

A study guide prepared by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

The Gun

By Paul Langan

Make a list of all words used in this book that you do not know the meaning of. Bring your list of words to class each week, along with your copy of the book, and this study guide, and we will resolve vocabulary words that you find.

This book picks up where the story The Bully, by the same author, Paul Langan, ended. If you have not yet read The Bully you may want to consider reading that book first.

CHAPTER 1

1. We are introduced to the main character of this story, Tyray Hobbs, a notorious bully in Bluford High School's freshman class. We are reminded of all of the facts that took place in the book The Bully, and Tyray now has to learn to live with a reputation that has been greatly diminished when a much smaller and weaker student, Darrell Mercer defeated Tyray in a school fight, breaking Tyray's wrist in the fight. Most of this book is about how Tyray deals with this lack of respect. Tyray is threatened by the school principal, Ms. Spencer, with suspension if there is any more bullying that takes place. Tyray's father, Gil Hobbs, is furious with him, but his mother tries to coddle her son, and calm her husband's anger. (p.8) "Woman, don't give me that!" Dad yelled, causing Mom to cower. "You been coddlin' this boy all his life, and that's why we got into this kind of trouble with him now. I'm glad he's in pain, understand? Now leave us alone." (p.10) "Woman, didn't I tell you to stay out of this? We already lost one son, and I ain't about to lose another." Tyray's older brother, Warren, has been out of the family home for over a year. Why? Where is he?
2. Tyray's father is the foreman of a construction company, and he towers over his entire crew. (p.11) "But more than respecting his father, Tyray feared him". Why does Tyray fear his own father?
3. (p.14-15) Tyray uses his skills as a bully to assess even a potential new girlfriend, as he did with Lark Collins, a freshman he hardly knew. (p.14-15) Lark would not be as stubborn or demanding as the girls who used to flirt with him. A few harsh words, and she would skitter off in tears and never talk to him again." "Lark was someone he could manipulate". Have you ever found someone that you felt was easy to manipulate? Have you ever found that you had been manipulated by someone else?
4. This chapter ends with the quote "His day of revenge would come, and no one would ever forget it". What is the meaning or definition of the word revenge? In Chapter 1 we read that there is really only one person that Tyray fears...his own father. What do you think Tyray's father would do if he knew that Tyray was already planning to get even? What do you think the school principal Ms. Spencer, would do? Why is it that some people have such a difficult time learning a lesson from their previous mistakes, and change their behavior so as to

not repeat these mistakes? How about you, have you made some mistakes over and over again? If so, what will it take to convince you to change?

CHAPTER 2

1. (p.18) “Being nice to people was weak. Not being nice gave you an edge. Tyray’s father said that a lot, and Tyray believed it”. Beginning on page 19 we see an excellent example of manipulation. What is the definition of the word manipulation? Can you see the way in which Tyray learned from his father how to use or manipulate Tyray’s mother on the days when she cashed her paychecks?
2. At the end of the day Tyray stops at a local restaurant. (p.24) At the restaurant other students again make fun of him, showing disrespect, and making fun of him. (p.26) Outside of the restaurant Tyray sees a man named Bones. How did Tyray know about Bones? When Bones learned of Tyray’s broken wrist, and problems with other students at school, what does Bones offer Tyray?

CHAPTER 3

1. (p.31) Tyray recalls the words of his father “I might not be the smartest man in the world. And I ain’t the best lookin’ neither. But you better believe that folks are gonna respect me ‘cause they know I ain’t scared of nothin’. I don’t care who I’m talking to. I just look ‘em in the eyes, and they’re afraid ‘cause they know I can hurt ‘em. All the education in the world still ain’t too much for the fear I put in folks. That’s all I need.” Tyray had accepted that philosophy for himself long ago. With a role model like his father, is it any wonder that Tyray turned into one of the biggest bullies at Bluford High?
2. (p.32) Tyray goes out at night in an attempt to find someone who can sell him a gun. (p.33-38) He comes across four boys from the neighborhood. But what happens to Tyray instead?
3. (p.38) “Look at him, Len roared. He’s gonna cry!” “How’s it feel to get payback?, Shamar laughed.” How about you, have you ever taken delight in giving payback to someone else? Did someone else ever enjoy giving payback to you?
4. Tyray becomes consumed with the idea of getting revenge on Darrell Mercer, the boy that Tyray believes is responsible for all of the disrespect Tyray is now facing. (p.44) “He hated Bluford and all its students and teachers. He hated Darrell Mercer and what he had done to his life. And that night, for the first time ever, Tyray hated himself.” Why does Tyray hate himself? Who is responsible for Tyray’s life? Is it correct to say that Darrell Mercer was responsible for what was done to Tyray’s life?

