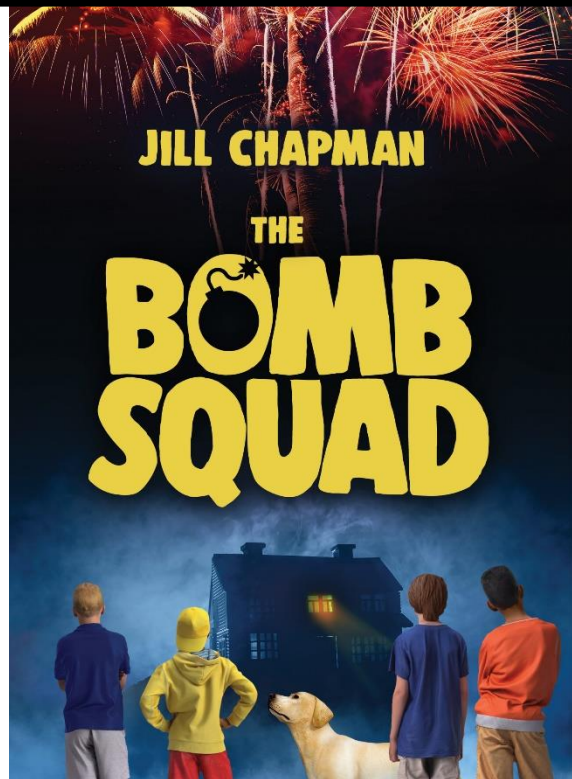


Discussion Guide

The Bomb Squad



Jill Chapman

The Bomb Squad

The Bomb Squad tells the story of four friends destined for adventure. Their escapades take them around their neighborhood and town. While solving a mystery, they also learn important lessons about loyalty, friendship, community, and family ties. Each friend brings something to the unique group.

This guide briefly summarizes each chapter and then dives into a *"Let's Talk It Out"* section. It's essential to allow children to discuss what happens. The boys make some big mistakes but let the children come up with the problem and then hopefully how they would solve it or avoid it in their own lives.

Adults who lead the discussion should read each chapter ahead of time. The synopsis is only a brief reminder, not a comprehensive guide.

Chapter 1

The story begins when Bryan sets off the community's Fourth of July fireworks. It was an accident, but his family and community are angry. His three friends, Josh, Shorty, and Tim, stick by him even though they didn't do it. Bryan is genuinely repentant, but he worries the neighbors won't forgive him.

Not all accidents can be prevented because they are random, like a shoelace breaking causing you to stumble. Some accidents are preventable if safety precautions are followed.

Bryan accidentally causes something to happen that puts other people in danger. It was an accident, yet he has to take responsibility for his actions. Bryan isn't alone in this. Many times in our lives, we'll have to accept the consequences for what we've done.

Let's Talk It Out

Was Bryan's accident random or preventable?

Fireworks can be fun, but they can also be dangerous. Many activities we do for fun require us to follow some safety rules. Can you think of other exciting and fun things, but rules must be followed to be safe fun? (Boating, skateboarding, bike riding, cooking, hiking)

We protect ourselves and others while still having fun by following safety precautions.

After the fireworks are finished, Josh, Shorty, and Tim stick by Bryan. They could've run away, leaving Bryan to face the consequences alone. Loyalty to friends means you stick by them when they need you. They chose to take punishment along with Bryan.

Why do you think they did that? They chose honesty also. All of them told the truth even though they could've said they didn't do it.

Does God expect honesty from us?

Chapter 2

The Bomb Squad has to apologize for setting off the fireworks to the whole community. They ruined an important neighborhood event. Not only that, they destroyed the holiday for themselves also. They're required to come up with an apology to the neighborhood. The boys are sorry but uncertain how to say it and make it up to the neighborhood. They also have to face punishment from their parents.

Let's Talk It Out

Have you ever had to apologize for something you did? Was it fun? Were you embarrassed?

Do you think it's fair for people to expect apologies if you didn't mean to do it?

Has anyone ever needed to apologize to you but wouldn't do it? How does it make you feel when they aren't sorry?

There is a handout with SORRY in the back of the guide. This is a great pattern to follow and shows the way through a complete apology.

How to make a proper apology. Use SORRY:

Say what you did wrong.

Own it. You did it, so own up to it.

Resist the urge to make excuses.

Replay what you did.

You will make it up to them.

Example:

S-I didn't take the trash out as you asked.

O-I should've done it this morning.

R-(Don't give an excuse here!)

R-Now the trash is stacked up until next week's trash day.

Y-I'm sorry and will make sure I take it out on time every week from now on.

Chapter 3

Bryan and his friends are curious about Bryan's new neighbor. This is a normal reaction to a new person. While we're supposed to be curious, we should also be friendly and build relationships with them. The Squad decides to do some snooping to see what the new neighbor is like. So, they plan to look in a window at night to see what he is doing. Not the best way to make friends. They also have a disagreement among themselves.

