

A Study Guide prepared by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

A Matter of Trust

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As you read this book, A Matter of Trust, please make a list of all words that are used in the book that you do not know the meaning of. Bring your list to class each week, along with your copy of the book and this study guide, and we will resolve vocabulary words that you find. Two of the central characters in this book are Darcy Wills and Hakeem Randall, both of whom play major roles in other Bluford Series books, Lost and Found, and Blood is Thicker. If you are drawn to either Darcy or Hakeem and their stories, you may want to consider also reading Lost and Found and Blood is Thicker.

CHAPTER 1

1. Darcy Wills had been dating Hakeem Randall for just a few weeks. They were both students at Bluford High School and were in the same tenth grade English class. (p.1-2)Hakeem is about to deliver an oral report on Macbeth, and Darcy was quite worried and concerned. Why?
2. (p.5-6)Darcy noticed a flyer for upcoming talent show auditions. Why did Darcy feel that this would be good for Hakeem, knowing that he stutters when he gets nervous?
3. (p.9)While walking home Darcy ran into Brisana Meeks, who until just a few weeks ago had been Darcy's best friend. Why did the relationship between Darcy and Brisana sour?
4. (p.12)Darcy rode home from school in Cooper's truck, where she observed Hakeem speed by on his new motorbike. But what else did Darcy observe?

CHAPTER 2

1. Darcy accuses Brisana of being a fake with Hakeem. (p.15) "A few days ago you were making fun of him, and now you're riding around on the back of his motorbike. I know you're only doing this to get back at me because I've become friends with Tarah and Cooper." Brisana accuses Darcy of being jealous. Have you ever been jealous of someone? How do you go about getting over being jealous?
2. (p.16)While in class Roylin Bailey once again makes fun of Hakeem by mocking him with a stutter. "'Shut your stupid mouth, Roylin,' Darcy demanded". (p.17) After class Hakeem tells Darcy "don't stick up for me in class, okay?" Why does Hakeem want Darcy to remain silent when Hakeem is being teased?
3. (p.20-21)Darcy and her sister Jamee have an argument over whether or not their father should be forgiven, when he returned after walking out on his entire family five years earlier. What are your thoughts on forgiveness? Are there ever times when someone should not be forgiven for their mistakes? Why are some things more difficult to forgive than others?

4. (p.25)Hakeem calls Darcy and asks her to accompany him at a track meet on Saturday. Why is Hakeem running in this track meet?

CHAPTER 3

1. (p.28)Jamee asks Darcy “how do you know if a person is...you know...being honest?” (p.30)When mom gets home from work the conversation turns to trust. **“I just don’t trust him.** Maybe I ought to, but I just don’t. If he ran off once, what’s to stop him from doing it again?” In your opinion, what things need to be done in order to restore trust in a broken relationship? Is it possible that sometimes trust can never be restored? Are there people in your life that you don’t trust? Are there others who don’t trust you? How can anyone be certain that change really takes place in someone else?
2. (p.34-36)Hakeem and Darcy talk about their relationships with their fathers. “All I’m saying is maybe you could give your dad a second chance. From where I’m sitting, it looks like he’s trying awful hard”. Have there been people in your life who were willing to give you a second chance? Does giving someone a second chance always turn out successfully?

CHAPTER 4

1. (p.41)Darcy and her family always dread going over to Aunt Charlotte’s house for dinner. Aunt Charlotte had already informed them that she had something really important to talk about. What was it that Aunt Charlotte wanted to tell them?
2. (p.42-43) “Your girls have good hearts, but it can’t be healthy for them to have a sick old woman there twenty-four hours a day.” “You have to work extra hours just to support Mother. And while you are out, the girls are forced to be baby-sitters and nurses because you want to keep Mother in your home. It’s not fair to keep Mother so close to you.” What are the advantages, and disadvantages, of placing Darcy’s grandmother in a nursing home, rather than continuing to care for her as they had been?
3. (p.45) “Which brings me to the real reason I need to talk to you all. This summer, I will be vacationing in France for a month, and I would be delighted to have you along, Darcy. I think it would be the experience of your life. It would help you see there’s more to life than Bluford High School, your grandmother, and your rundown neighborhood.” If you were Darcy, would you want to accept this invitation? Why, or why not?
4. Tarah was planning a party for her sixteenth birthday on the following Saturday. (p.52)There is some resentment by some classmates, due to some people not being invited. “We don’t want trouble, you hear what I’m sayin’? It’s gonna be a nice party with good food and good music, no fightin’, no booze, you get my meanin’?” (p.54) “I’m coming to the party Saturday,” Roylin announced. ‘You ain’t invited,’ Tarah retorted. ‘It’s a public place,’ Roylin challenged. ‘You can’t keep me away.’” Have you ever crashed a party, or had someone crash a party you were attending? How do guests feel when someone unexpected shows up?

