

# TORREY MALDONADO

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### SECRET SATURDAYS

is a young adult and middle grade novel about:

- making tough choices,
- maintaining friendships and trust and privacy, and
- balancing wanting to do what's right with wanting to be accepted.

Please visit [torreymaldonado.com](http://torreymaldonado.com) for reviews, an excerpt, and more on *Secret Saturdays*.

### FOR DISCUSSION:

**1. In the stadium, Sean pressures Justin to do a dare that Justin feels uncomfortable doing.**

- What is it about the Grey House that makes Sean and Justin want to trespass and go into it?
- Is Sean a good friend for pressuring Justin to do a dare that Justin feels uncomfortable doing? Please explain.
- If you were Justin, how would you have responded to Sean pressuring you to go into the Grey House? Specifically, what are some things you could have said to Sean to get him to stop pressuring you?

**2. Why does Justin want to know where Sean secretly goes?**

**3. Since both Sean and Justin are being raised only by their mothers and both have absent fathers, they have a lot they can talk about. So what might be some reasons both boys never talk about their fathers?**

**4. New Year's Eve and Halloween makes people act in certain ways in Justin's neighborhood.**

- How does Justin feel about his neighborhood on these holidays?
- Why does Justin say, "My mother always was a nervous wreck on Halloween"? Support your answer with details from the book.
- What does Justin's mother do with Justin on Halloween? How do you feel about that?
- If you were a powerful person in government who could do something about Justin's building and neighborhood on these holidays, what would you do?

**5. Justin says that he is one-part Kyle and one-part Sean. Think of two persons your age who you admire. If you could have one quality from each of them, what quality would you pick?**

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### DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

**6. Toward the end of the book, Justin realizes Vanessa knows something about friendship that Justin did not know.**

- What does Justin feel Vanessa knows about friendship?
- What makes a person a fake-friend?
- What makes a person a good friend?

**7. Principal Negrón says a fistfight is just one step on a staircase of violence. What does he feel is one of the first steps that leading up to a fistfight? Do you agree? Explain.**

**8. Sean keeps a secret from Justin.**

- Why does Sean keep his secret from Justin?
- Is Sean making the right choice when he keeps his secret from Justin?
- If you were Sean, what would you have done?
- If you were Justin what would you have done?

**9. To people who do not know him, Sean might be a “bad kid”. To people who do not have to live there, Red Hook might be a “bad neighborhood”.**

- Is Sean a “bad kid”? Why?
- Is Red Hook a “bad neighborhood”? Why?

**10. Justin has to make a big decision at the end of Secret Saturdays. What do you think about his decision?**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Torrey Maldonado is a teacher and author who was born and raised in the Red Hook projects of Brooklyn, New York. He overcame his neighborhood's poverty and violence and went on to earn a BA in Sociology from Vassar College and a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Baruch College. For nearly ten years, he has taught in a Brooklyn public school. Prior to that, he trained teachers and administrators to run conflict resolution programs in schools throughout New York's five boroughs. *Secret Saturdays* is a work of fiction inspired by the author's experiences with youth, city schools, fatherlessness, and poverty.