CHAPTER 4

1. This Chapter begins with Tyray in his bedroom where he is visited by his mother. What is Tyray’s mother like? What do you think Tyray feels about his mother?

2. (p.46-47) When Tyray was a boy he watched from a darkened hallway as his father yelled at his mother. What else did Tyray's father do to Tyray's mother?
3. (p.47) Tyray hated his father and mother. Why?
4. (p.49) After school Tyray continues searching for someone who will sell him a gun. He comes across Jupiter James, a neighbor "with a rap sheet a mile long, whose mother dealt drugs, and his father had been stabbed to death in a dispute over stolen goods, and whose brother, Londell served time in prison for attempted murder". (p.51) \$50 is the price for a gun that Tyray agrees to. What good can come of this? Based on what you have read, up to this point, how do you think this book will end?
5. (p.52) When Tyray returns to school one of his teachers, Mr. Mitchell, asks "Can I talk to you for a minute, Tyray?" (p.53) Why does Mr. Mitchell want to speak with Tyray?
6. (p.54-55) Mr. Mitchell says, "I know how the guys have been riding you. I see what's going on. But look, you can get through this and come out the other side a stronger, better kid. You can make a fresh start. You'll be surprised how things can turn around once people see you're making an honest effort to change." At this point in the story, do you think that Tyray has any intention of changing?
7. (p.56) Mr. Mitchell ends his conversation with Tyray by saying, "Tyray, you gotta get that chip off your shoulder, okay?". Do you think that you are seen by others as someone with a chip on your shoulder? Are there others that you know, which you believe have a chip on their shoulders? Why is it so difficult to change?

CHAPTER 5

1. Tyray thinks of a way to come up with the \$50 that it will cost him to buy the gun. (p.57-59) Where will he get the money, and how will he pull this off?
2. (p.59) When Tyray gets home from school he found his mother busy making a delicious dinner for her family. Tyray confronts his mother about the way she is treated by her husband, Tyray's father. (p.61-62) What does Tyray's mom think about the comments Tyray is making about her and her husband?
3. (p.64) When Tyray goes to his bedroom he reads an old letter from his brother, Warren, in prison. What did Warren tell Tyray in that letter?
4. (p.66-67) As Tyray approached the school the next morning, he found Darrell Mercer waiting for him at the front door. Darrell tells Tyray "I know some guys are giving you a hard time, and that ain't right." How does Tyray respond to this gesture of peace? Why do you think that Tyray responds the way he does?

CHAPTER 6

1. Lark is warned by other girls at school to not trust Tyray, and to not give him any of the money that he had asked to borrow. Lark gives Tyray money anyway. How much money did Lark give Tyray at school?
2. (p.72-73) Tyray then goes out to buy a gun. What happens? What plans are made for later that night?

CHAPTER 7

1. This Chapter deals entirely with Tyray's attempt to buy a gun at 11:00pm from a young man he was to meet at Muscleman gym. We soon learn that the whole deal was a set up. What warning signs had Tyray ignored? Have you ever been set up like this? Have you ever set up someone else? How easy is it to set someone up when they want to believe so hard that they are about to obtain whatever it is that they are looking for?

CHAPTER 8

1. The next day at school there is a pep rally for winter sports. Who is announced as the most improved member of the wrestling team?
2. Tyray escapes the pep rally by going to the bathroom. (p.92) Teacher, Mr. Mitchell, again confronts Tyray, telling him "you've got to get that chip off your shoulder, and reach out to the other kids". Tyray resents Mr. Mitchell trying to help, and tells him "don't waste no time on me, Mr. Mitchell." Have you ever refused help from someone when you knew they were right, and could in fact help you?
3. (p.92) At lunchtime Lark confronts Tyray with the fact that she had caught Tyray in a lie about the money she gave him. What happened? How did she find out? How do you react when you have been caught red handed in a lie?
4. After being robbed of the \$40 that had been loaned to him by Lark, Tyray finally figures out a way to get the \$50 that he will need to buy the gun from Bones. Where does Tyray get the money that he needs in order to buy the gun?

