

Uncharted Trials Book Club Discussion Kit

By Melissa LaShure

Book 2 in the Bounty Brothers Series

Book Overview

Genre: Historical Christian Romance

Setting: 1873-1874, American West (Kansas, Colorado, New York)

Main Characters: James McPherson, Madeline Flynn, and the Bounty Brothers

Synopsis: After fleeing murder charges and pursuing his niece, Thomas Belonge's reign of terror continues. Madeline Flynn, trapped as his victim, must protect her deaf brother Danny while enduring unthinkable abuse. When a mysterious rescue leads her to the Bounty Brothers and safety at the Circle 7 Ranch, she finds healing and hope with James McPherson. But their love story faces devastating challenges when James's past returns to claim him, forcing impossible choices about love, sacrifice, and redemption.

Discussion Questions

Characters & Relationships

1. **James's Character Arc:** How does James change from the beginning to the end of the novel? What role do his past mistakes play in his growth as a person and man of faith?
2. **Madeline's Strength:** Despite her trauma, Madeline demonstrates remarkable resilience. What specific moments showcase her inner strength? How does her faith journey reflect real-world struggles with doubt?
3. **The Brother Bond:** Discuss the relationship between Madeline and Danny. How does their sibling bond compare to the brotherhood among the Bounty Brothers?
4. **Victoria's Transformation:** How do you feel about Victoria's character evolution from antagonist to friend? Was her redemption believable and satisfying?
5. **Found Family:** The Bounty Brothers and their extended circle create a "chosen family." How does this theme resonate throughout the story?

Themes & Issues

6. **Consequences of Sin:** James faces severe consequences for his past actions. How does the novel handle the concept that forgiveness doesn't always eliminate earthly consequences?

7. **Faith Through Trials:** Both Madeline and James struggle with their faith during difficult times. How realistic are their spiritual journeys? What can readers learn from their examples?
8. **Justice vs. Revenge:** The pursuit of "King" raises questions about justice. How do the protagonists balance seeking justice with avoiding revenge?
9. **Sacrifice and Love:** Multiple characters make significant sacrifices for love. Compare the different types of sacrifice shown throughout the story.
10. **Forgiveness:** The novel explores various forms of forgiveness—self-forgiveness, forgiving others, and divine forgiveness. Which instances of forgiveness were most impactful to you?

Historical Context

11. **Deaf Representation:** How does the portrayal of Danny and deaf culture in the 1870s educate readers about historical attitudes and sign language development?
12. **Women's Roles:** How do the female characters navigate the limitations placed on women in the 1870s? Which characters challenge or conform to period expectations?
13. **Western Justice:** The novel depicts both formal law enforcement and vigilante justice. How do these different approaches to justice reflect the historical American West?

Plot & Structure

14. **Multiple Perspectives:** The story follows several viewpoints. Which character's perspective did you find most compelling? How did this narrative choice enhance the story?
15. **Redemption Arcs:** Several characters experience redemption throughout the story. Whose redemption felt most earned? Were there any that felt rushed?
16. **The Villain's Motivation:** "King" is revealed to be Thomas Belonge's son. How does his backstory affect your understanding of his actions? Does explanation equal justification?

Faith Elements

17. **Prayer and Scripture:** How do the characters use prayer and Bible reading to cope with their challenges? What role does community worship play in their healing?
18. **God's Plan:** The characters often reference God working through their trials. How do you interpret the balance between divine providence and human choice in the story?
19. **Christian Community:** How does the faith community support characters through their struggles? What does this suggest about the importance of church and fellowship?

Character Study: James McPherson

Background: Former soldier turned bounty hunter with a reputation as a charmer and reformed rogue.

Key Relationships:

- Madeline Flynn (love interest)
- Victoria Harding (former lover, later wife)
- Benjamin (his son)
- The Bounty Brothers (chosen family)

Character Arc Discussion Points:

- How does his past as a "Lothario" affect his present relationships?
 - What makes his love for Madeline different from his previous relationships?
 - How does becoming a father change him?
 - What does his willingness to sacrifice his happiness for duty reveal about his character?
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Character Study: Madeline Flynn

Background: Former maid who endured months of abuse while protecting her deaf brother.

