give the text and why? Discuss this together until you have reached a shared verdict. Use the text box to explain your choice.

This book club was developed by the editors of LitLab, a digital laboratory for high school literature research. For more teaching materials, visit www.litlab.nl. A teachers' manual and a didactic justification of this teaching method are available at www.litlab.nl/docenten.



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Introduction

'Mum and Dad were shouting a lot until late at night. They should think about me more. I'm having a difficult time, and I need my sleep. They don't understand being in love.' (p. 16)

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4 is a funny story about a young boy named Adrian Mole. We read the story in the form of Adrian's diary entries (*dagboekfragmenten*). Adrian is almost fourteen years old and lives in Leicester, England, with his mom and dad. He writes about getting bullied at school by Barry Kent, his parents fighting and separating, taking care of 89-year-old Bert Baxter, and about his relationship with Pandora, the girl he likes. Through Adrian's eyes, we see what it's like to be a teenager in a life filled with ups and downs.

Round 1: Understanding the plot

Take turns turning over a card and answering the question. After the person whose turn it is has answered, the rest may add to that answer or share their own views.

Round 2: Initial questions

Take turns selecting one of the excerpts (*fragmenten/stukjes*) from the book listed below. Think of a question you would like to ask one of the characters, and work together to find an answer to that question.

- Adrian gets a job: 'Tuesday February 17th... hear me.' (p. 19-20)
- There is no electricity at the house: 'Saturday May 9th ... the candles.' (p. 34-35)
- Bert Baxter is ill: 'Friday June 12th... home soon.' (p. 40-41)
- Adrian goes on holiday to Scotland with his mom and Mr Lucas: 'Saturday August 15th... was driving.' (p. 48)
- Adrian needs to get his mother's grey coat back: 'Monday December 21st... the cat!' (p. 63-64)

Round 3: Discussion

Take turns turning over a card from a pile of your choice and answer the discussion question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas.

Round 4: Opinion

Review *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4* by rating the novel on a scale of one to five stars, and then provide an explanation for your choice. Discuss what aspects you enjoyed and what aspects you didn't, and provide reasons for your opinions. Reflect on whether the discussion influenced your individual perspective, and if so, how. Incorporate examples and arguments from your responses to the discussion questions to support your review.



Question 1

How does Adrian come to know Bert Baxter?

Question 2

Adrian's got a job. What is it?

Question 3

Who does Adrian's mother move to Sheffield with?

Question 4

Why does Adrian have to buy candles?

Question 5

Why does Adrian have to have an operation?

Answers

- 1 Through a school club called Happy Helpers
- 2 A newspaper round
- 3 Mr Lucas – the neighbour
- 4 Because their electricity is cut off, because Dad didn't pay the bills.
- 5 To get his tonsils taken out.



Question

3

Question

2

Question

1

Answers

Question

5

Question

4



Personal connections? **1**

What are some of the challenges (*uitdagingen*) that Adrian has at school, and do you recognise (*herkennen*) any of them from your own life?

Personal connections? **2**

How does Adrian handle (*omgaan met*) his parents fighting? Would you do it the same way? Why (not)?

Personal connections? **3**

When Adrian is at Nigel's house for the weekend, he realises that his own family is poor (*arm*). If you were in a similar situation, how would that make you feel? In what way would you feel different from the way Adrian feels about it?

Personal connections? **4**

The book is about Adrian's experiences (*ervaringen*) growing up. Do you think the book gives a realistic image of what this is like? Explain your answer.

Personal connections? **5**

How does Adrian's relationship with Pandora develop (*ontwikkelen*)? Do you think that most teenage relationships develop like this? Explain your answer.

Personal connections? **6**

How does Adrian handle the situation with the phone bills? Would you do the same, or would you handle it differently? Explain your answer.



Personal connections?

3

Personal connections?

2

Personal connections?

1

Personal connections?

6

Personal connections?

5

Personal connections?

4



Food for thought? 1

Adrian joins the Happy Helpers group at school. What do you think of the responsibilities (*verantwoordelijkheden*) Adrian gets taking care of Bert Baxter?

Food for thought? 2

What do you think of the way Adrian's mom and dad handle their relationship problems, and how they involve (*betrekken*) Adrian?

Food for thought? 3

At Adrian's school there is a dress code (pupils have to dress a certain way). Do you think having a dress code at school is a good idea? Why (not)?

Food for thought? 4

The book was written in 1982. Do you think the story would be different if it was written in the present day? How would it be different?

Food for thought? 5

The book was written as a diary. How does this influence (*beïnvloeden*) the way you experience (*ervaren*) the story as a reader?

Food for thought? 6

Adrian has a lot of problems: his parents' divorce (*scheiding*), loving Pandora when she doesn't love him back and financial troubles. Do you think he deals with these problems in a good way? Why (not)?



Food for thought?

3

Food for thought?

2

Food for thought?

1

Food for thought?

6

Food for thought?

5

Food for thought?

4