



**Reading Guide**

Mateo

L.B.Tillit

## Purpose

This reading guide will help the reader focus on building vocabulary, strengthen reading fluency, follow the plot, focus on themes, use inferring skills, and discover character growth. It will provide opportunities for readers to engage in authentic discussion while encouraging an understanding of varying perspectives.

## Acknowledgements

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GUIDED READING FOR *MATEO*, BY L.B. TILLIT  
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# Chapter 1 The Gift

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**Mass**—church service where Holy Communion is served, often linked to the Catholic Church

**pew**—the long benches that people sit on in churches

**rehearsal**—practice

## Questions

Where did Mateo fall asleep? What did he think would be the result of falling asleep?

Who was Omar, and what role did he play in getting Mateo into their rock band?

## Reflection

How did Mateo make up for falling asleep? What does this tell you about his musical talent?

## Chapter 2 Alma

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**linger**—stay awhile

**scrawny**—thin, all skin and bones

**undocumented**—no legal papers

**green card**—legal papers that makes someone a permanent resident of the USA but not a citizen. The only things they cannot do are vote and run for a political office.

### Questions

What did Mateo like about Alma?

What kept Mateo from trying to get closer to Alma?

What was Mateo's background that defined him as a second-generation Mexican American?

### Reflections

When Mateo saw Alma's bruises, he was upset. Why did he hesitate to step in?

Mateo stated: *I thought maybe it was time to do my own thing. Not worry about others anymore.*

What did Mateo mean? What was he tired of? What options do you think Mateo has? Discuss.

## Chapter 3 Bent Rays

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**alter ego**—a different side of oneself, sometimes it can be like a completely different person

**amp**—amplifier, a device that helps move the electric signals from the electric guitar to the loudspeakers

**clomped**—stomping sound

**gear**—equipment

**gig**—job that only lasts a short time

**gig bag**—a soft travel bag to carry an instrument

**legit**—legitimate, valid

**mic**—microphone

**shred**—to play the guitar hard and fast with intense skill

**sick**—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

### Questions

Why did Levi not really want to hear what happened during Mass? What was the only thing that mattered to Levi?

What competition were the Bent Rays preparing for? Why did it matter to them?

What were the alter egos that three of the Bent Rays transformed into?

### Reflection

Why did Mateo not have an alter ego? Do you think this is a problem or not? Discuss.

## Chapter 4 Emma

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**sassy**—bold and rude, but in a playful way

### Questions

What were Mateo and Emma doing at school at 7am?

What was the deal that Emma and Mateo had? Why was this deal important to Mateo?

Why did Mateo not normally run into Alma? Why did he quickly stop smiling once Alma left?

### Reflections

What did Mateo say was the reason he wore earbuds? Do you think there were more reasons that he wore the earbuds than he stated? Discuss.

Would you describe Mateo and Emma as friends? Explain.

## Chapter 5 U.S. History

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**cover band**—a band that will perform songs originally written and performed by a different artist or music group

### Questions

Who gave Mateo most of the information about all the drama on the football team?

How did Mateo feel about Blake? Explain why he felt that way.

Why did Mateo respect Ozzie? What rumor did he not believe about Ozzie? Why was Mateo surprised when Ozzie approached him? What good news did Ozzie offer Mateo?

### Reflections

Mateo reflected on the night that he warned Zonta about Carlos's plan to hurt her at the party. But why did Mateo feel badly about that night? Do you think he was right to feel that way? Explain.

When Lilly finally arrived in class, Mateo stated: *The relief on Ms. Williams's face was added proof that Lilly seemed to get away with things that the rest of us didn't.* What did he mean by *get away with things*, and do you agree with Mateo? Discuss.

# Chapter 6 The Gig

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**cover songs**—a song originally written and performed by one artist or music group but is performed by a different artist or music group

**pegged**—named/called/declared/decided on

**to market yourself**—to get one's name/brand/team/group out to the public

## Questions

Mateo had not believed the rumor that Ozzie had tried to take his own life. What happened that made him think that the rumor may have had some truth to it?