Key Relationships:

- Danny Flynn (brother)
- James McPherson (love interest)
- Claire Belonge Young (best friend)
- Jesse Burns (protector/friend)

Character Arc Discussion Points:

- How does trauma affect her ability to trust and love?
 - What role does her protective instinct toward Danny play in her choices?
 - How does her faith journey mirror that of real trauma survivors?
 - What makes her strong enough to eventually open her heart again?
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Themes for Deep Discussion

1. Redemption and Second Chances

- Who deserves redemption in this story?
- How do the characters earn their second chances?
- What's the difference between redemption and merely escaping consequences?

2. The Cost of Love

- What sacrifices do characters make for love?
- When is sacrifice noble versus self-destructive?
- How do the characters balance duty and desire?

3. Faith in Dark Times

- How do characters maintain or lose faith during trials?
- What role does community play in spiritual healing?
- How realistic are the faith journeys portrayed?

4. Family - Both Blood and Chosen

- How do the various family structures in the novel compare?
- What makes the Bounty Brothers' bond so strong?
- How do characters create family when blood family fails them?

Historical Discussion Points

Life in the 1870s American West

- How accurately does the novel portray frontier life?
- What challenges did women face in this era?
- How did law enforcement work in frontier territories?

Deaf Culture and Sign Language

- What can we learn about 19th-century attitudes toward deafness?
- How has representation and treatment of deaf individuals evolved?
- What role did Thomas Gallaudet play in deaf education?

Social Class and Morality

- How do the characters navigate different social classes?
- What moral standards applied to men versus women?
- How did religious faith influence daily life and decisions?

Creative Activities

Writing Exercises

1. Write a letter from Victoria to Madeline (beyond what's in the book)
2. Create a diary entry from Danny's perspective during a key scene
3. Write a "what if" scene where James had made different choices

Discussion Starters

1. If you were Madeline, would you have forgiven Victoria? Why or why not?
2. Which Bounty Brother would you want as a friend and why?
3. How would this story be different if set in modern times?

Research Projects

1. Investigate the real Thomas Gallaudet and deaf education history
 2. Research bounty hunters in the American West
 3. Study marriage and divorce laws in the 1870s
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Reflection Questions

Personal Application

1. How do the characters' responses to trials compare to your own experiences?
2. What lessons about forgiveness can you apply to your own life?
3. Which character's faith journey resonates most with you?

Book Series Connections

1. How does this book build on themes from *Unwavering Faith* (Book 1)?
 2. What character developments do you hope to see in future books?
 3. How has your understanding of the Bounty Brothers evolved?
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Author's Faith Elements

Melissa LaShure weaves Christian themes throughout her narrative. Consider discussing:

- How faith informs character decisions
- The role of prayer and Scripture in daily life
- Community worship and fellowship
- Redemption and grace
- God's sovereignty in human suffering
- The importance of Christian community in healing

Recommended Discussion Format

Meeting 1: Characters and Relationships (Questions 1-5) **Meeting 2:** Themes and Faith (Questions 6-10, 17-19)

Meeting 3: Historical Context and Plot (Questions 11-16) **Meeting 4:** Personal Application and Series Connections

Allow 1.5-2 hours per meeting for thorough discussion.

Additional Resources

- **Author's Website:** www.literaryscape.com
 - **Author's Podcast:** LiteraryScape Podcast (historical Christian romance discussions)
 - **Newsletter:** Sign up at www.literaryscape.com/newsletter for updates and free content
 - **Series Information:** Learn more about the Bounty Brothers series and upcoming releases
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This book club kit is designed to facilitate meaningful discussion about faith, love, redemption, and the human experience as portrayed in Uncharted Trials. Feel free to adapt questions and activities to fit your group's interests and time constraints.

