

LET'S DISCUSS . . .

STERLING
CHILDREN'S
BOOKS

MARTIN McLean, Middle School QUEEN



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In chapter 1, Mr. Peterson talks to Martin after Martin has a panic attack. Can you think of a time when you also felt anxious or afraid? How did you handle it? Was there a trusted adult, like Mr. P, who you could talk to?
2. Families come in all shapes and sizes. Martin is an only child with a single mom, Pickle spends every summer with his aunt, and Violet has two adoptive parents and many adopted siblings. Talk with a classmate about what your family looks like. Can you think of three things that make your family unique or special to you?
3. Throughout the book, Martin has his Tío Billy to guide him as he tries to do drag for the first time. Can you think of a person in your life who has helped you try something new? What other new things would you like to try? What steps can you take to get started?
4. Compare and contrast Martin with his two best friends, Pickle and Carmen. How are they similar, and how are they different? Why do you think Martin enjoys hanging out with Pickle and Carmen, and vice versa?
5. When Martin goes to the drag show with Tío Billy in chapter 4, he loves the way the drag queens express themselves confidently, even without speaking. What are some other ways to communicate without words?
6. Carmen and Martin have a fight in chapter 7. Do you think they could have communicated their feelings to each other in a better way? Put yourself in Carmen's shoes, then in Martin's: How would you have reacted in their place?
7. Why do you think Nelson is a bully? How would you react if you met someone like Nelson in real life? What do you think you should do if you see someone being bullied?
8. Lottie Léon is Martin's drag persona, which might also be called an "alter ego." What if you had an alter ego, an alternate version of yourself? What would they look like? What would they do? How are they different from the real you, and how are they similar?
9. When Martin performs for the first time in chapter 12, he is scared, but he goes on stage anyway. Can you think of a time when you were brave like Martin? How did you feel before, and how did you feel after?
10. Throughout the book, Martin explores many different and overlapping parts of his identity. For example, he is an American middle school student, biracial with Afro-Cuban heritage, a Mathlete, a drag queen, and more. How would you define your identity? Think about your racial and cultural background, your gender expression, your interests, and other factors. How do all of these parts combine to make you unique? How do they shape the way you see the world?



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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Martin loves the music that his mom listened to when she grew up. Ask your parents or caregivers about the music they liked when they were your age. Create a playlist that includes some of your favorite songs mixed with their favorite songs. How are your choices similar to those of your parents/caregivers?
2. Imagine your own wacky Patented Pickle Plan. Pick a simple goal, like making your bed or going to a friend's house, and think of a creative way to achieve it. Draw an illustration of each step of your plan. (If you put your plan into action, be sure to check with an adult first, to stay safe!)
3. Find instances of Spanish language in the book and write down any words you do not understand. In small groups, select one Spanish word each and discuss what you think the words mean. How can you use context clues to understand a word, even if you do not speak the language? Then, with your teacher's help, look up the words. How close were your guesses to the actual definitions?
4. Create a "word cloud" for Martin. In one color, write down words Martin uses in the book to describe himself. In another color, write down words that other characters use to describe Martin. How does Martin's perception of himself differ from how others see him? How does his opinion of himself change by the end of the book? Now make a second word cloud, this time for yourself. Ask a few friends or family members to describe you. After writing those words down in one color, write down some words you would use to describe yourself in another color. Are some of the words the same? What about the words that are different? Do you agree with the words your friends and family used? Why or why not?
5. In *Martin McLean, Middle School Queen*, Martin's experience as a young drag queen is inspired by real-life "drag kids." With an adult, research drag kids. Pick a drag kid who interests you and write a paragraph or two about them. How do they use performance and style to express themselves? Some great drag kids to start with include Lactatia, Desmond is Amazing, E! the Dragnificent, and Katastrophe Jest.

