



**Discussion Guide  
For *Nice and Mean*  
By Jessica Leader**

**Plotting and lying...two great activities (just kidding about that.)**

1. Starting in chapter five, Marina plots to humiliate Rachel. Why does Marina do this? Does Marina's frustration with Rachel make sense, or is Marina overreacting?
2. Sachi desperately wants to be in Video this semester, and since her parents absolutely refuse, she lies to them. What are her reasons for wanting to be in video? What would you have done in her situation?
3. Throughout the book, Marina pushes people to do things they don't want to, and Sachi does things she doesn't want to in order to please others. Name one example of each. Then answer, which do you think is more common among people your age—pushing people to do things they don't want to, or trying to please others? How do you think each girl feels about the way she deals with things? What do you wish you could tell each girl about her approach to life?

**Partnership**

Although Marina and Sachi have a terrible time when they are forced to work on their video together, they eventually choose to do so. Consider...

1. What is it about Sachi that makes Marina want to work with her?
2. What is it about Marina that makes Sachi want to work with *her*?
3. How do you think each one changes as a result of the partnership?
4. Which one do you think changes more? Why?
5. Which one would be a better partner for you, and why?

**Ethnicity and Nationality**

1. Sachi is Indian-American, and immigrated to the US when she was little; Marina is Caucasian and born in the United States. How do their ethnicities and nationalities make them see some things more clearly? Are they blind to certain things because of their backgrounds as well?
2. Name a part of your identity that influences how you see things, such as your race, gender, religion, neighborhood, etc. What kinds of things does this part of your identity make you see? Is there anything you think you miss?

**Trends and popularity**

1. In Marina and Sachi's video on trends, lots of people share theories about what makes clothes popular. What are some of these theories? What do *you* think makes things popular, and why?

2. In the words of Sachi: do you try to follow trends or do your own thing? Why? What's difficult about your approach, and what about it makes you happy?

### **Creative Activities**

1. **Writing:** *Nice and Mean* tells one story from two very different points of view. Write your own story using two different narrators. Suggestions: two siblings, a parent and a child, two friends, two enemies. You may want to consider using different chapter-starters for each category, like a Video Nightmare or a Little Black Book.
2. **Art:** Marina and Sachi are very different girls, and from what we see in the book, their rooms are different, too. Draw a picture of each girl's room, using both details from the book and your imagination.
3. **Video:** Marina and Sachi interviewed people on a topic they were curious about—you can, too! Identify a subject that you want to know more about and make a video where you show people answering your question.