Let's Talk It Out

Being curious isn't bad, but is there a way the Squad could've found out about the new neighbor without looking in his windows at night?

When they have a disagreement with Tim, do they kick him out of the group or tell him he is no longer part of the Bomb Squad? Have you been friends with someone who wouldn't let you disagree with them without causing you to wonder if they would still be your friend?

Can we have disagreements and still be friends? What would be a reason to stop being friends?

Chapter 4

After dark, the Bomb Squad goes into Mr. B's yard to look in his windows to see what he does in his house. Bryan doesn't want his mother to find out. On the way there, Tim decides he can't go through with it and leaves the rest of the boys to go on without him. When Tim returns, it surprises everyone. Bryan and Shorty panic and Josh thinks they deserted him. Tim gets angry because the boys run from him.

Let's Talk It Out

Were Bryan and his friends trespassing or visiting?

Did they break anything or hurt any part of the property? Was it wrong for them to go there?

The friendship goes through some rough times because of the confusion. Could all of the chaos have been avoided? How?

Chapter 5

Bryan meets Mr. B face to face and finds out he is a poor man who needs help. Bryan's parents go out of their way to show him compassion by giving him things. They end up giving him stuff they still use. Bryan sees his parents do this and is confused. Bryan's dad tells him the way to get to know people is to be a friend to them and not sneak around and peek in windows at night. Bryan is grounded, and he does understand why. He accepts his grounding and doesn't argue with his dad.

Let's Talk It Out

Bryan is afraid to meet Mr. B at the beginning of the chapter. Why do you think he didn't want to meet him face to face?

What were some things Bryan's parents did to make Mr. B feel comfortable?

What did Bryan's parents do for Mr. B without telling him?

Is there a difference between being curious and being nosy?

Chapter 6

Bryan has to babysit for his younger sister in this chapter. He wanted to hang out with his friends instead. Later, after Tim's suggestion, the boys decide to ask Mr. B if he needs any work done around his house. Then they can snoop around and make their parents proud simultaneously.

Let's Talk It Out

Being a part of a family means there are times you look out for each other. Responsibilities are part of pulling together as a family unit. We won't always enjoy those responsibilities, but we should do them without much fuss.

If you have a brother or sister, chances are they've taken care of you, or you've taken care of them at one time or another.

Helping out a neighbor is part of being in a community. The boys help Mr. B out to snoop but also, if they didn't find anything, they would be doing a good deed. Do you think they made a good decision? Why or why not?

Chapter 7

Bryan tells his mom they will help Mr. B out, and she tells him how proud she is of him. The Squad goes to help Mr. B and does a lot of work for him in his yard.

They could've done an average job, but they work hard, and Mr. B shows his appreciation in the only way he is able. He brings them water in the glasses from Bryan's house, and Bryan feels a bit guilty because they plan to snoop around.

Let's Talk It Out

Have you ever helped a neighbor or someone else out? Did you do it to earn money, or was it to help out without compensation?

Tim's plan was to make his mom and other adults proud. Do you think the Bomb Squad did an excellent job and made their parents proud with all the work they put into Mr. B's yard? Caregivers should always know your plans so they can help protect you and keep track of where you are and what you're doing. This may seem annoying, but it's part of being responsible and considerate of others.

What do you think "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." means? Have you ever heard this before?

Chapter 8

The Squad goes to the Lookout to see what each of them discovered at Mr. B's house, if anything. Bryan feels like he found a clue, but Tim seems to have found a bigger one. The boys have discovered the Lookout is in plain view of an upstairs window from Mr. B's house. When

Bryan's mom calls to them; they're all startled. When Bryan sees movement in the upstairs window after the guys leave, he feels uneasy about the neighborhood's safety.

Let's Talk It Out

Do you ever feel like a caregiver or Mom or Dad knows what you're doing even when you haven't told them?

At this point in the mystery, do you think Mr. B is a bad guy? Do you think Tim found a vital clue?

Chapter 9

Bryan, Tim, and Josh visit Bryan's previous neighbor, but he notices mom is cleaning out more before he leaves. Before meeting Tim and Josh, he puts some of the stuff under his bed. While at Lumber Jack's store, Bryan sees his mom talking to a man outside an apartment building. This makes Bryan nervous to see his mom with another man. The visit to the Lumber Jack doesn't answer any of Bryan's questions and gives him more because of his mom.

He makes a list to try and get things straight in his mind. When he wakes up, someone is downstairs that his family seems happy to see. His grandpa with someone Bryan doesn't know.

Let's Talk It Out

We've got to be careful to not jump to conclusions when we see something we can't explain.

Have you ever thought something about someone and then found out later it wasn't true?

