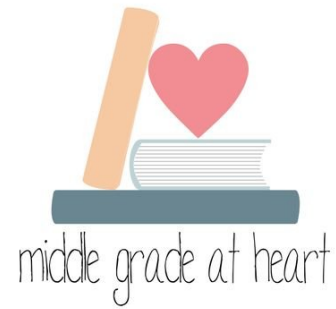


THE HOUSE THAT LOU BUILT was a book club selection with Middle Grade at Heart, a wonderful educator and parent resource for all things #middlegradebooks. They created this discussion & activity guide! Learn more at [MG Book Village](#).



The House That Lou Built *Discussion Questions & Activities*



About the Book



12-year-old Lou Bulosan-Nelson has the ultimate summer DIY project. She's going to build her own "tiny house," 100 square feet all her own. She shares a room with her mom in her grandmother's house, and longs for a place where she can escape her crazy but lovable extended Filipino family. Lou enjoys her woodshop class and creating projects, and she plans to build the house on land she inherited from her dad, who died before she was born. But then she finds out that the land may not be hers for much longer. Lou discovers it's not easy to save her land, or to build a house. But she won't give up; with the help of friends and relatives, her dream begins to take shape, and she learns the deeper meaning of home and family.

Recent Honors

- APALA Honor Award in Children's Literature
- Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award Master List, State of Vermont
- Best Books of 2019, CCBC (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Kirkus Best Middle-Grade Books of 2018
 - NPR's Best Books of 2018
 - Best STEM Books 2019 awarded by the National Science Teachers Association
 - Dictionary.com's Best Books of 2018
 - A Mighty Girl's Best Books of 2018
- School Library Journal, starred review
 - Kirkus, starred review



Discussion Questions

Created by Middle Grade at Heart

1. Lou likes to think of the people in her life as different types of houses. What kind of house would you be?
2. In the book, we learn about the concept of *bayanihan*. It means, “Community. Helping each other.” Lou realizes that she can’t accomplish her dream of building her tiny house and saving her land alone. What’s your dream? Who are the people in your life helping you along your way?
3. Lou is surrounded by so many wonderful friends and family members. Who was your favorite character?
4. Lou realizes that sometimes she forgets to tell her friends and family how much she appreciates them. Is there anyone in your life who you’d like to thank more often?
5. How do you think Lou’s perspective on keeping secrets changed throughout the book?
6. *The House That Lou Built* gives readers such a full picture of Lou’s family and their culture and traditions, from the Barrio Fiesta to descriptions of the food eaten at family meals. What was your favorite thing you learned about Filipino American culture?
7. Do you have a vision board--or as Lou calls it, a vision heart? What’s on it?
8. Lou learns that a home is more than dreams, and more than a house, too. It’s “a feeling of comfort and trust, of people who are apart of you...home is where your heart is.” Where is home for you?

Lumpia Recipe

“Expertly, Lola yanks items from the fridge and pulls me to the long table, where other lolas roll lumpias. Someone's frying them up, and the whole kitchen smells de-lish.” This recipe comes with a how-to video [here](#).

Ingredients

1 tablespoon vegetable oil	2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, minced, plus more for garnish
1 medium yellow onion, minced	1 1/2 cups canola oil, for frying
2 cloves garlic, minced	lumpia wrappers, or spring roll wrappers, or wonton wrappers
1 medium carrot, minced	1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated	sweet chili sauce, for serving
1 lb ground pork	
12 oz (1 can) water chestnuts, minced	
1 teaspoon salt	
1 teaspoon pepper	Note: Mae omits water chestnuts and cilantro, and replaces cilantro with more green onions.
2 teaspoons soy sauce	
1/4 cup green onion, minced	

Method

1. Make the filling: Heat the oil in a medium pan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, and carrot. Cook for 4 minutes, or until the onion is slightly translucent.
3. Add the ground pork and cook for about 6 minutes, or until cooked through.
4. Add the water chestnuts, salt, pepper, and soy sauce. Stir for 2 minutes, then mix in the green onion and cilantro. Remove the pan from the heat and let cool.
5. Heat about an inch (2 cm) of canola oil in a deep, medium frying pan until it reaches 300°F (150°C).
6. Lay out one lumpia wrapper in a diamond shape and spoon 2 tablespoons of filling at the bottom of the wrapper, leaving about an inch and a half (3 cm) of space from the bottom point.
7. Fold the bottom point over the filling, then fold in the edges to create an envelope shape. Roll the wrapper toward the top point. Brush the top point with egg wash and finish the roll to seal the end.
8. Carefully place four to five lumpia at a time in the hot oil. Frying on each side for 1-2 minutes, or until golden brown. Note: If the lumpia are cooking too fast or burning, reduce the heat.
9. Remove the lumpia from the oil and drain on a wire rack or paper towels.
10. Sprinkle with a garnish of cilantro and serve with sweet chili dipping sauce. Optional: Cut lumpia in half. 11. Enjoy!

