

Eight Keys by Suzanne LaFleur

Discussion Questions:

1. Elise had scabs all over her legs for her first day of school. Do any of you have an interesting first day of school or first day of work story?
2. Very early in the story, Elise described her friendship with Franklin and stated “we didn’t really need to get to know other kids because we had each other.” What did you think about this statement? Did you have any thoughts about Elise’s future?
3. How would you describe Elise and Franklin’s friendship? How is their friendship like or different from other middle school friendships?
4. Elise says that at her house “there’s hustle and bustle and very few rules—at his there are plenty of rules and almost nothing going on.” I’m wondering if you would be more comfortable in one house or the other or would you describe a different house that you would like?
5. Did you notice a difference in the way Franklin and Elise reacted to Amanda’s mean words near the top of page 37? Please help us understand the difference and why there is one.
6. Pretend that Elise was your friend and she told you what Amanda was doing to her lunch and asked you what to do about it. What would you tell her?
7. Please read the first paragraph on page 41. What do you think about Mrs. Wakefield’s response to Elise’s problem? I wonder if teachers at your school would respond differently.
8. Did anything in the story make you laugh?
9. On page 57 Caroline’s friends didn’t seem happy for her that the teacher praised her paragraph. What does that tell you about them?
10. Did anything in the story make you feel frustrated?
11. What does Caroline mean on page 78 when she says that she’s annoying because she’s smart?
12. This question is for a mom: Elise was surprised when she read in the sketchpad that her father knew her heart when she was very small and so he would always know her. Would you like to tell your daughter how young she was when you “knew her heart” or when you recognized her special personality?
13. Did you admire anyone in the story? Would you tell us about it, please?
14. Did the author write the book just for fun or did she want to teach us something? If so, what did she want us to learn?
15. On page 136 Elise refers to Amanda as a slug. Have you ever known a slug like Amanda? If so, please **don’t** tell us the slug’s name, but tell us if your slug was totally awful or if you were able to find some good in him/her.
16. How does a girl like Amanda get girls like Kate and Lindsay to follow her in everything? What is it about some girls that makes them the Queen Bee of a clique?
17. When I was reading page 141, I wondered why it took Elise so long to tell her aunt and uncle about her problems in school. Will you please help me understand why?
18. Please read the first two paragraphs on page 152. What do you think of Franklin and Elise’s three options? Could you think of any others?

19. Elise has the following thought about Caroline: “maybe she stuck with people, gave them chances. Maybe that was what friends did.” Do you agree? Is there anything else that friends do?
20. While I was reading page 177, I wondered what you think about Franklin’s mom!