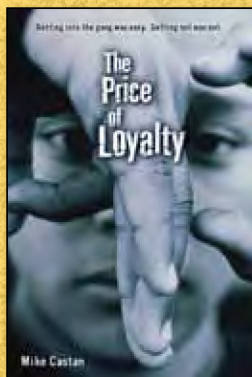


THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

BY Mike Castan



Ages 12 up HC: 978-0-8234-2268-5

“[A] stirring first novel.”

—Booklist

A Latino boy gives in to peer pressure before making a decisive move that cuts him free from gang life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What’s the appeal of joining a gang? Is a gang different from a clique? What about gang life appeals to Manny? What scares him?

How must Manny change, at least outwardly, to continue to be part of the Conquistadors? Is there a point for Manny when he feels he’s gone too far?

On page 11, Manny fears looking weak in front of the Conquistadors when inducting Bartolomeu. What are some other instances when Manny is asked to do something with which he isn’t comfortable? How does he rationalize his actions?

Loyalty is an important theme. Manny is torn because he is loyal to many people. Who are these people? How does Manny show his loyalty to each? Why is he loyal to each? How do these conflicting loyalties affect Manny’s decisions?

Manny calls the Conquistadors a “made-up gang” (p. 14). What makes the gang made up? Does it matter if it is made up?

There are a few characters whom the reader never meets, for example, Vasco, Manny’s abuela’s son. Who are the other characters the reader doesn’t meet? What roles do they have in the story? How do they affect Manny and the choices he makes?

“You are who your friends are, Manny” (p. 46), Henrietta says. Is this true? Can you judge others by the friends they have? Why or why not? Should Manny be held accountable for the actions of the other Conquistadors?

How do Manny’s dealings with Carl change his situation within the Conquistadors? How do they change how he feels about himself?

How is Manny’s new neighbor, Bernard, different from his other friends? What does Manny like about hanging out with him?

Manny’s loyalty to the Conquistadors is given the ultimate test after the fight in the cul-de-sac. Did he do the right thing? Should he have acted sooner? Is there a “price” Manny pays for being loyal to the Conquistadors? Are there benefits to being loyal to the Conquistadors?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Castan has worked with middle-grade students in Southern California, where he lives. *The Price of Loyalty* is his first book.