

A study guide prepared by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

The Bully
by Paul Langan

As you read this book, The Bully, please make a list of all words that are used that you do not know the meaning of. Bring your list to class each week, and we will resolve vocabulary words that you find.

CHAPTER 1

1. In describing Darrell's old neighborhood in Philadelphia it is said "there were always people to turn to in times of trouble". (p.2). Have you found this to be true in your life? In your neighborhood? Who were some of these people for you?
2. Darrell and Malik truly are the best of friends. (p.6) "You been a real brother to me" Darrell said. "I...I love you, man", Darrell blurted, his voice melting into embarrassing sobs". Have you ever had a male friend speak of love like this, in a non-sexual manner? Have you ever had a friendship, like that between Malik and Darrell?
3. Darrell's mom knows how much the move is going to hurt Darrell, leaving all of his friends behind, and starting school in the middle of a term. (p.9) She tells him, "It hurts me so much to be doing this to you. If there was any other way..." Have you ever had someone that loves you do something that really hurt and disappointed you?
4. Chapter 1 ends with Darrell and his mom on the bus, headed for California. Darrell is upset at leaving his friends behind, especially Malik. Have you ever had a close friend like Malik, and then lost the friendship for any reason?

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 gives several examples of first impressions, which are not always good. What were Darrell's first impressions of:

1. His arrival in California (p.15)
2. His uncle Jason (p.16-17)
3. His move to California (p.18)
4. His new home (p.20)
5. His cousin Travis (p.20)
6. The 5 boys in front of the sandwich shop (p.22)
7. Tyray Hobbs (p.25)
8. His first day in California (p.27)

CHAPTER 3

1. Darrell begins to realize (p.35) that "No matter where he went, it seemed there always were bigger kids who liked to show how strong they were by picking on smaller, weaker people". Have you observed this to be true in your life? Were you picked on like this? Have you been responsible for picking on someone else? Why do you think people do this, in becoming a bully?
2. Darrell sees that the bullying takes place even in his uncle's family. (p.37) Darrell could see hatred in Nate's face. "He decided he would watch out for his

little cousin, no matter what his uncle said. That was what Malik would do. And that was what he was going to do too”. Have you ever had someone who watched out for you, and “had your back”? Have you ever done this for someone else?

CHAPTER 4

1. (p.39) “It was comforting to know how much his mom loved him, and he clung to that when things got really bad”. Is there someone that you are really close to, and know that this person will be with you no matter what happens, even when things get really bad for you?
2. (p.41) “Everything Darrell had feared was coming true. He was probably the only new kid in the entire school”. Have you ever experienced feelings of hopelessness like Darrell?
3. (p.44) “Darrell always thought teachers were fools. They never seemed to know what was going on in their classrooms”. How does Darrell’s opinion of teacher’s compare to your experiences and your impressions of teachers? Are all teachers this way?
4. (p.46) “Without embarrassing Darrell, Mr. Mitchell had managed to stop what was happening. And for that Darrell was grateful”. What did Mr. Mitchell do?
5. (p.48) “Standing amidst the huge crowd, Darrell felt more alone than he ever had in his whole life”. Have you ever experienced anything similar, where you were surrounded by people, yet felt all alone, and helpless?

CHAPTER 5

1. After school got out Darrell walked home, and ran across Amberlynn. (p.56) “Darrell was amazed at how friendly she was, after ignoring him all day”. “Around her friends, she was embarrassed to admit she knew him”. Do you know anyone that seemed to be embarrassed to know you, or is there someone you are embarrassed to admit that you know? Why do you think that this happens?
2. After his first day at Bluford High School Darrell goes home and is questioned by his mother about his first day at the school. When questioned about lunch, Darrell lies and says that he found someone to eat with (p.61). Why do you think that Darrell did not tell his mother the truth about how miserable he was at Bluford High?
3. Darrell’s mother encourages him to speak to Uncle Jason, “especially if you ever wanted to talk to a man about man stuff”. (p.63) yet “Darrell could tell that his uncle was sizing him up, judging him. Even worse, Darrell knew he did not measure up in his uncle’s eyes. And he knew Uncle Jason had no idea what was happening with his own boys”. Have you ever had someone you are close to say something that convinced you that they were clueless as to your real feelings?
4. (p.65-68) Darrell is confronted by Tyray as he walks back home from the grocery store with a bag of oranges that his mother asked him to buy. Tyray demands money, and cuts open the bag of oranges, then crushes them on the sidewalk. (p.68) “Next time you better have cash for me, hear? Tomorrow morning I’ll be waiting right in front of the supermarket”. What do you think Darrell should do about this demand made by Tyray?