UNCHARTED TRIALS

Character BINGO Game

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Print out Player Cards and distribute to participants
2. The host reads from the Calling Cards
3. Players mark off the character name when their card clue is called
4. First player to get 5 in a row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) wins!
5. Use the Answer Key to verify which character matches each clue

PLAYER CARD 1

James	Claire	Tom	Brody	Madeline
Danny	Victoria	George	Benjamin	Gramps
Phillip	Henry	FREE	Jesse Burns	Allie
Walter	David Hendrix	Sawyer Smith	Bethany	Lena
King	Sheriff Dozier	Junior	Lionel	Margaret

PLAYER CARD 2

Madeline	Henry	Brody	Allie	Tom
Benjamin	James	Sheriff Dozier	Gramps	Victoria
Jesse Burns	Lena	FREE	Claire	Walter
Sawyer Smith	King	Bethany	David Hendrix	Phillip
Lionel	Margaret	Junior	Danny	George

PLAYER CARD 3

Bethany	David Hendrix	King	James	Lena
Sheriff Dozier	Claire	Gramps	Madeline	Phillip
Tom	George	FREE	Henry	Benjamin
Brody	Victoria	Sawyer Smith	Walter	Allie
Jesse Burns	Junior	Danny	Lionel	Margaret

CALLING CARDS (For Host)

1. *"I'm a skilled doctor and reformed rogue turned bounty hunter."*

Answer: James McPherson

2. *"I survived months of abuse while protecting my deaf brother."*

Answer: Madeline Flynn

3. *"I'm the leader of the Bounty Brothers and a man of strong faith."*

Answer: Brody Young

4. *"I'm deaf but intelligent beyond my years, and I love candy."*

Answer: Danny Flynn

5. *"I'm a silent, deadly bounty hunter with a mysterious past and a pet wolf."*

Answer: Tom

6. *"I married James out of obligation but found redemption and friendship."*

Answer: Victoria Harding

7. *"I'm a gentle giant bounty hunter with incredible strength."*

Answer: George

8. *"I'm James's son, a good kid who bonds quickly with his new family."*

Answer: Benjamin

9. *"I'm the ranch cook and telegraph operator, a wise grandfather figure."*

Answer: Gramps

10. *"I'm Brody's wife and Madeline's best friend."*

Answer: Claire Belonge Young

11. *"I'm a U.S. Marshal who becomes like a brother to Madeline."*

Answer: Jesse Burns

12. *"I'm a bounty hunter known for my pranks and mischief."*

Answer: Phillip Sharpe

13. *"I'm Phillip's twin brother, a skilled tracker."*

Answer: Henry Sharpe

14. *"I'm a former brothel madam who finds redemption and new beginnings."*

Answer: Allie

15. *"I'm a U.S. Marshal who loves Madeline like a sister."*

Answer: David Hendrix

16. *"I'm a U.S. Marshal and bounty hunter who became like a brother figure."*

Answer: Sawyer Smith

17. *"I'm a bounty brother with a soft-spoken nature and a painful past."*

Answer: Walter

18. *"I'm a mysterious villain hunting Madeline, and I'm Thomas Belonge's son."*

Answer: King

19. *"I'm the local sheriff who works with the Bounty Brothers on cases."*

Answer: Sheriff Dozier

20. *"I'm Brody's adopted son and a six-year-old bundle of energy."*

Answer: Junior Young

21. *"I'm Claire's brother, a reformed man married to Margaret."*

Answer: Lionel Belonge

22. *"I'm a Kansas farm girl turned wealthy woman, expecting a baby."*

Answer: Margaret Belonge

23. *"I'm a pastor's daughter who is sweet, gentle, and catches attention."*

Answer: Bethany Kellinger

24. *"I'm a recovering saloon girl seeking a new start in life."*

Answer: Lena

ANSWER KEY FOR HOST

Quick reference guide for matching clues to characters.

James McPherson *"I'm a skilled doctor and reformed rogue turned bounty hunter."*

Madeline Flynn *"I survived months of abuse while protecting my deaf brother."*

Brody Young *"I'm the leader of the Bounty Brothers and a man of strong faith."*

Danny Flynn *"I'm deaf but intelligent beyond my years, and I love candy."*

Tom *"I'm a silent, deadly bounty hunter with a mysterious past and a pet wolf."*

Victoria Harding *"I married James out of obligation but found redemption and friendship."*

George *"I'm a gentle giant bounty hunter with incredible strength."*

Benjamin *"I'm James's son, a good kid who bonds quickly with his new family."*

Gramps *"I'm the ranch cook and telegraph operator, a wise grandfather figure."*

Claire Belonge Young *"I'm Brody's wife and Madeline's best friend."*

Jesse Burns *"I'm a U.S. Marshal who becomes like a brother to Madeline."*

Phillip Sharpe *"I'm a bounty hunter known for my pranks and mischief."*

Henry Sharpe *"I'm Phillip's twin brother, a skilled tracker."*

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David Hendrix *"I'm a U.S. Marshal who loves Madeline like a sister."*