Bryan makes a list of things on his mind to try and make sense of things he thinks he knows.

When you get concerned about something, it's a good idea to make a list. Have you ever done that?

Chapter 10

Bryan's grandpa comes, which is exciting news until Bryan meets his new girlfriend. Trish will be his new grandma in a short time, and Bryan isn't sure he's ready to welcome her into the family yet.

Later that day, Bryan sees some men sneak into Mr. B's house. Before the gang can decide what to do, Mr. B comes home, and the Squad has to warn him before he goes in and surprises the

men that broke in. When they warn Mr. B and see the intruders' mess, the Squad is surprised that Mr. B doesn't call the police.

Let's Talk It Out

The Squad decides to not tell yet about the neighbor. When is a good time to tell adults about things going on?

Families change through lots of different experiences. Have you ever had to accept someone new into your family? What can we do to make things go more smoothly when someone joins our family?

Chapter 11

When a fire starts at the park close to Bryan's house, the boys are shocked that their neighbors think they're the ones who created it. They may be mischievous, but they would never dream of doing something like that. Bryan realizes that even a child can get a bad reputation. It also makes him realize that the Squad might be jumping to conclusions about Mr. B.

Let's Talk It Out

The Squad is falsely accused of setting the fire. Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? Did the person who accused you have reason to believe you did it? Have you been a problem to them before?

Things aren't always what they seem. Have you felt someone was a nuisance or harmful before?

Did you get to know them, and it changed your mind? Would you be willing to give someone a second chance so you could get to know them?

Chapter 12

The Bomb Squad decides to do twenty-four-hour surveillance on Mr. B. They set up a schedule, with each of them taking a turn. They keep a notebook with what they observe. They don't learn much about Mr. B at first, but they learn that Shorty will eat all the snacks. Eventually, they know the packages are left on Mr. B's front porch aren't in the regular mail. They also learn Mr. B is the owner of a big company.

Let's Talk It Out

This chapter is all about teamwork. The Squad has to work together to accomplish the task of watching Mr. B. Tell a time you worked together with others to complete a task.

Are you a friend others can count on?

Shorty was a loyal friend, but he ate all the snacks. Do our friends make us mad sometimes?

Bryan was angry, but Josh knew that Shorty had a weakness for snacks. They both forgave Shorty. Have you ever had to forgive a friend?

Chapter 13

Bryan and the Squad are discovered in their snooping. Once again, they're in trouble. While Bryan walks Max around the burned-out gazebo, Max digs around and finds an old key. Later Bryan and Max are at the basketball court to watch Josh and Shorty play ball with some older boys. The guys lose to the older boys, and Shorty has to practice good sportsmanship.

After the walk in the park, Bryan's mom talks to him about the stuff he hid under his bed when she was cleaning out. She also tells him the key he found looks like it would open a lockbox.

Bryan and Josh can go help Mr. B in his house. They discover the key does open the lockbox Tim had found earlier. Tim and Shorty are upset the other two found a clue, but now Tim is confident Mr. B is a robber.

Let's Talk It Out

Do you have any pets? What does it take to keep them healthy and happy?

Shorty has to learn to be a good sport? What does it mean to be a good sport and show good sportsmanship?

Sometimes parents do things that make us sad or upset. It helps if we can talk it over with them.

Have you ever talked things over with your parents when you were upset?

Chapter 14

Bryan's family has a big wedding for his grandpa and Trish. She's now Bryan's new grandma, and he decides she'll make a nice one. After the wedding, Bryan goes home to Mr. B and some men fighting in Mr. B's backyard. The Squad knows things are serious now and must call for help. They also want to help Mr. B, so they devise a plan to save him.

Tim is supposed to call for help while the rest of the Squad creates a distraction to help Mr. B.

The fireworks light up the night sky and distract the men inside for a short time. Then Bryan is captured.

Let's Talk It Out

Talk about a wedding you've attended. Why are weddings an important part of our lives? Did you have fun, or were you bored at first?

Have you ever had to call for help? Big or small? How do you know you need to call for help?

Chapter 15

Bryan, Josh, Tim, and Shorty all pull together to help Mr. B in the end. Each person shows bravery to help each other and Mr. B. When Bryan realizes he is actually in danger, the thought of his friends brings him courage. Even Max shows his true colors in the end by helping to save the boys.

Knowing when to ask for help is vital in the end. The boys were in real danger and needed to call for help.

Bryan finds out, in the end, Mr. Crandle wasn't a bad person.

Let's Talk It Out

In the last chapter, Bryan comes face to face with evil men. Can we tell a lousy person by looking at them?

When we're in trouble, it's essential to know when to find a trusted adult. Name someone you trust.

Describe how each person showed courage in this chapter?

Courage can be big things like saving someone from a bad person. Still, it can also be other things, like standing up to a bully or talking to a trusted adult about something bothering you.

