

Book Notes

Once Confronted by Lynne Stringer

Discussion Questions

Chapter One

1. If you were a parent (or if you are one), what would your response be to your child's request to go overseas for his/her gap year? If you would say yes, explain why. Would it be conditional? If you'd say no, what reasons would you give for refusing?
2. Even though she's finished high school, Maddy still has no idea what she's going to study at university. Do you think she should have made up her mind by now? Why or why not? Did you know what you were going to do before you left school? Did your friends? What do you think this says about Maddy's character?
3. If you were the victim of an armed robbery, do you think you'd behave the way Maddy did in this situation? Would you have behaved differently? Why?
4. Do you think Evan was struck because he was going too slowly? Explain your answer.

Chapter Two

1. Why do you think Maddy is reluctant to have her parents come down to Sydney after the robbery?
2. Why do you think Maddy prefers not to talk about what happened?
3. Why do you think Evan apologises to Maddy?
4. Maddy comments that the people around her are talking about something they 'would never really know anything about'. What do you think she means by this?

Chapter Three

1. Why do you think Maddy feels her home is like an alien environment?
2. Have you or anyone you know ever been involved in a traumatic incident? How did you/their behaviour change afterwards? Did it stay the same?
3. Why does Maddy not want to go back to Sydney for the trial? Do you think you would be willing to be a witness at a trial against someone who had attacked you? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Maddy doesn't want to be considered a victim?

Chapter Four

1. What do you think of Melanie's straightforward approach? Do you think it's a good thing to use when speaking to someone who's the victim of violent crime? Do you think she's doing it deliberately because of what Maddy's been through or because it's just her personality? Do you think her own trauma has caused this trait to surface in her?
2. Do you think Maddy chose social work simply because of what she's been through? Do you think that Melanie is right when she tells Maddy that she shouldn't become a social worker? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think Evan's talk of winning bothers Maddy?

Chapter Five

1. What do you think about restoration conferences? Do you think it's something that could be beneficial? Do you think it's a good idea to allow an attacker to apologise to their victim?
2. Maddy is angry about letting Jeremy Stannem apologise. Do you think this is the way she should feel? Do you think it's okay for her to feel this now? Explain your answer.

3. Melanie decides to find out about the restoration conference for Maddy. Do you believe the reasons she gives for doing it? If not, what other reasons might she have? Do you think it was a good idea to do that? Explain your answer.
4. Evan has strong feelings against restoration conferences. Do you agree with him when he says that people can't be rehabilitated? Explain your answer. Have you ever known someone who was rehabilitated after they committed a crime?

Chapter Six

1. Maddy cracks under pressure in her first session at the domestic violence unit. Do you think her response is a sign that she shouldn't be a social worker? Explain your answer.
2. What do you think Angela means when she says that Maddy will get used to things at the domestic violence unit? Do you think she's right? Do you think getting used to it would change Maddy's character? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think Maddy is not telling Crimson and Elaine about her problems with her placement and Melanie's contact with the prison chaplain?
4. If you had found out that someone who had wronged you had been released on parole, do you think your response would be closer to Evan's or Maddy's? Explain your answer.

Chapter Seven

1. Evan clearly has problems. Why do you think Maddy doesn't try and talk to him about them?
2. Do you think Maddy's right to be considering the restoration conference? Do you agree with Evan's response? Explain your answer.

Chapter Eight

1. Do you know of any churches that run programs like Westside Community Church? Have you or anyone you know ever sought help from a charity organisation? In what ways do you think these programs benefit society?
2. Do you think churches and other organisations should hire people just out of jail? In what circumstances do you think it's appropriate or inappropriate?
3. What do you think you would say if you were Maddy and your attacker was standing in front of you, apologising? Why do you think she responded the way she did? Do you think her response was appropriate? Explain your answer.

