

Just As I Am
a novel
by Virginia Smith

Discussion Questions

- When Mayla Strong, the main character in *Just As I Am*, becomes a Christian in her mama's church, the congregation doesn't quite know what to make of this purple-haired young woman with multiple facial piercings. Do you know any people like Mayla? Would those people be comfortable in your church? Why or why not?
- After Mayla becomes a Christian, her mama and the people in her church want her to change her appearance, but she refuses. Yet, she did change. What sort of changes took place in Mayla? Is there something about you that you would like to change? What can you do to make those changes happen?
- Mayla's friends Stuart, Sylvia, and Tattoo Lou, are not Christians. Do you think Christians should continue to hang out with people whose lifestyles don't reflect Christian beliefs and morals?
- When a Christian chooses to remain friends with unbelievers, what circumstances might that person find himself or herself in that would not honor Christ? How should a Christian act in those circumstances?
- Many people become Christians when they realize their sins will keep them separated from God for all eternity. Mayla tries to confront Sylvia with her sinful behavior by quoting the Bible. Why doesn't it work? What finally convinces Sylvia to accept Jesus?
- Through much of the book, Mr. Holmes disapproves of Mayla because of her untraditional looks. What does Mayla do to win him over? What can we learn from Mayla in this area?
- Mayla searches for a place to fit in at her church. Her attempts to "serve" in children's church and on the drama team are disastrous! Yet, she eventually finds a place to serve. How important is it to make a commitment to become involved at church? Why? In your church, what kinds of service are available to people your age?
- Toward the end of the book, Mayla is furious with God when her friend Alex dies. She knows she should pray, but she feels like she and God "aren't on speaking terms." Has there ever been a time when you felt you and God weren't on "speaking terms"? How did you handle it?