

An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny

by Laura Schroff and Alex Tresniowski



About the Book

It could have ended with a passing glance. He could have been just another panhandler, and she could have been one of many New Yorkers who simply walks on by. Instead, Laura Schroff stopped and bought lunch for eleven-year-old Maurice. From that day, their unique bond evolved into a profound friendship that changed the course of their lives in ways neither could have imagined.

Discussion Guide

1. **An Invisible Thread** introduces readers to some of the realities of poor families living in large metropolitan cities. How would you characterize Maurice's family life? What kind of differences do you think exist between urban and rural poverty?
2. Why do you think Maurice throws Laura's business card away? How does trust influence the early stages of their friendship? What about later in their relationship?
3. Laura's grandfather would say "Il solo tempo lei dovrebbe baciare i sue bambini in quango dormono," or "The only time you should kiss your children is when they are asleep." What kind of role does love and affection play in Maurice's life? What about Laura's?
4. Why is Laura so adamant about obtaining permission from Maurice's mother so he can attend the Mets game?
5. In what ways is privilege evident in **An Invisible Thread**? What types of privilege can you identify? How would you

compare and contrast this privilege in the 1980s with today?

6. Why do you think Laura stayed with Michael, even though he denied her what she wanted more than anything?

7. Laura's family life growing up had a significant impact on her and her siblings, especially in terms of what they wanted for their own families. Based on Laura's descriptions, how would you characterize the lives of the siblings' individual families?

8. Laura writes that, "Sometimes we are drawn to that which is exactly the same" alluding to the impact that familiarity can have on one's comfort, regardless of how bad the conditions may be. How does Laura's life stray from this idea? How does she embrace what is different?

9. How did you interpret Michael's initial rejection of Maurice? What role did this rejection play in Laura's decision to divorce him?

10. The title, **An Invisible Thread** suggests several meanings about the bonds that connect us with others. Describe how these themes are reflected in Maurice's and Laura's lives, as well as in their relationships with other people.

11. Laura later discovers that Maurice was actually twelve when they first met, not eleven, because he wasn't even sure himself how old he was. How does this detail signify the importance of identity in **An Invisible Thread**?

12. Laura was initially careful to maintain boundaries between her and Maurice, ensuring that she was a friend to him and nothing more. At what point do you think their relationship changed from a friendship to something more akin to a mother and a son?

Enhance Your Book Club:

1. Rituals are an important element of **An Invisible Thread**. Take a moment to discuss your favorite ritual with your book club as a child and explain why it was so important to you, even to this day.

2. Pack up your book club for a day and see a baseball game. Reflect on Maurice's feelings of wonderment at his first baseball game. What is your favorite part of a baseball game or of attending a sporting event?

3. Using a smartphone, scan the Microsoft Tag in the back of **An Invisible Thread**, and watch Maurice's toast at Laura's fiftieth birthday dinner. Discuss the highlights and your reaction among your book club.

Author Bio

Laura Schroff is a former advertising executive who has worked with several major media companies, including Time Inc. and Conde Nast. Born and raised on Long Island, Laura was part of the advertising team that made *USA Today* a successful national newspaper. Before helping launch three of the most successful start-ups in Time Inc. history --- *InStyle*, *Teen People*, and *People StyleWatch* --- she was also the New York Division Manager at *People* magazine.

Laura has also been the New York Ad Manager at *Ms.* magazine and Associate Publisher at *Brides*. Laura loves spending time at her condo on Long Island and visiting with her family in New York and Florida. She lives in New York City with her feisty poodle Coco.

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