Chapter Nine

1. What do you think motivated Jacinta to take Maddy back into Jeremy's presence, or do you think it was unintentional? What other reasons might she have had for taking Maddy and her father to the auditorium?
2. Why do you think Maddy was more scared of Angel than Jeremy during their confrontation?
3. Do you think Maddy is brave or foolish to agree to return to the church to explain what happened? What do you think motivated her to do it?
4. Maddy notices that Jeremy looks different from the way he looked during the robbery. What do you think caused this difference, or is it just in her imagination? Why do you think she might imagine something like that?

Chapter Ten

1. Why do you think so many of the kids are interested in hearing Maddy's story? How do you think they would have felt about what she said?

2. Why do you think Brett asks Maddy to come back and then leaves so abruptly during her talk? Do you think he benefited from what she said? Explain your answer.
3. The kids ask Maddy why she doesn't hate Jeremy. Why do you think she doesn't?

Chapter Eleven

1. Why do you think Maddy is relieved that she doesn't see Evan?
2. Why do you think Jeremy approaches Maddy without hesitation when she arrives at the church?
3. Do you think it would help Maddy if she knew of Jeremy's past? Why or why not?

Chapter Twelve

1. Do you think that Evan's descent was caused solely by what happened to him and Maddy, or do you think other things contributed to it? Do you think the reason Maddy didn't do that was because she was willing to forgive or do you think it was more likely because of her personality?
2. Why do you think Maddy is so determined not to turn Evan in, given what she's learned from being in the domestic violence unit? Do you think she's right not to report him? Explain your answer.

Chapter Thirteen

1. Why do you think Maddy doesn't tell her parents about what Evan did to her?
2. How did you feel when you heard Jeremy's story? Did it give you an understanding of why he turned to a life of crime or do you think it's an insufficient explanation?
3. Do you think Maddy is right to be angry at Evan because he didn't even consider travelling the road she took? Explain your answer.

Chapter Fourteen

1. How did you feel about Jacinta's assessment of Maddy's potential as a social worker? Do you agree that she could be good at the job, or do you think Melanie's assessment is more accurate? Explain your answer.
2. Why do you think Aunt Myrtle agreed not to tell Maddy's parents about what Evan did?
3. What do you think draws Maddy to the kids at Westside?

Chapter Fifteen

1. How do you think Evan justified to himself that it was okay to hunt Jeremy down with a gun? Do you think he is right in saying that Maddy should have stayed away from Jeremy?
2. Why do you think Evan is convinced that what he did was for both him and Maddy, in spite of what she'd already told him?
3. Why do you think Maddy still doesn't want Evan in jail, in spite of what he did? Do you think a jail term is the right punishment for Evan? Explain your answer.
4. By the end of the chapter, Evan seems to be seeing things in a slightly different light. What do you think is the most likely reason he is starting to see things differently?

Chapter Sixteen

1. Why do you think Jeremy thinks it's okay to jump in front of a gun for Maddy but doesn't think it's okay for her to do the same thing for him? Is it just because she's a girl or is there more to it than that? Explain your answer.

2. Why do you think Jeremy is prepared to leave his job to allow Maddy to work there? Is it just because of guilt or do you think there's more to it than that? Explain your answer.

Chapter Seventeen

1. Why do you think Maddy has no issues about working with Jeremy at the church? Do you believe that she's really as okay with it as she seems to be?
2. Do you think that Maddy's assessment that we all can do bad things at times is enough reason for her to forgive Jeremy of so heinous a crime? Has getting to know Jeremy changed your mind about whether or not Maddy should forgive him? Explain your answer.
3. Do you believe that some criminals can change like Jeremy, even if others can't? What do you think makes it possible for a person to be rehabilitated?

Chapter Eighteen

1. Why do you think Maddy is upset that Alana calls her 'nice'? Why would she regard this as an insult? Do you think Alana intends to insult her? Are there any circumstances where this really would be an insult?
2. Maddy tells us why she goes back to hug Jeremy. Why do you think he came to find her?