

An Invisible Thread

by Laura Schroff with Alex Tresniowski

This feel-good story chronicles the lifelong friendship between a busy sales executive and a disadvantaged young boy, and how both of their lives were changed by what began as one small gesture of kindness.

Laura and Maurice meet by chance on a busy Manhattan street and start an unusual friendship. Eventually, they become family. Their story, while it might not appear so at first, is one of mutual generosity, and is in itself an invisible thread that pulls us together.

1. As the Chinese proverb suggests, do you believe there are those in our lives we're destined to meet? If so, do you agree the thread that connects us will never break? Why?
2. As you read this story, who did you find yourself identifying with more – Laura or Maurice? What did you find compelling about each of their stories?
3. In their first encounter, why do you think Laura went back to Maurice, after she'd walked right by him? Have you had a similar change-of-heart experience that led to something unexpected?

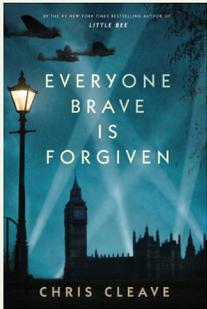
4. What similarities existed between Laura's childhood and Maurice's, if any? Which of her life experiences influenced her decisions and actions toward Maurice? How did Maurice's life experiences influence his decisions and actions toward Laura?
5. Maurice had never known someone who had a job. He didn't understand the concepts of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He didn't know how to blow his nose. Yet he knew how to ask for what he wanted when given the opportunity, he knew to say thank you, and he was extremely resourceful. How much of drive do you think is intrinsic, and how much is nurtured by our families?
6. Why do you think it was important for the author to include so much detail about her father's relationship with her brother, Frank? How did that influence your interpretation of the primary story?

7. Despite her neglect of him, Maurice loved his mother. Despite his abuse, Laura loved her father. What role did these dynamics play in Laura's and Maurice's friendship? Do you think either or both were able to forgive their parents?
8. Some people in Laura's life were open and welcoming of Maurice, while others discouraged or ignored the relationship. Which of these situations could you relate to most?
9. The author shares considerable detail about her ancestors, and about Maurice's extended family. How does this strengthen the story? How would your perception of either Laura or Maurice have been different without this background or context?
10. Much of the time Laura and Maurice spent together was in simple activities – cooking, shopping, doing laundry, playing games. How can simple activities like these bring together people from different backgrounds and lifestyles? Where is the lesson in that for us?

11. What do you think about the parallel of Maurice with his mother on her deathbed, while Laura stayed away as her father was dying?
12. Laura says “All of our stories, as much as they are about anything, are about loss.” Why do you think she makes this statement? Do you agree? Why or why not?
13. Do you think Laura saved Maurice’s life, or do you think Maurice saved Laura’s life?
14. Has this book inspired you to reach out in some way to someone around you? If so, what has the experience taught you?
15. Who are you connected to with an invisible thread? Do you nurture that relationship in any way, or simply trust that the thread will remain strong?

Jacque Stouffer lives with her family in Liberty, Missouri, where she works with nonprofit agencies as a specialist in organized fundraising through communication and grant writing.

NEXT MONTH



Everyone Brave is Forgiven

by Chris Cleave

An insightful, stark, and heartbreaking story about three lives entangled during World War II. Based loosely on his own grandparents, Cleave’s novel portrays the irrepressible hopefulness that can arise in the face of catastrophe.