Sawyer Smith *"I'm a U.S. Marshal and bounty hunter who became like a brother figure."*

Walter *"I'm a bounty brother with a soft-spoken nature and a painful past."*

King *"I'm a mysterious villain hunting Madeline, and I'm Thomas Belonge's son."*

Sheriff Dozier *"I'm the local sheriff who works with the Bounty Brothers on cases."*

Junior Young *"I'm Brody's adopted son and a six-year-old bundle of energy."*

Lionel Belonge *"I'm Claire's brother, a reformed man married to Margaret."*

Margaret Belonge *"I'm a Kansas farm girl turned wealthy woman, expecting a baby."*

Bethany Kellinger *"I'm a pastor's daughter who is sweet, gentle, and catches attention."*

Lena *"I'm a recovering saloon girl seeking a new start in life."*

UNCHARTED TRIALS

Trivia Game

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HOW TO PLAY:

1. Print out the Question Sheet for participants
 2. Players answer questions individually or in teams
 3. Use the Answer Key to score responses
 4. Award points for each correct answer
 5. The player or team with the most points wins!
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TRIVIA QUESTIONS:

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Score: _____ / 50

SECTION 1: CHARACTERS (10 Points)

1. What is Madeline's brother's name?

2. What disability does Danny have?

3. Who is the leader of the Bounty Brothers?

4. What is the name of Tom's pet wolf?

5. Who does James marry first before Madeline?

6. What is the name of James and Victoria's daughter?

7. Who is Jesse Burns's occupation?

8. What is the nickname everyone calls the ranch cook?

9. Who is Claire's best friend?

10. What is the real name of the villain called "King"?

SECTION 2: PLOT EVENTS (10 Points)

11. Where does Madeline first meet James?

12. What crime was Thomas Belonge fleeing when the story begins?

13. How does Victoria die?

14. What happens during James and Madeline's first wedding attempt?

15. Who shoots up the safe house where Madeline is staying?

16. What barn activity leads to James and Madeline's first real kiss?

17. What wedding happens in April 1874?

18. Who is killed by King before the main story events?

19. Where is the safe house located (general area)?

20. What causes the barn fire at the Circle 7 Ranch?

SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIPS (10 Points)

21. Who does Jesse Burns initially have feelings for before Madeline?

22. What is the relationship between King and Thomas Belonge?

23. Who becomes like brothers to Madeline at the safe house?

24. What is Benjamin's relationship to James?

25. Who marries Brian Yorke?

26. What is Lionel's relationship to Claire?

27. Who becomes the godfather to Madeline's baby, Iris?

28. What is Junior's relationship to Brody?

29. Who does George have feelings for?

30. What is Victoria's maiden name?

SECTION 4: LOCATIONS & SETTINGS (5 Points)

31. What is the name of the ranch where most of the story takes place?

32. In what state is the town of Gambel located?

33. Where does the story begin (what city)?

34. What is the name of the town where Lena lives in a boarding house?

35. In what year does the majority of the story take place?

SECTION 5: FAITH & THEMES (5 Points)

36. What Psalm does Madeline make into a sampler for James's cabin?

37. What does Victoria find before she dies?

38. Who helps Madeline restore her faith after she turns away from God?

39. What does the name "Iris" symbolize for Madeline's baby?

40. What Biblical principle does James learn about forgiveness and consequences?

SECTION 6: DETAILS & FUN FACTS (10 Points)

41. What treat does Danny especially love?

42. What color are James's eyes?

43. What does Gramps help the boys learn to do in the woods?

44. What farm animal does Junior's turkey try to fight before dying?

45. What language skill does Tom surprisingly know?

46. What is Madeline especially skilled at making that everyone requests?

47. What is the Bounty Brothers' battle cry from the war?

48. What does Mrs. Wilmot wear that flaps around ridiculously?

49. What is the name of James's horse?

50. What month and year does James and Madeline's successful wedding take place?

BONUS QUESTIONS (5 Extra Points)

B1. What baby formula brand is mentioned as being used for Mary?