CHAPTER 5

1. (p.57)The birthday party at the park was a huge success, until someone uninvited showed up. Who?
2. Roylin confronts Hakeem, teasing him by stuttering. (p.58)“With the speed of a big, lean cat, Hakeem lunged at Roylin. Roylin tried to block Hakeem’s punches, but one connected with his nose, spraying droplets of blood on his white t-shirt. He seemed unprepared for Hakeem’s rage. With a look of wild fear in his face, Roylin fled across the parking lot”. “A champagne-colored Nissan had come into the parking lot without anybody noticing it because all attention was on the fight.” What happened next?
3. (p.60) “Bailey got shot in the head. He was running from me”. Is it possible to sometimes simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time?
4. Darcy and Hakeem rush to the hospital Emergency Room, to see if there was anything they could do to help Roylin Bailey’s mother, who was known to have four other children. In what way do Hakeem and Darcy help Mrs. Bailey, at this time of need?
5. (p.66-68)When Mrs. Bailey is called back into the Emergency Room to see her wounded son, Darcy and Hakeem have a conversation with Roylin’s younger sister, Amberlynn. Darcy comes to realize how difficult Roylin’s life was due to his very cruel father. All of these conversations made Darcy realize that there was someone she needed to talk with. Who?

CHAPTER 6

1. How seriously was Roylin Bailey injured when he had been shot in the head?
2. (p.74)At school everyone is talking about the shooting in the park. Brisana says “Oh Hakeem, to think you might have been killed in that awful shooting! I could just die to even think of it! I’m so glad you’re okay!” “‘Yeah,’ Hakeem said. ‘Roylin Bailey is gonna be okay too. A bullet grazed his head, but he’ll be fine.’” “‘Like anybody cares,’ Brisana replied”. How can anyone be this insincere, and yet still expect others to think that she really cares?
3. Darcy was forced to miss out on an opportunity to go out with Hakeem, going to the beach and watching the sun go down. (p.80)“Darcy felt trapped. It would always be this way, she thought, and sooner or later Hakeem would sense it too. She was sure that he would grow tired of waiting for her and that he would become interested in someone else, someone who was free, attractive, and smart. Someone like Brisana”. Do you ever fear that someone will “grow tired of waiting for you”? What can you do about these feelings?

CHAPTER 7

1. (p.85)While walking to school, Darcy is approached by a girl who tells her that Hakeem and Brisana had gone to the beach yesterday afternoon. (p.87)Brisana then tells Darcy the same story. (p.88) “‘Hakeem and I went to the beach and went swimming,’ Brisana purred, ‘and, oh, it was so romantic’”. When Brisana

- was asked by Darcy why she would be telling Darcy this, Brisana says “So now you know how it feels to be dumped. You and I, were friends, and you dropped me the second you got your trashy new friends”. Have you ever been dumped by someone? How did it make you feel? How did you get over these feelings?
2. Darcy and Brisana later go out for an ice cream sundae. (p.94)“We used to be such good friends, Darcy. Then all of a sudden you just dropped me, like I never existed.” “‘That’s not true,’ Darcy began calmly. ‘We never knew Tarah and Cooper, but we said bad things about them anyway. Well, I got to know them and found out they were really nice. I gave them a chance. **You never tried to.**” Have there been people in your life that you could have become friends with, but never even tried to?

CHAPTER 8

1. At the talent show auditions Hakeem beautifully sang a song while playing the guitar. (p.99)“Darcy knew what Hakeem was trying to say in his song, but she wondered if the other students understood him. Not everyone had seen Roylin get shot.” What was Hakeem trying to say?
2. (p.104)During dinner with her father, Darcy has a conversation about financial assistance. (p.105)“Darcy looked down at the tablecloth, not knowing what to say. **The truth was that Mom did not trust him.** Darcy did not really trust him either” If you were Darcy, would you trust her father? If you were Darcy’s mother, would you trust Darcy’s father, knowing that the rest of the family will be affected by your decision?
3. (p.106)Darcy’s dad tells about how bad he felt when he realized how badly he had hurt his entire family. “And then when the fire dies out, you are left with the ashes. Then you ache with guilt, and you realize you’ve hurt the people dearest to you, and you can’t take it back”. This reminds me of a quotation by William Shakespeare, “What’s done is done, and can not be undone!”. Are there any things that you wish could be undone in your life?

