

# BOOK CLUB GUIDE

Guide created by Amy Christine Parker for library, classroom, and reading group use.

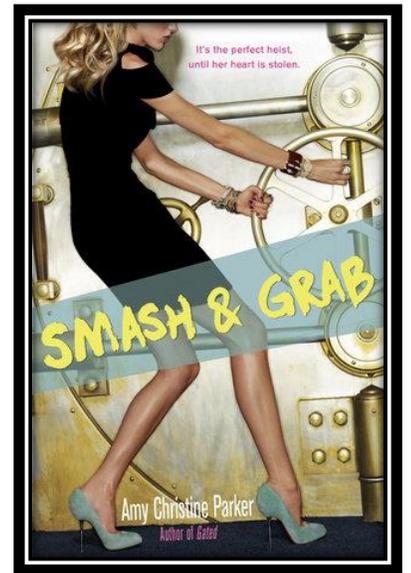


Random House Children's

A Division of Penguin Random House

# SMASH & GRAB

By Amy Christine Parker



## SYNOPSIS

*Ocean's Eleven* meets the star-crossed lovers of *West Side Story*. Grab some popcorn and get ready for an adrenaline-filled heist!

**LEXI** is a rich girl who loves a good rush. Whether it's motorcycle racing or BASE jumping off a building in downtown Los Angeles, the only times she feels alive are when she and her friends are executing one of their dares. After her father's arrest, Lexi doesn't think twice about going undercover at his bank to steal the evidence that might clear his name. She enlists her hacker brother and her daredevil friends to plan a clever heist.

**CHRISTIAN** is a boy from the wrong side of the tracks. The local gang has blackmailed him and his friends into robbing banks, and he is desperate for a way out. When the boss promises that one really big job will be the last he ever has to do, Christian jumps at the chance for freedom. In fact, he's just met a girl at the bank who might even prove useful. . . .

Two heists. One score. The only thing standing in their way is each other.

Told in alternating points of view, this caper is full of romance and fast-paced fun. Hand to fans of *Perfect Chemistry*, *The Conspiracy of Us*, and *Heist Society*.

## PRAISE FOR

## SMASH & GRAB

"Fans of Julia Durango's *The Leveller* and Jennifer Lynn Barnes's *The Fixer* will flock to this novel for its cool *Ocean's 11* references and strong, layered main characters. VERDICT Purchase where spy thrillers fly off the shelves."

—*School Library Journal*

"An exciting novel that will inspire young readers to rise above misfortune. As Christian and Lexi live in the moment, they also discover that finding love can happen any time—even when you're jumping off a building."

—*Teen Reads*

"This is a perfect summer read. A bit of intrigue, a bit of love, and a smidgeon of blockbuster action."

—*125 Pages*

"The characters were well-developed and thought out. This is an action-packed book that will leave you guessing until the very end. Highly recommended."

—*Christina Farley, Bestselling author of the GILDED series*

"I loved the chemistry, the plot, and the friendships, and the West Side Story feel. I would definitely recommend *Smash & Grab!*"

—*Take Me Away to a Great Read*

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Any Christine Parker gets most of her ideas from real life current events and news stories. [Watch the true story that inspired SMASH & GRAB](#) about a teenage girl and her brother who are recruited by their father to help him rob banks then discuss the following:

1. Do you feel there are any aspects of the final story that mirror this news piece?
2. In your opinion, how much responsibility do the teens have when it comes to the robberies? Do you think they would have been open to robbing banks if anyone other than their father was the ring leader?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The book opens with Lexi and her friends BASE jumping off the top of the US Bank Tower in Los Angeles. Just before she jumps, Lexi makes a comment that briefly touches on suicide. Do you think she is really feeling suicidal in this moment or merely making an observation? Why or why not?
2. Lexi and her friends keep a BAM (Bad Ass Maneuvers) Book that chronicles their risk-taking adventures. If you had a BAM Book what would be listed in it? What kinds of daring things would you still like to try?
3. Christian's first chapter opens with him stealing a car. Normally this would make him an unsympathetic character. What are some examples of things the author did in Chapter Two and throughout the book to make the reader want to root for him?
4. Lexi and Christian have very different reasons for robbing LL National. Do you think one character's reasons are more compelling than the other? Why or why not? Which character do you identify with most?
5. Christian has been recruited by gang leader, Soldado, to rob banks. If you were in his shoes, would you agree to rob a bank if it meant keeping your family and friends safe? Could Christian have found a way to turn Soldado down?
6. Lexi isn't scared of Christian when they run into each other for the second time as he's robbing a bank and doesn't seem to be frightened of him or his friends at any time throughout the book even though they have an impressive record of robbing banks. Why do you think that is? Do you think anything scares her? If so, what?
7. Christian's and Lexi's families are at the heart of their motives for robbing LL National. Compare the two families and discuss what is positive/negative about both. How do these things shape Christian and Lexi's behavior throughout the book?
8. What do you think draws the two characters to each other? In your opinion are they good for each other in the long run? Why or why not?
9. The author chose to let both characters get away from the scene of the crime and off the hook without major consequences even though each benefitted monetarily from the heist after Lexi and her friends use the flash drive they found in Harrison's safety deposit box to transfer funds from Harrison's off shore accounts to her own and then distributes equal shares of it to Christian and his buddies. Do you think the fact that Lexi and Christian only took money from a criminal and not directly from the bank makes this outcome okay? Why or why not?
10. Do you think teens could pull off a heist of this magnitude in real life? Why or why not?

## MAKE IT A PARTY

SMASH & GRAB is the perfect book for a Cops and Robbers Party. Here's how to pull it off:

**Invitations:** Use an image of the book's cover to design your own invite. [Canva](#) is a terrific site to use for this.

**Encourage Costumes:** Ask your fellow book clubbers to come dressed as either a cop or robber.

### Decorations:

Use duct tape to make a prison stripe tablecloth. Use black, white, and blue as your primary decorating colors.

Put together gift bags of mini donuts to hand out as people leave.

Buy burlap money bags and fill with candy coins to set on your food table.

Serve a signature drink: Mugshot Root Beer Floats using Mug Root Beer.

### Activities

**Photo Booth:** Make or purchase a [mug shot background](#) and stock a basket full of [props](#) (thief masks, handcuffs, police hat, loot bags, a [mug shot card](#)). Take a mug shot photo of each of your guests.

**Game:** Have each person concoct a reason for being arrested—the funnier, more outrageous the better—then have them write their arrest story on a strip of paper. Put the strips into a jar and read them to the group one by one then have everyone guess whose story it is. The person who guesses the most correctly wins.



## CLUB MEETING MENU

Serve foods inspired by the book.

- **Main Course:** At Christian's graduation party his mother serves a traditional Mexican dish, [Barria](#). Try your hand at making this delicious main course. Serve with [guacamole](#) and [salsa](#).
- **Dessert:** When Lexi and Christian officially meet he asks her out for donuts. Visit the links below and make both character's favorites:  
Christian: [Chocolate Iced](#)  
Lexi: [Maple Bacon](#)



## CONSIDER AN AUTHOR APPEARANCE

Having the author discuss her book with your group will allow you a unique glimpse into her inspirations and can make discussions on the themes and character motivations even deeper and more meaningful. Amy is available to do virtual appearances via Skype or Google Hangouts and some in person appearances. She does charge for her time, but depending on the group and their needs, she can sometimes be flexible on her fee, but this will be on a case by case basis.

### Skype/Google Hangout Visits

Skype visits are completely free for the first 30 minutes.

31-60 minute visits cost \$50.

Amy will send personalized, signed book plates to each member of your book club as well as some special swag.

### Book Club Appearances

\$100 for 60-90 minutes.

Travel expenses required for all appearances beyond Pasco and Hillsborough Counties unless Amy is already in the area for a book festival or school visits.

Amy will be happy to sign/personalize books for each member of your book club who would like their copy signed and will provide special swag during the appearance.

Find out more about Amy Christine Parker and her books, appearance schedule, and more at [www.amychristineparker.com](http://www.amychristineparker.com)