CHAPTER 6

1. After being confronted by Tyray at the grocery store, Darrell walked home with his bag that had been cut open by Tyray. The oranges kept falling out of the bag. While walking, he met Mrs. Davis (p.69-70) who offered Darrell a different bag. Have you ever met someone who surprised you by being unexpectedly warm, friendly, or helpful?
2. Mrs. Davis is raising her grandson Harold, who is also a freshman at Bluford high school. (p.70) “Well, praise the Lord!” “The good Lord musta intended us to meet ‘cause my grandson, Harold, he’s a freshman too. That poor child is having a tough time in high school because he’s so shy. He needs some friends to talk to”. Would you have agreed with the request made by Mrs. Davis for Darrell to develop a friendship with her grandson, Harold?
3. (p.71) Darrell noticed that Mrs. Davis’s description of her grandson, Harold, described Darrell as much as it did Harold. How would people describe you when you weren’t there to hear what they were saying?
4. (p.74-75) Darrell kept his promise to Mrs. Davis and sat down for lunch with Harold. “Finally, he thought, I am not alone”. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt all alone, with no one to turn to as a close friend?
5. (p.77-78) While jogging in gym class, Tyray kicked Darrell in the ankle, causing him to fall. (p.79) When Darrell changes clothes at his gym locker Tyray takes Darrell’s clothes. On both of these occasions Darrell does not tell the gym teacher, Mr. Dooling. Do you think Darrell should have told Mr. Dooling? What do you think would have happened if Darrell had told?
6. (p.83) Tyray refuses Darrell’s offer to pay Tyray 50 cents a day, with Tyray demanding instead two dollars a day, Darrell’s entire lunch money. The crime of extortion is defined as a threat, accompanied by a demand. (If you don’t pay me xxx, I will xxx). The fear of giving in to these demands is that you have no way of knowing if the person making the demand will in fact do what was said. Darrell is now being forced to pay Tyray ten dollars a week. What are some of the things that could happen to make this threat, along with the demand for money, even worse for Darrell in the weeks ahead?
7. (p.85) Mr. Mitchell approaches Darrell after class and says “Look, Darrell, I know what it’s like to be new in a high school. It’s not easy. If you ever need someone to talk to, I’m right here”. Have you ever had someone offer their time to you as a mentor or confidant, so that you could talk things out?
8. (p.86) “Darrell knew that paying Tyray was wrong. The shame and guilt he felt for giving his mother’s money to a bully swept over him in unending waves”. Why do you think that Darrell does this, knowing that it is wrong?
9. (p.88) “Darrell Mercer, you are the sorriest punk in all of Bluford. Ain’t no one else there who’s as small, dumb, and poor as you”. “The words were like sharp knives. Darrell knew they were true”. What is the worst thing anyone has ever said about you?
10. (p.88-89) “Darrell hated them. He hated the power they had over him. He hated that they knew what hurt him most”. “In Tyray’s gleaming eyes, Darrell saw the bully’s pleasure in humiliating him”. What hurts you the most?

11. (p.91) Darrell knew that now, more than ever, he was completely alone. Darrell decides to take up Mr. Mitchell's offer to talk with him. Would it have been better if Darrell had spoken up sooner?

CHAPTER 7

1. Mr. Mitchell tells Darrell that when he was in high school that he was the smallest kid in the class, and was frequently beat up. (p.94) "But what really helped was developing *inner toughness*". Mr. Mitchell tells Darrell that he can "always make yourself stronger". In the end, Mr. Mitchell offers Darrell a book, Hatchet by Gary Paulsen. (p.95) Darrell "was disappointed. He wanted an answer to his problem, not a book". Have you ever been offered support and encouragement by someone in a way that you were not expecting?
2. What happened in the book Hatchet that Mr. Mitchell had given to Darrell to read? How could Darrell relate to the main character, Brian, in that book, Hatchet?

CHAPTER 8

1. (p.104) Darrell "had given them his mother's money, and they were still hurting him". Go back to question 6 in Chapter 6 of this study guide, and re-examine the fears facing someone who gives in to the demands of someone else. What do you think?
2. (p.106) Over lunch Harold tells Darrell that "wrestling is the last sport I'd join if I were you". Darrell eventually realizes (p.107) "maybe Harold isn't ready for a change, but I am".
3. Most of Chapter 8 deals with Darrell's decision to join the wrestling team, after seeing a paper taped to the cafeteria door announcing "**Build Confidence, Gain Strength**" "**Join the Bluford Wrestling Team. No experience required. Freshmen welcome**". Darrell's biggest concern is that he is too small to join the team. How does Coach Lewis respond to these concerns of Darrell?
4. (p.114) At his first wrestling practice Coach Lewis had all the boys climb up ropes hand-over-hand. Half way up Darrell fell to the ground embarrassed. "Even though he was discouraged by the ropes, he could not believe that he was practicing with the wrestling team. Never in a million years would he have guessed that he would be doing such a thing. For a few minutes he was almost proud of himself". Have you ever done something like this, that made you feel proud of yourself?
5. (p.116-118) What is Darrell's relationship with Craig and Luis, the two boys in Darrell's weight class that Darrell was assigned to practice with? How do they treat him?
6. (p.120) The day after his first wrestling practice Darrell arrived at school and noticed Amberlynn smiling at him. "For a second, he felt happy at Bluford. Finally someone had talked to him, someone who was attractive and friendly". Tyray and his friends then entered the classroom and confronted Amberlynn, asking if Darrell was her new boyfriend. (p.124) "He's not my boyfriend! Amberlynn screamed. **I don't even like him.** Do you hear me? **I don't even like him!**" Have you ever had someone reject you in such a hurtful way?

