



Discussion Questions for Readers

1. How much thought did you give to toys, specifically dolls, before reading this book?
2. The introduction to the book begins with a list of quotes that the author, Jodi Bondi Norgaard, heard from professionals in the toy and publishing industry about the Go! Go! Sports Girls dolls and books. Then she asks, “Do you actually believe any of these statements?” Norgaard doesn’t, but did you? After reading the book, does your reaction to these statements feel different? How?
3. Do you remember your first doll? Did you have a favorite doll? Did you have a doll that you played with in ways that weren’t “traditional” (as Norgaard and her sister did when torching their Barbie’s hair)?
4. In Chapter 2, “Lovely Lola Is Not My Daughter,” Norgaard shares the moment she was inspired to start a new doll company, after noticing dolls that looked highly sexualized. Have you ever noticed such dolls in a store? What did you think of them then? What do you think of them now?
5. On page 13, Norgaard says: I have seen throughout my life men supporting and wanting the best for their daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, and the women near and dear to them, but I’ve come to understand that there is a deeply rooted cultural undercurrent that goes unnoticed: men support women close to them, but when it comes to overall gender equality, there isn’t the same whole-hearted belief in women’s strength, ability, or worthiness of equality. How do you feel about this statement? What is your experience?
6. In Chapter 5, “Raising ‘Good’ Girls,” Norgaard talks about labels—the way other people see us that can become our identity whether we want it or not. Did you feel labeled as a child? If so, how did that impact you as you grew older?
7. Norgaard makes the case in Chapter 7, “Representing Girls As They Are,” that there is room on the toy market for a sports-themed doll. She says throughout the book: “Girls

play sports and so should their dolls.” Do you believe that too? Why or why not?

8. As Norgaard writes about her journey creating the Go! Go! Sports Girls dolls and bringing them to market, she includes experiences throughout her life that shaped her beliefs. Was this backstory important to the book? Did any of these personal stories resonate with you?

9. On page 82, Norgaard writes: I want to be clear that I have nothing against fashion. In fact, I find fashion beautiful, interesting, colorful, and I have a strong appreciation for exhibiting one’s personal style. However, I’d like to argue that girls gravitate toward fashion dolls because there are seventy-five brands of fashion dolls marketed to girls with few other options. How can a girl gravitate to something that isn’t offered? It’s like a grocer saying their customers gravitate toward peanut butter when their shelves are stocked with seventy-five brands of peanut butter. What would happen if they introduce almond, cashew, hazelnut, and pistachio butters? I’d bet the peanut butter revenue doesn’t decrease, and the overall nut butter revenue booms. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

10. Over and over, Norgaard is denied and rejected by toy buyers. Despite the setbacks, she keeps going because she comes to realize what’s more important to her than launching a successful doll brand (which would require her to change her concept to a fashion doll), is the mission of fighting for change in the toy industry. Is this a worthy endeavor?

11. In Chapter 28, “A Toy is Not Just a Toy,” Norgaard writes: One reason creating change is so hard is because still too few people see the harm. Make your own press-on nails—what’s the big deal? The prevailing attitude of “it’s just a toy” minimizes not only the profound effects and implications toys have on the growth and development of our children but also the sexualization and/or stereotyping itself. “It’s no big deal” can apply as easily to a makeup kit packaged as a science kit to an unwanted sexual advance during a job interview. Have your beliefs changed about the impact toys can have on child development as well as societal norms?

12. Ruth Handler created Barbie in 1959 to empower little girls with an adult-like doll that inspired them to become “poised little ladies.” Barbie was a major paradigm shift from baby dolls at the time, and fashion dolls became and remains a dominant toy today. Norgaard introduced the Go! Go! Sports Girls fifty years later. What are the similarities between the two doll creators? What are the differences?

13. In the final chapter, “How We Move Forward,” Norgaard provides suggestions for consumers to advocate for healthy toys. Do you feel motivated to take on any of her recommendations? If so, which ones?

14. Each chapter begins with a quote. Is there one that resonated with you?

15. Do you have any lingering questions after reading the book? What are they?