CHAPTER 9

1. Tyray finally is able to buy a gun from Bones. (p.102) But Bones gives Tyray a very strong warning. What is it?

CHAPTER 10

1. For several chapters we have been reading about the many ways that Tyray has attempted to obtain a gun, so that he can obtain revenge on Darrell Mercer. Now that he finally has a gun Tyray is eager to get it over with, and confront Darrell. Have you ever been obsessed with the idea of getting revenge the way Tyray is?
2. Everyone at Bluford High seems to know that Tyray has a gun, and those who made fun of Tyray are now once again afraid of him. The principal Ms. Spencer, and Lark, both try to convince Tyray not to do anything foolish with the gun. After school Tyray goes out with his gun, to hunt down Darrell. While standing in a steady drizzle Tyray waited in silence as he stalked the alley that he knew Darrell would ride his bicycle through on his way to work. When Darrell comes by "Tyray lunged at Darrell, sideswiping him with his shoulder, catching Darrell by surprise, sending him crashing into the garage wall. Tyray walked over to

him, aiming the gun at his face”. “Tyray walked over to him, aiming the gun at his face. I got you, man, Tyray said”. How does this book end? How did you think it was going to end?

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

Go back to page 116 where Tyray tackles Darrell as he rode by on his bicycle. “Tyray walked over to him, aiming the gun at his face”. “I got you, man, Tyray said”. At this point I would like for you to write an alternative ending for this story, anything that is different from how this author ended the 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.

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

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Darrell looked up from the puddle in the alley way where he fell. He immediately recognized Tyray, and focused all of his attention on the gun pointed at Darrell's face. Darrell was scared, and the look on his face brought a smirk to Tyray's face. "Now who's the tough guy"?, asked Tyray. "Please don't shoot", begged Darrell. "All I ever did was to join the wrestling team so that I could learn self-confidence, to put an end to your taking all of my lunch money. I did not mean to humiliate you, and as I told you the other day, I wanted to do anything that I could to put a stop to the hard times that some of the guys have been giving you". "You should have just kept on paying me, and none of this would have happened," said Tyray. "Yeah, but you can't go through life bullying people, because after a time you will come across someone that is bigger and stronger, and puts an end to it", Darrell responded. "Besides, I am no way close to being as big or strong as you. It was only when I joined the wrestling team that I began to believe in myself", Darrell said.

"Well, no one believes in me!", Tyray shot back in disgust. "My father hates me, my mother is clueless, and now I am a nobody at school, thanks to you". "You know, Tyray, you could always join the wrestling team, like I did. It made all the difference in the world to me. I would be willing to help you, and work with you. I could show you some moves, and help you learn the art of wrestling. With some hard work and practice, I am sure that you would be a sure winner", reasoned Darrell.

"I am just a loser, and no one can help me with that", Tyray responded. "You don't have to be a loser. You have some choices that you can make. You don't have to walk down the wrong path all of your life" Darrell said in an upbeat way.

"As I stood here waiting for you to come by all I could think about was something my brother Warren said in his last letter to me from prison. He said 'Whatever you do, don't end up like me', yet here I stood waiting for you to come by, so that I could shoot you, and end up just like my brother" said Tyray, with a puzzled look on his face. "It doesn't have to be that way", begged Darrell. "How about if we put all of this behind us, and see what we can do to help you regain some respect. You don't have to put on a tough guy act. I am willing to work with you, and I would love to have you join the wrestling team, and join me, so that you can learn some discipline. How about it?" asked Darrell? With that Tyray extended his arm, and helped Darrell up from the alley. "I don't see what I have to lose, that I haven't already lost", responded Tyray. "I wonder if I can get a refund on the money that I stole from my mom in order to buy this gun", said Tyray, with a bit of laughter in his voice.