

## Praise for **COMPROMISED**

ALA 2011 Best Fiction for Young Adults

“Maya’s narrative of youngster’s who have slipped through the cracks is both heart wrenching and hopeful. An absorbing tale.”  
—**Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)**

“With a sharp ear for dialogue and prose propelled by a searing urgency, the author plumbs the depths of her characters’ souls for horrors and treasures alike. A poignant portrait.”  
—**Kirkus Reviews**

“A gut-wrenching, terrifyingly authentic story and memorably etched, courageous characters. Reminiscent of Adam Rapp’s 33 SNOWFISH, this challenging read will leave readers holding out a faint hope for Maya’s future.”  
— **ALA Booklist**

### About the Author

**HEIDI AYARBE** grew up in Nevada and has lived all over the world. She now makes her home in Colombia with her husband and daughter. She is also the author *Freeze Frame* and *Compulsion*. You can visit her online at [www.heidiayarbe.com](http://www.heidiayarbe.com).

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\* Discussion guide created by Christina Koza, Master Teacher of English, NYC Dept of Education.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE **COMPROMISED**

by Heidi Ayarbe



“A gut-wrenching, terrifyingly authentic story and memorably etched, courageous characters.”

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Maya Sorenson and her dad have been on the run for a long time—from the law, from debt, from any kind of stability. The only thing that's a constant in the chaos is the scientific method that Maya relies on to find a solution to their troubles. So when her dad lands in prison and Maya gets sent to a shelter, Maya does what she knows best- she runs. With the help of Nicole, a girl toughened by the system, and Klondike, a runaway with a troubled past, Maya starts a 400-mile trek in search of a long-lost aunt that may be the key to what she has always longed for: a normal life. Maya discovers there may be no scientific method for surviving in the system or on the streets, on a journey that puts everything she believes in to the test.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) Describe Maya's dad. What kind of person is he? What kind of parent is he? What kind of relationship does he have with Maya?
- 2.) Maya describes science as "enchantment" and "magic" (p. 172). Explain what science means to Maya. Why do you think it is so important to her? How does it affect the way she does and sees things?
- 3.) At one point, Maya wonders if her family "is created by love or necessity or obligation" (p. 50). What is your definition of family? Is there more than one kind of family? How does family shape or influence our lives?
- 4.) After Maya goes after the Triad at the Kids Place shelter, and the others return her clothes, Nicole says, "The clothes are yours. You earned them. Not a lot of kids here have a vertebra, you know." (p. 70). What does she mean? Why is the act of returning the clothes significant? How does this event affect Nicole's perception of Maya?
- 5.) At first, Nicole and Maya seem like unlikely allies. Describe them. How are they similar? How are they different? Would they be friends under different circumstances? Explain.
- 6.) Maya explains Darwin's theory of friendship that "it has to do with self-interest. People are attracted to each other based on what they can get out of each other." (p. 152) Do you agree with this definition of friendship? In what ways is this positive? In what ways is this negative? How does this apply to the three main friendships in the novel? What do we need out of friendships—why are they important?
- 7.) Maya thinks Klondike has Tourette's Syndrome\*, but Klondike has always believed he was a "demon, inside and out." (p. 282). Why does he think this? Describe what his life has been like, and how Tourette's Syndrome has affected his life.

8.) Maya says "Just because people have been bad to us doesn't mean we have to do the same." (p. 220) Do you agree? Consider everything the three main characters have been through, in their lives and on this journey. If you were one of them, would you think the way Maya does? How would you see the world?

9.) The three main characters in this book each have a "code" or set of "rules" they live by: Maya has the scientific method, Nicole has the mafia code, and Klondike has his religious faith. What do each of them need from these ideas? Why are they so important to them? Do you have a code? What rules or ideas do you live by?

10.) Nicole says, "Not everything in this . . . world is about black and white, right and wrong, Jeopardy . . . It's about loyalty, okay?" (p. 236) Why is loyalty so important to Nicole? How important is loyalty in your life?

11.) Maya says that people have "a total lack of interest in anything not directly related to them. Think about it. AIDS, hunger, global warming, genocide—this happens daily. And we don't care. Apathy is the disease of the developed world. The more bad stuff happens, the less people care." (p. 260) Do you agree with Maya? Why do you think she feels this way? Is she right to think this? How do you feel about these issues? What issues are important to you, and why?

12.) Jan is the one person the group encounters who offers any assistance. Characterize Jan. What makes her different? Why do you think she helps Maya, Nicole, and Klondike?

13.) Klondike's death is a tragedy that both Nicole and Maya feel in some way responsible for. Is it fair for them to blame themselves or each other? Who or what is responsible for Klondike's death?

14.) The title of the novel is COMPROMISED. What compromises do each of the characters make throughout the book? Which ones do they choose not to? What does it mean to compromise a scientific experiment? Why do you think the author chose this title?

15.) At the end of the novel, Maya gives the flower Aunt Sarah sent her mom, to Nicole. Why does she do this? What might this flower represent to Maya? What might it represent to Nicole?

16.) Maya quotes Einstein as saying, "There are two ways to live your life—one is as though nothing is a miracle, the other is as though everything is a miracle." (p. 441) Why do you think she says this to Nicole in the hospital? How does Nicole respond? What is Maya trying to say about how people should live their lives?

\*Tourette's Syndrome, a neurological disorder which becomes evident in early childhood, and is defined by motor and vocal tics- sudden and repetitive movements and sounds/words, over which a person has little or no control. SOURCE: The National Tourette Syndrome Association, <http://www.tsa-usa.org>