B2. Who will be featured in Book 3 of the Bounty Brothers series?

B3. What is the full name of Madeline and James's daughter?

B4. What town has the Tumbleweed Tavern where the Bounty Brothers find Calvin?

B5. What does Victoria leave for Madeline before she dies?

ANSWER KEY

SECTION 1: CHARACTERS (10 Points)

1. Danny (Danny Flynn)
 2. Deaf/Deafness/Cannot hear
 3. Brody (Brody Young)
 4. Ajax
 5. Victoria (Victoria Harding)
 6. Mary (Mary McPherson)
 7. U.S. Marshal
 8. Gramps
 9. Madeline (Madeline Flynn)
 10. Thomas Belonge Jr. (or King is Thomas's son)
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SECTION 2: PLOT EVENTS (10 Points)

11. The L.B. Saloon in Dodge City (or Lionel's saloon)
12. Murder (murder charges)
13. Childbirth/hemorrhaging during childbirth/complications from childbirth
14. Victoria arrives with Benjamin and claims James is the father/wedding is interrupted
15. King's men (or King's hired outlaws/the Coyote Crew members)
16. Brushing/grooming Sass-a-Frass (James's horse)
17. James and Madeline's wedding (accept: Allie and Brian's wedding also happens)
18. Madame Isabelle (and Thomas Belonge)

19. Kansas (near Fairville, Kansas)

20. Arson/King's men set it on fire/deliberately set to flush out Madeline

SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIPS (10 Points)

21. Claire (Claire Belonge Young)

22. King is Thomas's son/Thomas is King's father/King is Thomas's illegitimate son

23. Jesse Burns, David Hendrix, and Sawyer Smith (accept any two or all three)

24. Benjamin is James's son

25. Allie

26. Brother (Lionel is Claire's brother)

27. Jesse Burns

28. Adopted son (Junior is Brody's adopted son)

29. Lena

30. Harding

SECTION 4: LOCATIONS & SETTINGS (5 Points)

31. Circle 7 Ranch

32. Colorado

33. New York (or New York City/traveling from New York)

34. Gambel

35. 1873 (accept 1873-1874)

SECTION 5: FAITH & THEMES (5 Points)

36. Psalm 23

37. Faith in Christ/salvation/Jesus/redemption (accept: friendship with James)

38. Jesse Burns

39. Hope, wisdom, faith, trust, and bravery (accept any 3 of these)

40. That forgiveness doesn't eliminate earthly consequences/we face consequences for our sins even when forgiven

SECTION 6: DETAILS & FUN FACTS (10 Points)

41. Candy/sweets

42. Green (emerald green/moss green)

43. Hunt/hunt turkey/shoot/track animals

44. Junior's turkey doesn't die/fight - it was only knocked out and comes back alive (accept: the turkey wasn't really dead)

45. Sign language

46. Bread/rolls/dinner rolls/mother's rolls

47. Hooah

48. Large feather(s) (in her hat)

49. Sass-a-Frass

50. April 1874

BONUS QUESTIONS (5 Extra Points)

B1. Nestlé (Nestlé baby formula)

B2. Tom and Bethany (Kellinger)

B3. Iris Mauve McPherson

B4. Cattleflats

B5. A letter (asking for forgiveness/apologizing to Madeline)

SCORING GUIDE

50 Points Possible (55 with Bonus)

- **45-50 points:** Bounty Brother Expert! You know this book inside and out!
- **40-44 points:** Circle 7 Ranch Regular - Excellent knowledge of the story!
- **35-39 points:** Faithful Reader - Great job! You paid attention to details!
- **30-34 points:** Good Effort - You know the main story well!
- **25-29 points:** Time for a Re-read - Brush up on those details!
- **Below 25 points:** New to the Ranch - Enjoy reading it again!

TRIVIA GAME VARIATIONS:

Team Play:

- Divide players into teams of 2-4
- Teams work together to answer questions
- Award bonus points for fastest correct answers

Lightning Round:

- Host reads questions aloud
- First person/team to shout correct answer wins the point
- No writing required

Category Challenge:

- Let players choose which section to answer first
- Award double points for the hardest section (Section 5: Faith & Themes)

Book Club Format:

- Read questions aloud during discussion
- Award small prizes for correct answers
- Use questions as discussion starters