CHAPTER 9

1. Darcy’s mom asks how Darcy’s dinner with her father went. (p.111)“Good, Mom. I had a nice talk with him. He’d like to, you know, be more involved with the family again.” “‘Anything’s possible, I guess. But don’t expect too much, hear?’ ‘It’s not that I’m still angry –well, not much anyway. But that’s not the main thing. What if I trusted him again and he went away again? Baby, I got a life now—we’ve got a life. It’s not a great life, but at least I got some control. I know your father’s real sorry for what he did, but I just can’t put our lives back in that man’s hands. Not yet. Maybe not ever’”. The title of this book is A Matter of Trust. Do you think that there is any hope for trust to be restored in this family?
2. Have you ever had a situation in your life when someone lost the trust of a family member, and after forgiveness, trust was restored? Have there been times when after trust was restored, it became apparent that restoring trust was a mistake?

CHAPTER 10

1. Who won the talent show?
2. When Darcy walked home after school, she found her father's car parked out front, and Jamee said that Mom had given permission for Dad to show them something. What was it that their Dad wanted to show his daughters?
3. On Saturday afternoon Darcy takes grandma to the park, where she is met by Hakeem. When they return home they hear loud angry voices coming from the closed door. Darcy's parents were in there shouting at each other. (p.123) "Carl Wills, you are no good. No man who runs out on his family is any good. I don't want to put my heart in your hands again, just so you can stomp on it any time you please". (p.124) "Darcy heard her mother weeping, then loud sobs. Then they trailed off. What do you think **will happen**? What do you think **should happen**?"

What did you think of this book, and why?

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

I usually end my reading study guides by giving an opportunity to do some creative writing. I am going to ask you to pretend that this book ended with Chapter 9, and you get to write whatever ending you would like. Write an alternative ending that is different from how the author ended this story. Please remember that there is no right or wrong ending, you can write whatever you wish. Be creative. Have fun. When you are finished I will show you an alternative ending that I wrote.

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Darcy finished her dinner with her father, and had to admit to herself that she had a good time, and some productive conversation. It really did all boil down to **a matter of trust**. There was nothing Darcy could do to help her mother in making a decision as to whether or not she should take the risk and allow Carl Wills back into their lives, or play it safe, and keep him at a distance.

Saturday afternoon Darcy took grandma to the park, and was pleased to find Hakeem there. He was playing the new guitar he had received from Brisana's brother. "That's beautiful, Hakeem", Darcy whispered. "Yeah, I really like the tone of this guitar. I loved my old guitar, but this one makes everything sound much deeper and richer. By the way, I got something for you!" "What are you talking about, Hakeem", asked Darcy with a puzzled look on her face.

"The talent show had a \$25 prize for the winner, and as I was walking over here today I saw a sign in the window at the store that tonight's power ball lottery drawing is \$215 million dollars. I don't believe in gambling, and know that it's the same as just flushing money down the toilet, but I wasn't expecting this money to begin with. So, I thought I would get a ticket for you, because things are finally starting to look better".

"Well, with Dad helping Mom out with money, things are looking better – but there is no guarantee for the future. My Dad might just be too big a risk for my Mom to take", explained Darcy.

Hakeem then told Darcy how he picked numbers that were special to him "the date we first met...your birthday...and mine. For the power ball number I chose "5", for the number of years you and your family lost due to your father's absence".

"Well, thank you Hakeem", Darcy said as she put the ticket Hakeem had purchased into her pocket.

Sunday morning was a beautiful sunny day. While in the shower, Darcy turned on the radio. An announcer excitedly reported the results of last night's winning power ball drawing. "With the lucky power ball being number 5"! Darcy stood there in the shower, letting the warm water wash the anxiety from her. A smile crept across her face as she thought "*might this be that Mom won't have to climb out on a limb, and decide to trust Dad again? Maybe they could be a family once again, without the worry of Dad walking out once again. What if...*"