**Boy Toy**

**Discussion Questions**

1. **When we first meet Toya, she has just arrived at her seventh foster home in five years. What kinds of adjustments has she had to make in her life in having to move from house to house to house over those five years? How has it affected her?**
2. **One of the first things Miss Angie did after Toya moved into her home was demand that Toya hand over her stash of condoms and inform her that it was a celibate household, despite the fact the previous foster mothers immediately put her on the pill. Was it unrealistic for Miss Angie to expect Toya to be celibate given her background? Why do you think Toya decided to give Miss Angie all of her condoms, instead of holding back a few as she originally intended?**
3. **On the day that Toya came down to Sassy’s, to get her hair done for the first time, Miss Angie made a point talking about sexual abuse and asking the other clients to raise their hands if they had been sexually abused or knew someone who had been abused. Was she out of line to do that in front of Toya? What impact do you think it had on Toya?**
4. **After meeting Toya for the first time, one of Angie’s clients warned her that Toya could be a bad influence on Angie’s 13 year old daughter, Chelsea. How would you describe the relationship between Toya and Chelsea? What kind of influence was Toya on Chelsea?**
5. **We know that Toya was attracted to Terry from the moment she first laid eyes on him. Yet when she had to chance to hang out with him for the first time and braid his hair, she ended “stabbing him in the head with a comb?” What did Terry do to upset Toya that day? In spite of that rough beginning, why do you think Toya and Terry became friends so quickly?**
6. **When Toya called Terry for the first time, she encountered his mother—who was not pleased that Toya had called her son so late at night. Before hanging up on Toya, she told Toya “…you are not a decent girl.” Those words seemed to haunt Toya throughout the book. Why do you think those words stuck with Toya for so long, even though others had said far worse things to her?**
7. **The trip to the beach before school started revealed some fundamental differences between Toya and Chelsea. What differences did you learn about Toya and Chelsea from that day at the beach? Why was a simple act of running into the ocean with Chelsea such a moving experience for Toya?**
8. **Miss Angie advised Toya that she should view her start at a brand new school as a clean slate. Did Toya take that advice? Why do you think Toya seemed to adjust so well to her new school in the beginning?**
9. Toya’s clean slate at her new school did not last long. Why do you think Jenelle seemed to dislike Toya so much? Was the fight between Toya and Jenelle only about the fact that she embarrassed Toya with that video? What else could have been fueling Toya’s rage during her fight with Jenelle?
10. What was it about the Toya’s fight with Jenelle and the video that had upset Miss Angie so much? In what way did Miss Angie see a part of herself in Toya? What significance did the African violet plant have for Miss Angie?
11. **Toya had the perfect opportunity to get revenge against Jenelle by stealing her boyfriend. At the last moment, however, she couldn’t go through with it. Why not? What affect would it have had if Toya had actually gone through with her plan to get revenge on Jenelle?**
12. **Why do you think Toya agreed to see her mother after she had been out of her life for so long? How did running help Toya get through the stress she was feeling in the days leading up to her visit with her mother?**
13. **Why do you think Tamika had stopped visiting Toya and had stayed away so long? What made her want to start visiting with Toya again?**
14. **Through the photo albums that Tamika gives to Toya, we get a glimpse of Toya’s family and what her life had been like before foster care. How would you describe Toya’s natural family?**
15. **Before she had ever met Miss Angie, Tamika seemed to feel a great deal of hostility toward her. How would describe Tamika’s feelings about the woman who was now caring for her daughter?**
16. **What motivated Mr. Rick to approach Toya that day as she walked home from school? Why do you think Toya decided not to tell anyone about her encounter with Mr. Rick?**
17. **How did Tamika’s big news about her pregnancy affect Toya? How did the news of a new baby brother or sister impact her decisions from that point on?**
18. **Toya never seemed to be a shy person at any point in this story, so why do you think chose to go through the pretense of the “mystery date” with Terry instead of just telling him she wanted to go out with him? Why did Emily’s suggestion that Terry might not be excited about the thought of Toya as his mystery date cause her to freak out?**
19. **In one week, Toya her friendships with Emily, Terry and Chelsea. Which one do you think had the greatest impact on her?**
20. **Why didn’t Toya just run away when Mr. Rick approached her again in the school parking lot? What do you think would have happened if Terry had not intervened? Why was she so mean to Terry, despite the fact that he had rescued her?**
21. **Why do think Toya chose to run away instead of just telling someone that Mr. Rick was stalking her? What do you think it was about her conversation with Mother Pearl that caused Toya to abandon her plans to run away?**
22. **What value did Tamika place on Toya’s first gift of the DVD as compared to the later gift of expensive leather “hooker boots?” In spite of all that her mother had put her through, why did Toya go through such great lengths to get her the perfect Christmas present?**
23. **What do you think motivated Toya to join the track team? How did running make her feel? What other benefits did being a part of the track team add to her life?**
24. **As Miss Angie prepared to go out on her first date with the “Bug Man,” what advice did Miss Angie give to Toya and Chelsea about dating? Did Toya follow that advice? Why or why not?**
25. **Toya’s terrible date with Brandon revealed many things to Toya. What did she learn about her relationship with Miss Angie? What else did she learn about herself through this experience?**
26. **Toya finally revealed the truth to Miss Angie about being stalked by Mr. Rick. In what way was the response different this time than years earlier when Toya first told the truth about Mr. Rick? How was the response the same?**
27. **During the trial, Mr. Rick’s defense attorney asked Toya, “How badly do you to move back with your mother?” Why do you think Toya decided that she really didn’t want to live with her mother after all?**
28. **Toya had just experienced a great victory in the courtroom, celebrated with a fabulous dinner and experienced the excitement of seeing Miss Angie and Mr. Kevin finally becoming a couple, but that night all she could do was think about her mother. Why was she so worried about her mother? What did the decision to start calling Miss Angie now Mom-Angie say about her feelings about her mother?**
29. **What was it that kept Toya and Terry from admitting their feelings for each other? Now that Terry had admitted his feelings for Toya, why did he insist on waiting to kiss her?**
30. **By her 17th birthday party, how had Toya’s world changed since the day she first arrived at her Mom-Angie’s home? How was she still the same?**
31. **Everything was perfect for Toya’s first official date with Terry, so why was she so unhappy? Why did Terry’s gift make her feel worse instead of better? What was it about her conversation with her Mom-Angie that calmed her down?**
32. **After reading the letter from Granny Jean, do you think it’s possible for Toya to have a relationship with her new little brother? With her mother?**