

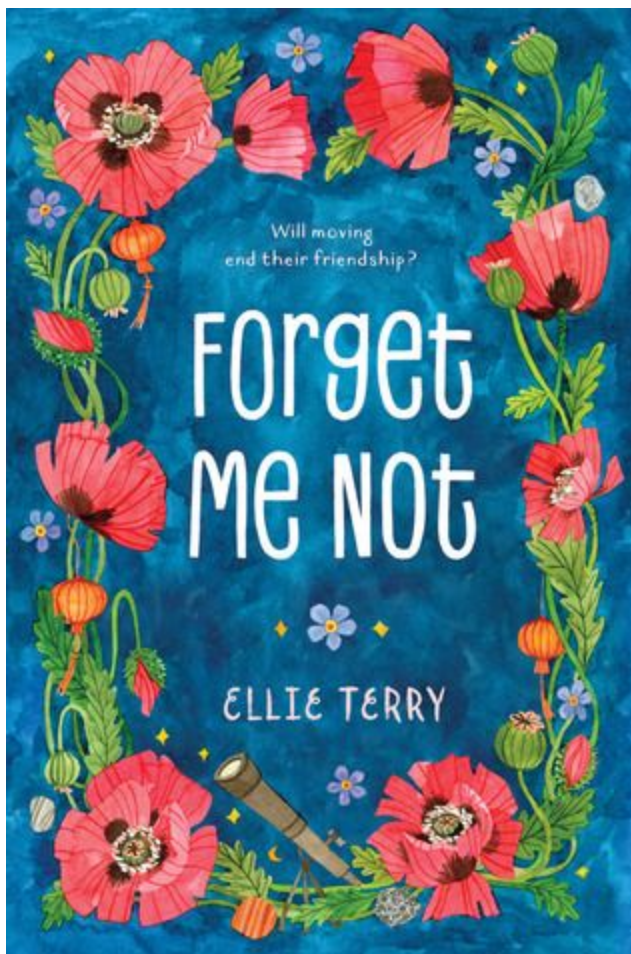


middle grade at heart  
discussions & resources for  
teachers, parents, and kids

### **Forget Me Not Discussion Guide**

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## What's it about?

Astronomy-loving Calliope June has Tourette syndrome, so she sometimes makes faces or noises that she doesn't mean to make. When she and her mother move yet again, she tries to hide her TS. But it isn't long before the kids at her new school realize she's different. Only Calliope's neighbor, who is also the popular student body president, sees her as she truly is--an interesting person and a good friend. But is he brave enough to take their friendship public?

As Calliope navigates school, she must also face her mother's new relationship and the fact that they might be moving--again--just as she starts to make friends and finally accept her differences.

Ellie Terry's affecting debut will speak to a wide audience about being true to oneself.

# Author Interview

**Where did the idea for *Forget Me Not* Come From?** It was really several things.

- 1.) A story from my mother's childhood
- 2.) Discovering my daughter had Tourette syndrome
- 3.) Something my neurologist said when he diagnosed ME with Tourette syndrome

**What are some of your favorite middle grade books, and why?** THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE, BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE, OUT OF THE DUST, ESPERANZA RISING, ONE CRAZY SUMMER—As I think about these books and why they're some of my favorites, I realize it's because I love each of the main characters. And if they were real live people, I would choose them as my friends. I love their strength and tenacity and they have given me courage to deal with hard things in my life.



**How did you start writing in verse? How is writing in verse different than writing in prose?** Well, I've been writing poetry, including free verse, since I was ten years old. Writing poetry is how I've always dealt with my feelings--the good and the bad. I did not, however, set out to write *Forget Me Not* in verse. When I first began drafting Calli's story, I heard her voice a certain way and I typed it into the computer that same way. When I looked it over, I realized I was writing it in free verse.

For me, writing in verse means paying more attention to word choice and rhythm, focusing less on dialog and action and more on the internal thoughts and feelings of a character.

**In *Forget Me Not*, Calliope learns to embrace and be open about her Tourette's syndrome. Was that a struggle for you after you were first diagnosed, as well? What message would you like to give to children (or adults) with conditions like Tourette's who are struggling with whether to tell their friends and family?** Yes, it was a struggle for me to be open about my Tourette syndrome after I was first diagnosed (it still is sometimes). I was embarrassed. I thought people wouldn't believe me. My neurologist even suggested that I not go around telling everybody, because they'd probably treat me differently if they knew. But (as you know if you've read the author's note in the back of *Forget Me Not*) I decided to not only go against his advice, but write a book about it, haha, although I learned that lesson a little bit the hard way.

Sharing a diagnosis or condition with family and friends can be scary. It is a personal choice that only the person with the condition can make for themselves. However, I will say that opening up to classmates, friends, teachers, co-workers, etc. can be very helpful. When people understand WHY you are the way you are or WHY you are doing the things you are doing, it builds empathy.