Tell about someone you know who is courageous. Maybe it was you!

SORRY

How to make a proper apology. Only saying sorry and not changing your behavior isn't a true apology. We must take responsibility for why we need to apologize.

Use SORRY to help you recognize why you need to apologize and how to do it.

Say what you did wrong.

Own it. You did it, so own up to it.

Resist the urge to make excuses.

Replay what you did.

You will make it up to them.

Example:

S-I didn't take the trash out like you asked.

O-I should've done it this morning.

R-(Don't give an excuse here!)

R-Now the trash is stacked up until next week's trash day.

Y-I'm sorry and will make sure I take it out on time every week from now on.

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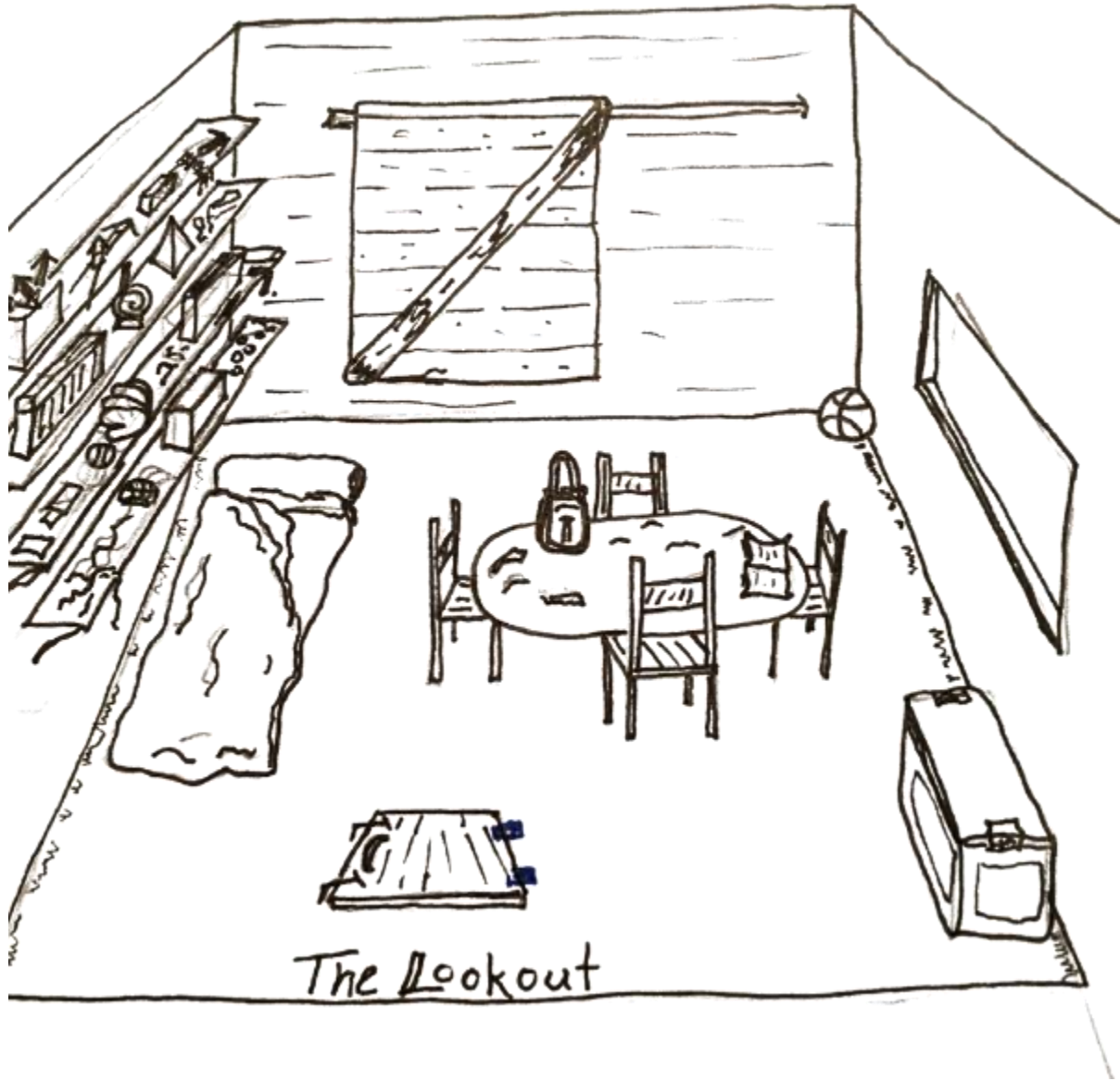
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The Lookout

Drawn by Bryan Bouwer



Draw your own Lookout. What would you put in your special hideout? Who would you let come in? Would you have snacks or drinks? Do you think you'd ever sleep overnight in your there?