Why did Mateo think he had messed up the chance at booking the gig? Why did Ms. Waxman still want to consider the Bent Rays for the wedding gig?

## Reflections

How did Mateo handle stress? Where do you think Mateo went wrong?

Do you agree with Mrs. Waxman that the band really needed to figure out how to market themselves? Explain.



# Chapter 7 Rivers

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**conducting**—in music, it is the leading or directing, when the person who stands in front of the musicians guides them

## Questions

Why did Mateo eat lunch every day with Rivers in the chorus room?

What did Rivers say that caused Mateo to have a hard time eating? Why did this news surprise Mateo?

## Chapter 8 The Deal

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**lead vocalist**—the main singer

**lyrics**—a song's words

**sound board**—a board that takes in the sounds from the instruments and the microphones during a concert, and the individuals who operate it can adjust levels as needed

### Questions

Why did Rivers think that Bent Rays was not ready to compete?

What deal did Rivers and Mateo agree to?

### Reflection

When Rivers and Mateo discuss Mateo's problem with closing his eyes, Rivers stated: *It's like you close your eyes and shut out the world.* But when Mateo reflected on the issue, he stated: *I still needed to work on opening my eyes. When I did open my eyes, it was always to check on something, never because I wanted to connect with my audience. Even at church. But still, that shouldn't be enough to keep us from competing.* Who do you think had a better understanding of why Mateo keeps his eyes closed? Discuss what you think is going on with Mateo's habit of closing his eyes when he sings.

# Chapter 9 Long Shot

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**long shot**—not likely, little chance

**mimicked**—copied

## Questions

What did Mateo admit the earbuds helped him block out?

What did Mateo need from Emma, and why was his request a long shot?

What deal do Mateo and Emma make?

## Reflections

Mateo stated the following about Blake: *Blake always seemed to have a little fear of me, and I planned to keep it that way.* Why do you think Mateo still acted this way towards Blake?

After Emma and Mateo made the deal, Mateo pointed out: “. . . *one day, we’ll run out of deals that need to be made.*” Then Emma responds: “*Are you really worried that we can’t be friends without a trade-off between us?*” Mateo said they were not friends. Why did he keep pushing the friends-idea away?

## Chapter 10 Gavin

### Questions

Who did Mateo run into in the lunchroom? What happened with Alma that surprised Mateo? Why was it such a surprise to him?

What things did Gavin do or say that really bothered Mateo?

### Reflection

Why did Mateo not push it with Gavin? What made him back off and move on? Do you think Mateo overreacted (made a bigger deal out of it) to begin with? Discuss.

# Chapter 11 Dents

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**chew out**—yell at

**sorry**—poor/bad/pitiful

## Questions

What joke did Levi play on Mateo and Omar as they waited in the Bent Rays' van outside of Tang-Lee fabrics?

Why was the joke not funny to either Mateo or Officer Evans?

What did Officer Evans promise he would do to make it up to Mateo and Omar?

## Reflection

Do you think Mateo and Omar had good reason to be upset with Levi for this joke? What do you think Levi was thinking when he planned the joke? Do you think he had any idea what he was doing?

Explain.

# Chapter 12 Tang-Lee Fabrics

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**brocade fabric**—a woven fabric with a pattern that can look metallic or shiny. Often this type of fabric is used for decorative reasons or for costumes.

**plaids**—checkered patterns

**sick**—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

**trench-coat**—a long jacket that almost reaches the ground or floor

**upholstery**—the material used to cover furniture like chairs and couches

## Question

What did Mateo decide to change about the fabric choice for their jackets? Why?

## Reflections

What did Emma's behavior towards Omar when she arrived at the fabric store tell you about Emma?

How do you think Levi and Theo will react when they see the fabric choices Mateo made?

## Chapter 13 Too Far

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**radical**—cool/excellent/extreme in a good way

### Questions

How did Levi and Theo respond differently to the new idea for their rock-band jackets?