**Lots of writers face rejection on their way to success. Had you ever been rejected before writing *Forget Me Not*? (wink wink!)** Haha. Yes. I spent 11 years submitting stories and poems to editors and querying literary agents (and racked up 326 rejections) before signing with my agent, Steven Chudney. All writers get rejections, even published ones! So it's important to keep writing and keep pushing on.

**What tips or words of wisdom do you have for young aspiring writers?** Read. Write. Learn. (As much as you can.) Don't ever give up, no matter what.

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## Discussion Questions

1. When Calliope Snow is first introduced to her new classroom, she asks the teacher to call her Calli June. Why does Calli want to change her name? What might it signify for her?
2. Jinsong, Calli's neighbor, is the student body president at his school. How does this role influence his often conflicting behavior toward Calli?
3. Jinsong recalls a proverb spoken by his grandfather: *A man should choose a friend who is better than himself*. What is your interpretation of this message and its importance?
4. Calli is fascinated with astronomy, and frequently wears a t-shirt with the phrase: "Give Me Space." How might her interactions with other kids influence her interest in all things far, far away in the galaxy?
5. Throughout her time at school, Calli often carries around a flattened poppy. In an early scene, she plants a poppy in a bouquet of white roses. Why do you think Calli is drawn to this particular flower?
6. At the end of the story, Calli moves with her mother to Las Vegas, away from Jinsong. But despite the two characters being apart, the author offers several resolutions to their story arcs. What are some of the ways Calli and Jinsong get to move forward?
7. Geology extension: Calli collects rocks from the places she has lived. Find a rock from your own neighborhood to identify. What is the mineral composition of this rock? How does the rock clue us in to your habitat and climate?
8. Calli's doctor tells her not to share her Tourette syndrome diagnosis with others due to societal misperceptions and labeling. What can you learn about Tourette syndrome to understand the condition without relying on stereotypes?

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## Recipe: Easy (Americanized) Mooncakes

*"Nothing beats a mooncake with a crispy crust that melts away in your mouth. We drove all the way to Vegas and back yesterday so we could buy them from our favorite bakery in Chinatown. We don't buy them every year, but when we do...oh man, we buy a lot."*

This recipe was found here: <https://bit.ly/2HcCGge>. It is not a true or authentic mooncake recipe. As you will see in the little comic strip below, a true mooncake calls for ingredients that are hard to find in the US and is pretty tricky to make. Most people just buy mooncakes rather than make them. But we found a simplified, Americanized approximation of mooncakes that you can make with kids, share with friends, and eat beneath the full moon.

### Ingredients

1/4 cup sugar

2 egg yolks

1/2 cup salted butter

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup strawberry (or your favorite) jam (traditionally red bean paste is used so if you want a more authentic version, you can use a can of red bean paste instead of the jam).

### Method:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Combine the butter, sugar and 1 egg yolk and stir.

Mix in the flour.

Form the dough into one large ball and wrap it in plastic wrap.

Refrigerate dough for half an hour.

Unwrap the chilled dough and form small balls in the palms of your hand.

Make a hole with your thumb in the center of each mooncake and fill with about half a teaspoon of jam.

Brush each cake with the other beaten egg yolk and place on a cookie sheet.

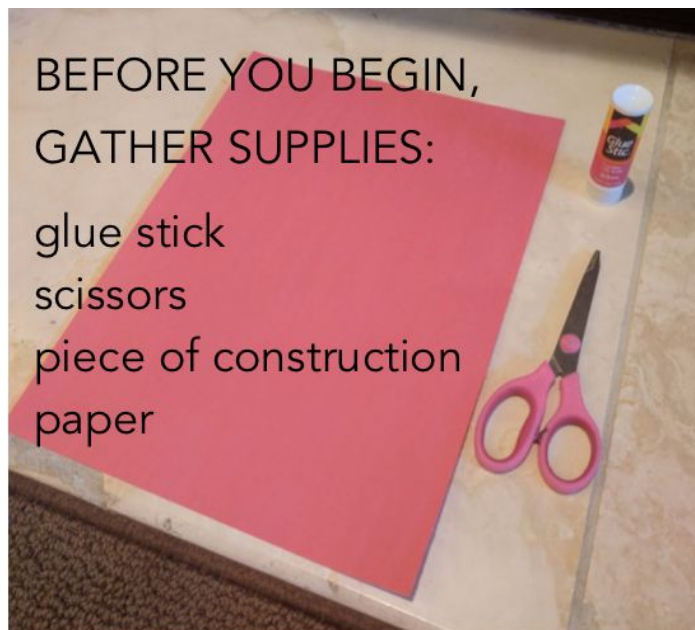
Bake for about 20 minutes or just until the outside edges are slightly brown.