CHAPTER 9

1. (p.128) “The only time Darrell did not think about Tyray was at wrestling practice. As soon as he went into the locker room after school, it was as though he entered another world”. “As the weeks passed, Darrell was slowly getting stronger”. As the weeks pass for you, while at IYC St. Charles, do you find that you are changing in any way?
2. (p.129) “Darrel learned quickly that wrestling was like chess. To master it, you had to use strategy”. Have you found situations in your life when you had to be able to think ahead to the possible consequences of your actions, and how that might change the decisions that you want to make right now?
3. (p.130) “After practice one day, Darrell was changing back into his clothes when the kid with the shaved head walked by on his way to his locker”. Darrell had learned that his name was Kevin. “Good job today,” Kevin said and walked out. Why was this comment so important to Darrell? (See pages 112-113 for comparison)
4. (p.131) At the supermarket Darrell runs into Amberlynn’s best friend, Jamee. Jamee tells Darrell that Amberlynn feels real bad about what happened in school. Should Darrell believe Jamee? If Amberlynn really was sorry for what she had said about Darrell why wouldn’t she just apologize herself?
5. Even though Darrell lost his first wrestling match, his coach still gave Darrell praise. (p.142) “In order to win, to change, to succeed, you have to work at it”. Yet Uncle Jason made comments that were very hurtful (p.145). Darrell tells his uncle “you ain’t my coach”. “Do I need to be told that I’m no good? I know it already”. (p.146) Darrell slammed the door behind him. He was not going to talk to his uncle again. Why do you think Uncle Jason treats Darrell this way?

CHAPTER 10

1. (p.147) The next day at lunch Harold tells Darrell “you know, I’m thinking about joining wrestling because of you, Darrell”. (p.148) “Harold was the only kid Darrell knew who could understand what he was going through. For him to say what he did, meant a lot”. Have you ever had a deep positive influence on someone like this, without even really knowing it at the time?
2. (p.150) “But each Friday when he paid Tyray, he felt scared as he did during his first days at Bluford. Deep inside Darrell knew what he wanted would not come until he confronted Tyray, that nothing would be different as long as he kept paying him”. Have you had times when you knew what you had to do, but just could not take the steps to get it done?
3. Darrell and Harold go to the school dance, and hope to meet up with the girls they like. Everything goes fine until Tyray confronts Darrell, and demands additional money, and then throws Darrell into a garbage can in the men’s room. With that Darrell runs home, without telling anyone what had happened, or where he was going. What does Darrell do when he gets home? (p.162)

CHAPTER 11

1. Over the Christmas holidays Darrell heard a commotion coming from his uncle’s garage. It was his cousin Travis who had locked his cousin Nate in a crate,

- demanding that a Christmas present be turned over to Travis. Darrell gets involved, even though Uncle Jason had earlier told him to not get involved with his cousins Travis and Nate. Why did Darrell feel that he had to take action? (p.169) What was Uncle Jason's reaction to what Darrell had done?
2. (p.171) Darrell won his first wrestling match. Coach Lewis was so happy for Darrell that he hugged Darrell when he stepped off the mat. Coach Lewis could see the efforts that Darrell had made, the many changes that had taken place since their first meeting. Have you ever made someone that happy?
 3. (p.171-172) Darrell and his mother talked about making New Year's resolutions. What is Darrell's resolution?

CHAPTER 12

1. (p.173) "Darrell had decided that his days in school were miserable whether he paid Tyray or not. So why pay him?". In one word, why do you think Darrell continued to pay Tyray his lunch money?
2. (p.176-177) After Darrell bought lunch for the first time with the lunch money that he had been giving away, Tyray spilled the food and drink all over Darrell's body and clothes. The entire cafeteria was expecting a fight to break out. "The rage began to build up in Darrell". What have you done in the past when someone made you this angry?
3. (p.177-178) Darrell saw Miss Bea coming out to clean up the spilled food, and decides to act. Anger starts to bubble inside Darrell. When Darrell finally stands up to Tyray (p.181) what does Darrell tell Tyray that he must do?
4. (p.180) The school anticipates a fight as Tyray moved over to Darrell, with Rodney and two other friends right behind Tyray. Tyray's friends start to move on either side of Darrell, but suddenly they stopped. Why?

COMMENTS ON BULLYING:

Many schools and communities are experiencing acts of bullying. Sometimes school violence breaks out, including school shootings, as a result of bullying that has been going on for some time. Victims can be selected because they are perceived to be the weak, gays, other race groups, people who look different, people who dress different, people with different tastes in music, or for any other variety of reasons. **What do you think are the reasons that some people use to justify why they should be allowed to pick on others?**

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

Go back to page 183. "Over Tyray's shoulder Darrell could see teachers struggling to make their way into the center of the fight". "Tyray came at him again. This time Darrell decided not to fight Tyray, but to wrestle him". At this point in time in the story, you are being asked to be the author. Write an alternative ending for the story that is different from the one that the author wrote. Please remember that there is no right or wrong ending, you can write whatever you wish. Be creative. Have fun.