What worried Mateo about Levi's response?

### Reflection

Why did Mateo suddenly wonder if he had pushed it too far? Do you think his worry was valid (he had a good reason to feel that way)? Explain.

# Chapter 14 Hancock Burger

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**hip**—in style

**linoleum**—type of flooring made out of natural materials

**retro**—styles related to the past

**vinyl**—a synthetic/artificial material, a type of plastic

## Questions

Where did Mateo work, and why did he love working there?

What did Gavin say that bothered Mateo? How did he handle it?

## Reflections

June Figby, Mateo's boss, told Mateo: *"You'd think things make more sense when you get older. But that's only half the truth. Bottom line is you just stop focusing on what doesn't make sense and move on with life."* How did this statement help Mateo? Do you think there could be some truth to June's statement? Discuss.

Why do you think Lilly was at Hancock Burger?



## Chapter 15 Shift

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**shift**—time working on a job

### Questions

What was Lilly doing at Hancock Burger?

What two things did June tell Lilly she had to do to work for Hancock Burger? Which one of the two things was Mateo worried Lilly would not be able to do? Why?

### Reflection

In chapters 14 and 15, you are introduced to June Figby. What is your first impression of her?

# Chapter 16 Perks

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**bussing**—clearing (bussing tubs are plastic containers used to clear dishes)

**perks**—bonus/things you get because you work somewhere

## Questions

What was one reason Mateo was thankful that he had to help train Lilly?

What did Lilly ask Mateo about the job? What did Mateo tell her?

## Reflection

At the end of the chapter the following takes place. Mateo stated, *“I heard that June offers the extra food to whoever wants to take some, then she’ll take whatever no one wants to a shelter or something. I guess you could take leftover burgers with you. But who wants burgers every night?”*

Then Lilly laughed and answered, *“Are you kidding? Who wouldn’t?”* What was the difference between Mateo and Lilly? What does this tell you about Lilly? Discuss.

## Chapter 17 Just a Joke

### Questions

Levi lets Omar and Mateo know that having the police stop them was just a joke. What was Levi's argument? Why did he think it was okay to do what he did?

Levi's uncle Officer Evans had told Levi that he was blind to race issues. Why was this so hard for Levi to believe?

What did Mateo say that helped Levi understand how he was blind to race issues?

### Reflections

Mateo stated as he spoke to Levi: *"Doing the right thing is calling it the way it is!" I pointed out what was so hard for so many people to understand. "Let's be different, Levi. What's so wrong with different?"* What do you think Mateo was trying to explain? Can you think of examples that support Mateo's point? Are there times when it is not as easy as he makes it sound? Discuss.

At the end of the chapter, Mateo stated: . . . *it took Levi calling them badass Mexican jackets for me to feel like I'd made the right call on fabric. Levi wasn't the only one that needed to check his thinking.*

What did Mateo realize about himself? Explain.

# Chapter 18 Wedding Gig

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**drum kit**—the basic drum set

## Questions

What had Mateo not told his band members about Rivers helping them with the wedding gig? How did Rivers handle the fact that Mateo had not shared his real reason for being there?

What surprised the Bent Rays when more people showed up for the wedding? What was the band worried about? How did Rita Waxman ease their worries?

## Chapter 19 Dance Party

### Questions

How did the wedding guests respond to the Bent Rays during the first half of the dance party?

At half time, what did Rivers share with the band about his own thoughts on how they were doing?

Why was Mateo angry with Rivers? How did Rivers use Mateo's anger to get his point across?

### Reflection

Mateo stated: *I found myself safe in my world. With my eyes closed.* What was Mateo protected from when his eyes were closed? Is this a habit you think he can break? What do you think it will take for him to break this habit? Discuss.

## Chapter 20 Santana

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**mad**—crazy/wild

**sick**—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

**unified**—combined/together

### Questions

What song did a young woman want the band to perform? Why was this exciting for Mateo?