## Activity: Celebrate the Moon Festival!

*"My place is decorated with brown moving boxes, and his with colorful lanterns, resting on tables, hanging from ceilings, all lit up, like this feeling inside."*

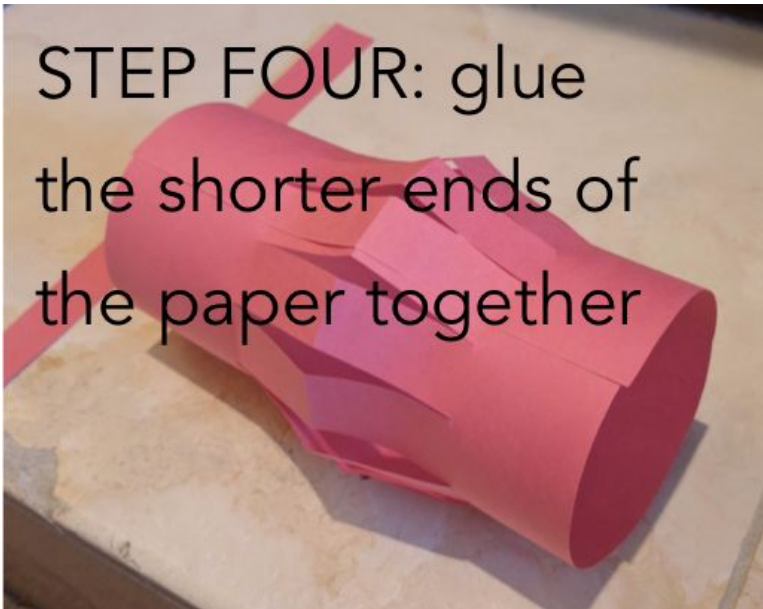
One of our favorite scenes in *Forget Me Not* is when Callie joins Jinsong for the Moon Festival. Here are instructions to make your own Chinese paper lantern to celebrate the Moon Festival (also called the Mid-Autumn Festival) this year! **Note: If you'd like, you can use a flameless LED candle inside these lanterns to create a warm glow. NEVER USE A REAL CANDLE OR ANYTHING WITH A FLAME.**



STEP THREE: unfold the piece of paper and use the scissors to cut off a one-inch strip from one of the sides



STEP FOUR: glue the shorter ends of the paper together



STEP FIVE: glue the ends of the strip onto the lantern to create a handle and you're done!



# HOW to eat MOONCAKES

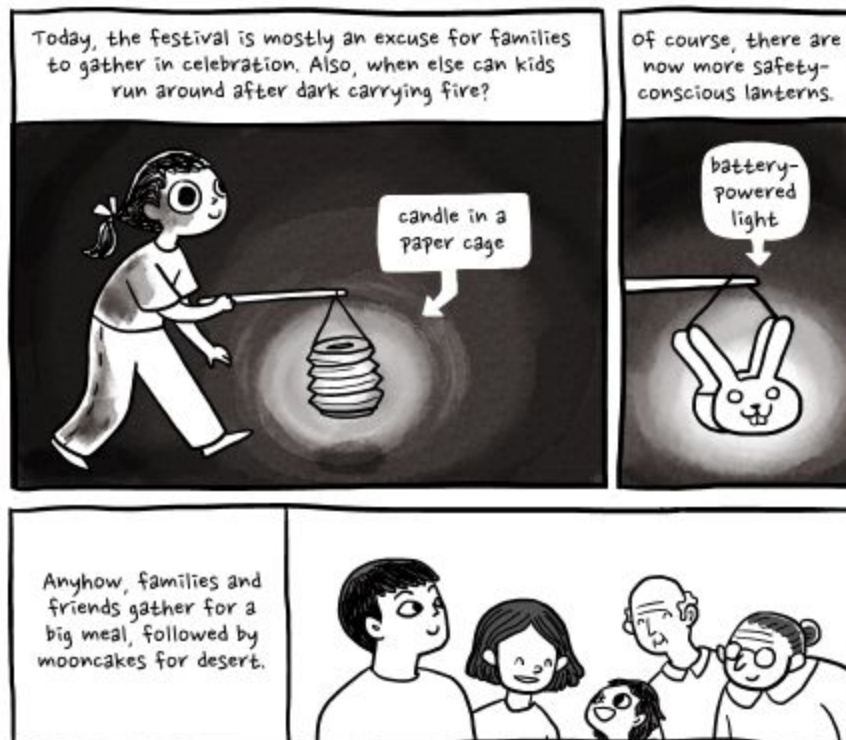
by Remy Lai











Or families and friends gather just to eat mooncakes.

