Lucky Broken Girl by Ruth Behar

Recommended for grades 4 to 6

Summary: It’s the 1960s, and Ruthie Mizrahi and her family have recently emigrated from Castro’s Cuba to New York City. Just when Ruthie’s finally beginning to gain confidence in her mastery of English—and enjoying her reign as her neighborhood’s hopscotch queen—a horrific car accident leaves her in a body cast and confined to her bed for a long recovery. As Ruthie’s world shrinks because of her inability to move, her powers of observation and her heart grow larger and she comes to understand how fragile life is, how vulnerable we all are as human beings, and how friends, neighbors, and the power of the arts can sweeten even the worst of times.

Discussion Questions:

1. Ruthie and her family are Jewish and Cuban. How do those cultures influence their lives?
2. Whose "fault" is Ruthie's accident? What does she decide about forgiveness?
3. Ruthie's father makes decisions without consulting his family. Is that fair?
4. Ruthie has to spend a year in bed, before TV. How would you entertain yourself for a year if you didn't have any electronic devices?
5. Did you know this book was based on the author's real life before you read it? What effect does that have on your opinion of the story?

Further Resources:

Interview with the author: https://dar.to/2QF7quH

Frida Kahlo Biography: https://dar.to/2O6sSXM

Activities

1. Chico is an artist who helps Ruthie express her feelings and thoughts through painting. Paint a picture of anything. Paint a portrait of a friend or the park. Paint what you are feeling or thinking.
2. Ruthie reads Nancy Drew while she spends a year in bed. Be a detective, make your own mystery, and see if your friends can solve it. Need help? See this Nancy Drew activity guide: https://dar.to/35ob7Jk