Make Your Own Tiny House! (Really Tiny!)

Middle Grade at Heart can't take credit for this activity and we can't show you any better than the amazing Leyla Torres! Make an easy Origami House! All the instructions are in this YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtNv2N8CVyw>

Coloring Page

Enjoy this coloring page of a scene from *The House That Lou Built*, where Lou and a friend practice the Filipino folk-dance of Tinikling.

Illustration by Remy Lai (author/illustrator of *Pie in the Sky*)

[Click here](#) to download a high-res printable version.



Interview with Author Mae Respicio

1. Where did the inspiration for *The House That Lou Built* come from?

My inspiration for this story came from a lot of different things but one of my main inspirations is that I wanted my kids to read a story centered around a big, loving Filipino American family, something which I've yet to see in any middle grade book. I drew a lot from my own childhood coming from a large extended Filipino American family (I have 22 cousins... and counting!) and my kids have a similar family dynamic. I wanted to write and publish a book where they could see their culture reflected back at them.

2. You have posted some interesting things in the past about how you, yourself, live in an Eichler house in California, just like Lou's shop teacher, Mr. Keller. How much do you share Lou's interest in architecture?

Eichler homes were built in the mid-century by a developer named Joseph Eichler. They're what I think of as very much a California home in how they blend indoor and outdoor spaces—they have tons of windows and sometimes whole walls made of glass with everything opening into the outside. (It's one of my favorite writing spaces with all the natural light!) I love how inspiring and magical these homes feel so I decided to write one into the book, which fit perfectly with Lou's curiosity about houses. Folks who live in Eichlers are often quite passionate about them and their history, so while I know nothing about architecture it's been fun to learn more from my neighbors. One of the most fun details I learned was that the original Eichlers often had interior walls made from Philippine mahogany.

3. Did you ever feel as a kid like you needed your own space, away from your family? What made you want to explore that theme in *The House That Lou Built*?

Oh, definitely! As a kid I used to day dream about my dream house—I'd spend hours drawing the interiors and making teensy furniture out of paper and cardboard. When I was writing Lou's story I thought, "What kid doesn't want to have his or her own little house?" A house was the perfect metaphor for Lou to explore where she fit into the world outside of her family.

4. What are some of the books and authors that inspired you as you worked on this story?

*Erin Entrada Kelly was a huge inspiration and I was so honored (and floored) when she blurbed my debut! I first discovered Erin's debut, *BLACKBIRD FLY*, in the middle of writing my book and it filled me with joy to finally read a MG story with a Filipina protagonist (so much so that I bought the book for all of my nieces at the time!). *THE THING ABOUT JELLYFISH* was another book I discovered while I was writing Lou's*

story, and I was intrigued by the book's beauty and how authentic and strong the voice was. I find that crafting a true kid-lit voice can be challenging and it helps my writing process to read other books that nail it.

5. Every writer faces rejection on their path to publication. Were you ever rejected? What advice would you give to aspiring writers about rejection?

My path to publication for LOU was fairly painless, but I wrote and published nonfiction for many years prior to writing middle grade and I've gotten countless rejections—it can be brutal! I've come to realize that the one thing I have control over in this crazy business is my craft. I studied writing but even now I continue to workshop, read craft books, and listen to podcasts, etc. So whenever I get rejected I'm still strengthening my craft, which is what will help me write the next thing that does get published. I also learned early on not to take rejections personally. It's a subjective business so write what you love!

6. What are you working on next?

My next MG novel! (Hooray!) It's another hopeful and heartwarming coming-of-age story about a twelve-year-old girl named Kaia. Kaia is obsessed with special effects make-up and making movies, and she uses her unique strengths to help her family navigate through a sudden change in their lives. The book is called ANY DAY WITH YOU and it comes out in May 2020. I'm excited for you all to read it!

Learn more about upcoming middle grade books through the [Middle Grade at Heart](#) book club, a resource for readers, parents, and educators.

To learn more about Mae Respicio and her books, please visit [Mae's website](#).