How did the audience respond to the band's performance of the song? What role did this response play in Mateo opening his eyes as he sang?

### Reflection

After Mateo sang with his eyes open, he stated: *Rivers was wrong about one thing. It was not about me sending a message.* What did Mateo believe instead? Do you agree with Mateo? Explain.

# Chapter 21 Just Tired

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**killed it**—did very well

## Questions

What had Rivers told the band after their wedding gig?

Why did Mateo get so upset when Alma handed him a note from her father?

## Reflection

Alma asked Mateo if he was upset with her after he pointed out that it was her own lie to Gavin that made her think he would be at church. Mateo only answered that he was *just tired*. Was Mateo just tired? Was there more to it? Was Mateo's approach to dealing with Alma's world working? Discuss.

## Chapter 22 The Note

### Question

Mateo did not want to read the note and had planned on throwing it away. Why did he read the note after all?

### Reflection

What made Mateo so angry about the note? Did he have a right to be so angry? Explain.



## Chapter 23 Do Something!

### Questions

What did Lilly want Mateo to do? Why did this seem strange to Mateo?

What was it that Mateo finally remembered about Lilly's past? How did Mateo hope to use this to help him with Alma?

### Reflections

Mateo had hope that Lilly would help him with Alma, but suddenly Lilly backed off. Why do you think Lilly did not want to talk about it anymore with Mateo?

Lilly stated: *"I don't get you, Mateo. Why did you help Zonta, who wasn't your friend? Why won't you do the same for someone who is your friend?"* Do you think Lilly had a point? Or was it not that simple? Explain.

## Chapter 24 Aldo Santos-Vera

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

sick—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

### Questions

Why did Mateo try to avoid Aldo Santos-Vera?

What did Mr. Santos-Vera share with Mateo that shocked him?

### Reflections

How did the new information about who was really hitting Alma change Mateo's situation? What did Alma's father want from Mateo? Was the father's request reasonable?

Mateo stated: *I could hear my mother telling me over and over again we help because that is just what we do! But how could I help? Suddenly laying low was no longer enough. But laying low was all I knew how to do.* What was Mateo's challenge? What needs to change for Mateo to be able to help Alma and her father? Discuss.

## Chapter 25 Uncle Pedro

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**tamales**—seasoned ground meat or beans are wrapped in cornmeal dough and then usually wrapped into corn husks and steamed

### Question

What did Mateo learn from his cousin, Angel, about Gavin and college?

### Reflection

What role did Uncle Pedro play in Mateo's family? What mood did he set? How do you think Mateo feels about his uncle?

# Chapter 26 Bus 51

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**dedicated**—loyal, hard working, very focused on something

## Question

What did Uncle Pedro share with Mateo about something that happened on his bus in January?

## Reflections

This chapter reveals how Mateo felt about his uncle. Describe their relationship. Would you consider this a positive relationship? Explain.

At the end of the chapter Mateo stated: *I realized I might have been harder on Blake than I should have been. Not because he lived in public housing, but because I realized maybe I really didn't know him at all. I'd have to think on that one.* What did Mateo mean? Do you agree with him? Explain.

# Chapter 27 Lyrics

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**groove**—style/rhythm that is enjoyed

**on cue**—just at the right time like it was planned that way

**original**—a musical piece that has been written by the performers

## Questions

What did Rivers suggest Bent Rays do at the Battle-of-the-Bands competition? Why?

What were all the original music pieces by Bent Rays missing?

## Reflections

No one on the Bent Rays knew that Mateo wrote lyrics. What does this tell you about Mateo?

What memory of Emma made Mateo say that he would bring his lyrics to share? Do you think Emma had more of an impact on Mateo than he was willing to admit? Explain.

# Chapter 28 Slapped

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**sick**—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

**suspended**—removed from the school for a specific period of time as a form of punishment

## Questions

What noise did Mateo hear coming from the costume closet? Why did Mateo hesitate to step into the closet at first? But why did he finally decide to open the door?

What did Mateo find in the closet? How did Gavin try to explain what Mateo saw?

## Reflections

Although Mateo finally stood up to Gavin, he did not feel like he helped at all. Why did his attempt to help not work? Do you think Alma carried some responsibility (she was to blame too)? Or does her statement *“BUT I CAN’T SAY ANYTHING!”* really show how she was stuck? Discuss.

Mateo struggles with knowing what to do to really help. Do you think there was something else he should have been doing to help? Discuss.

## Chapter 29 Crazy

### Questions

Mateo asked Lilly about how she dealt with her own bad situation. What was Lilly's response?

What did Lilly point out was the difference between her and Alma?

### Reflection

At the end of the chapter, Lilly laughed and told Mateo, *"You have no idea how crazy it is that you asked me for help. Funny! Too funny!"* Why do you think Lilly thought it was so crazy? Explain.

## Chapter 30 Fan

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**spade**—shovel

### Questions

Why did Mateo try to find a quiet spot by himself? What did he still need to figure out?

Mateo ran into Vashon at the small church. Where had the two met before?

Why was Vashon excited to see Mateo?

### Reflection

How did Vashon's excitement impact Mateo? What had changed for Mateo at that moment?



# Chapter 31 Vashon

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**pace**—walk back and forth

## Questions

What did Vashon ask Mateo that caused Mateo to be embarrassed?

Why did Mateo ask Vashon if he would manage Bent Rays' social media?

How did Vashon respond to Mateo's offer?

## Reflection

How does Vashon change the mood in the story? Do you think this change is important? Explain.

## Chapter 32 The Beat

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**hold captive**—to keep a person from being free to make their own choices or live their own life

### Questions

What was the reason Mateo's mother bought him headphones in the first place? How did the reason for using the headphones or earbuds change over time?

Why was Mateo excited at the end of the chapter? What had he finally figured out?

### Reflections

Mateo stated: *How could I live in the two worlds at the same time?* What two worlds was he talking about? Discuss.

Do you think that when Mateo took out his earbuds, it helped him figure out his lyrics? Explain.

## Chapter 33 Ready

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**chord**—a group of musical notes played together at the same time

**mastered**—controlled, knew it very well

**sick**—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

### Question

What did the Bent Rays feel they were ready for? Why?

## Chapter 34 Lunchroom

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**wolf down**—eat quickly like a hungry animal

### Questions

Why did Mateo go to the lunchroom?

What had Vashon managed to do for Bent Rays?

Why was Mateo surprised when Lilly showed up?

### Reflections

Even though Mateo had pushed Emma and others away as friends, Mateo said to Lilly, *“What? I thought we were beginning to be friends?”* He then stated: *I teased, knowing very well that Lilly would be the one person that would not be calling me a friend any time soon.* Why did he make the statement to Lilly? What does this tell you about Mateo and friendships?

Lilly teased Mateo that she didn't want him in her business. But he stated to himself: *I knew Lilly wasn't really teasing.* What did Mateo suspect about Lilly (think was going on)? Do you think he is right? Discuss.

## Chapter 35 The Glance

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**glance**—a quick look

### Question

What did Mateo see in the lunchroom that upset him? Who saw it too?

### Reflections

Once again, Lilly told Mateo he needed to do something, but his response was to begin putting in his earbuds. What did Lilly say when she called Mateo out (point out what he was really doing)? Do you think Lilly was right? Explain.

Lilly finally stated to Mateo: *“The way I see it, if you’re so great with creating music, then you’re just one creative thought away from helping Alma.”* Is this a positive statement? Do you think Mateo has it in him to do as Lilly said? Discuss.

## Chapter 36 Off the Record

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**regardless**—no matter what, in spite of everything

### Questions

Mateo was nervous at first when he ran into Officer Evans at the Tackitts' house. Why?

What did Officer Evans mean when he said they could talk off the record? How did Mateo respond to this suggestion?

What advice did Officer Evens give Mateo on how Alma could be safe?

### Reflection

At the end of the chapter Mateo asked what he could do to stop Gavin. The officer answered: *"So find someone who has nothing to lose. Someone who can't be hurt by Gav—the boy."* Officer Evans smiled. *"Get creative."* What did Officer Evans mean by someone who has nothing to lose? What difference do you think that would make if he could find that person? Who do you think might be that person? Discuss.

## Chapter 37 Nothing to Lose

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**bantered**—teased back and forth

**narrowing focus**—tighter attention, more intense attention and not thinking much about other things

### Question

What did Emma say to Mateo that made him suddenly think that Blake could be a help?

### Reflections

According to Emma, why did Blake have “nothing to lose”? Do you think this made Blake the perfect person to help Mateo? Discuss.

Do you think that getting Blake to help Mateo might be a challenge? Explain.

# Chapter 38 One Condition

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**condition**—demand/rule/thing that must be done

**nudge**—gently push

## Questions

What was the one condition that Blake had if Mateo wanted him to help with the plan?

Why did Mateo think something was wrong with their teacher?

## Reflection

What did Mateo realize that he had in common with Ozzie? How did Mateo think this might help him? Do you think Ozzie will listen to Mateo? Discuss.



## Chapter 39 Upset

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**ticked at**—angry with

### Questions

What did Blake do that made the whole class be quiet? How did the teacher respond?

What did the teacher do that showed the whole class that she was upset with Lilly?

### Reflections

As the drama was taking place in the classroom, Mateo stated: *As sorry as I felt for Blake, it was that brutal honesty that I counted on.* What did he mean by that? What was it about Blake that Mateo suddenly liked and needed?

Although the reason is not stated in this chapter, what reasons do you think the teacher might have for being upset with Lilly? Predict based on your own opinions of Lilly and the life you suspect she lives.

# Chapter 40 Missing

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**droopy**—hanging down

## Question

When Lilly did not show up to class, Mateo did not worry much since he planned on speaking with her at work after school. What made Mateo suddenly need to worry about the fact that Lilly was missing? What could he not do until he helped figure out where she was?

## Reflection

Why do you think Mateo asked Ozzie and Zonta about Vashon? What was suspicious about Vashon's behavior?

## Chapter 41 Lilly's Back

### Question

What did Vashon finally tell Mateo about Lilly?

### Reflection

When Mateo pushed Vashon to answer questions about Lilly, Vashon finally said, *"Look. I've told you where you can find her, but that's all you're getting from me."* What was Vashon not answering? What do you suspect is happening with Lilly? Discuss.

## Chapter 42 Hide Out

### Questions

Where did Mateo find Lilly? Describe what he saw and how he reacted to her, at first.

What did Mateo mean when he called Lilly's backpack her closet? How did Lilly respond?

Why was Lilly's teacher upset with her?

### Reflections

When Mateo found Lilly, he realized she had been crying. Why do you think Lilly had been crying?

Mateo calls Lilly out on her half-truths. Describe two half-truths that Mateo points out. Discuss how they are half-truths and if you think they were harmless or not.

After Mateo called Lilly a puppet master, she argued that she just did not want people in her business. Then Mateo stated: “. . .*whether you like it or not, they may not be in your business, but they are in your life. Decide what matters before you don't have anyone worrying anymore.*” What point was Mateo trying to make? Do you think Mateo was speaking the truth? Discuss.

## Chapter 43 Not Worth It

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**stunned**—shocked/amazed/surprised

### Questions

What was Mateo waiting for as he sat in Rivers' classroom for lunch?

Suddenly Alma showed up. Why was Alma stunned? What had happened?

### Reflection

Why didn't Mateo want Alma to know that he was behind the plan? Do you think it was okay that Alma did find out when Emma and Blake came into the room? Explain.

## Chapter 44 Proof

### Question

How did Ozzie, Blake, Zonta, and Emma get Gavin to break up with Alma?

### Reflections

How did the history and personalities of Ozzie, Zonta, and Blake play a role? Do you think anyone else could have spoken to Gavin this way? What was it about those three that gave them the right to speak like they did?

Do you think Gavin will back off and leave Alma and her family alone? Do you see any possible problems?

# Chapter 45 Goodbye

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**top dog**—person everyone looks up to

## Questions

Why did Alma and her family decide they needed to leave? What part of the plan did Mateo not think through?

How did Gavin and Alma become a couple? Why did this information upset Mateo?

What gift did Alma give Mateo? Why?

## Reflections

Alma's father stated the following to Mateo: *"I wanted to thank you for what you did for Alma. I know you had your friends challenge the boy. You honored my request, and we are forever thankful."* Then Mateo's thoughts were as follows: *I decided not to explain to Alma that Ozzie, Emma, Blake, and Zonta weren't friends doing me a favor. At least I didn't see it that way. They were just willing to do what was right.* What does this tell you about Mateo and his understanding of his relationship with Emma, Blake, Zonta, and Ozzie? Do you think Mateo was right? Discuss.

When Alma told Mateo that Gavin was never her first choice, what was implied (what did she mean without saying the words)? What did Mateo finally face when it came to his own feelings about Alma?

After Alma and her father left, Mateo stated: *I hated that a part of me was relieved, knowing I didn't have to worry about them anymore. I didn't have to worry about Alma, even if a part of me felt a loss.* Why did he still have mixed feelings about the whole situation? Do you think he shouldn't? Explain.



## Chapter 46 Ready

### Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

sick—1. awful 2. awesome/cool

### Reflections

Who were Cora Rising, and why did they make Theo, Omar, and Mateo nervous? Do you think they had reason to be nervous? Explain.

How did Levi inspire the rest of his band members?

What role did Vashon play in making the experience less stressful?

## Chapter 47 Battle of the Bands

### Question

How did Bent Rays do on the first night of the Battle of the Bands? Did they make it to the second round?

### Reflection

What did Mateo finally realize for the first time when he saw Ozzie, Zonta, Blake, and Emma sitting in the audience? Do you think this was an important discovery for Mateo? How do you think it might change Mateo's world? Discuss.

# Chapter 48 Rising Up

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**out of habit**—when someone does something because they are used to doing it

**show and tell**—an activity in the early school years when a child can bring something to school and show it to their classmates and tell them about it

## Reflections

What is the difference between a cover song and an original song? What makes performing an original song more of a challenge?

What did Mateo finally understand about connecting with the audience? What was important?

Mateo dedicated the original song to more than just Alma. Who did he reach out to not only through his speech but through his lyrics? Why do you think the crowd connected? Discuss.

## Chapter 49 Winners

### Reflections

Although Bent Rays did not win anything, Mateo stated: *Still, none of us could really feel down. There was something that had just happened to us as a band that none of us could put words to. We had come in unsure but were leaving with a new understanding of who we wanted to be as a rock band.* What do you think Mateo meant? How was the experience worth it?

How was Mateo's reaction to Emma different?

Why did it matter to Mateo that Zonta said Alma would have liked the song?

# Chapter 50 More

## Vocabulary

Check out how these words are used in context:

**padding the truth**—make something sound better than it really is

**mentor**—person who guides/gives advice

## Question

Who was Greta Dice, and why was she important? How did meeting her change the mood of the Bent Rays?

## Reflections

What reality did Bent Rays need to face? Was this reality good or bad? Explain.

At the end, Mateo stated: *I shifted and, without a thought, reached for the cross in my pocket. I held it between my fingers and felt a calm come over me. Fearless. I smiled to myself. I realized I suddenly had a thing—a thing that was mine. That thing that transformed me into a Mateo that didn't want to be careful or silent anymore. Mateo-the-fearless.* In what ways had Mateo changed and grown? How do you think this change might play out in how Mateo acts in the future? Discuss.