

WE BEAT THE STREET: HOW A FRIENDSHIP PACT LED TO SUCCESS

DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE THREE DOCTORS

Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt grew up in Newark, New Jersey, and graduated from Seton Hall University. Davis and Hunt received their medical degrees from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, while Jenkins earned his dentistry degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Today, Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt—who call themselves The Three Doctors—work in New Jersey area hospitals.

In addition to working in their respective hospitals, they run The Three Doctors Foundation—creating opportunities for inner city communities through education, mentoring, and health awareness. Their adult book, *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream*, reached the top of the bestseller lists and led to honors from *Essence*, Oprah Winfrey, and many others. Speaking to parents and teachers throughout the country, these

charismatic men received numerous requests for a book that would make their story accessible to children at risk of falling victim to “the street,” which led to the writing of *We Beat the Street*.

ABOUT THE THREE DOCTORS FOUNDATION

In hopes of making the path they followed easier and more accessible to children growing up in “inner cities,” Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt started The Three Doctors Foundation in March 2000. The mission of The Three Doctors Foundation is to inspire and create opportunities for inner city communities through education, mentoring and health awareness. But perhaps the most important of the foundation’s goals is mentoring. The foundation aims to serve as a positive model for inner city youth and families across the nation. Drawing from their own personal experiences, the doctors want to encourage community development, volunteerism, and leadership.

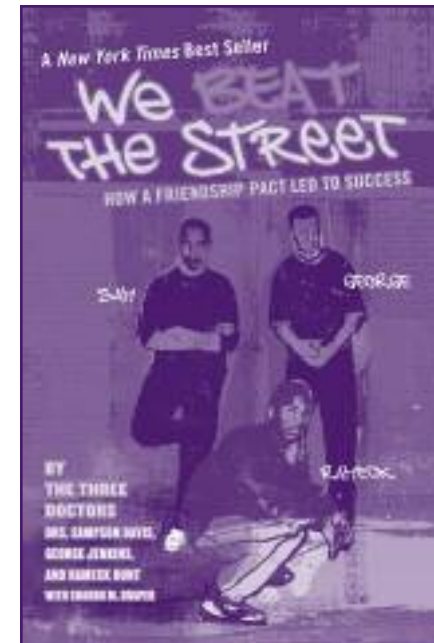
To inspire the youth to get involved in their community, the foundation sponsors a Positive Peer Pressure Challenge, which allows kids ages 10–18 to team up and promote positive behavior and activities in their communities. This challenge is designed to reward children for their positive achievements.

For more information about The Three Doctors and their foundation visit www.threedoctors.com.

The foundation is based in Newark, NJ but coordinates outreach for communities within and beyond New Jersey.

This guide was written in conjunction with the author, Sharon M. Draper. Sharon Draper is an award-winning author and professional educator. She has been honored as a National Teacher of the Year, is a three-time winner of the Coretta Scott King Book Award, and is a *New York Times* bestselling author.

For more information about Sharon M. Draper, visit her website at www.sharondraper.com.



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Children today, especially teens, are faced with many challenges. It is up to us as teachers, librarians, guardians, and mentors to help them succeed in achieving their goals. *We Beat the Street*, an inspirational story of how three young men managed to overcome obstacles—many of which stemmed from peer pressure—and become successful will resonate with many young readers.

This guide includes discussion questions and projects that are appropriate for classroom discussions and book clubs. It is intended to provoke thought and provide insight into the themes of this novel, which include peer pressure, friendship, developing personal aspirations, family, role models, dealing with the consequences of your actions, and leadership. The guide is intended for children in grades 5 and up.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt grew up on the inner city streets of Newark, New Jersey, in a neighborhood where drugs, gangs, and survival overshadowed the importance of academic success. But together these three young men developed a bond that proved stronger. Together, they were able to achieve their goals of becoming doctors.

In this dramatic and inspirational story of three young men beating the odds, Coretta Scott King Award-winning young-adult author and teacher Sharon Draper brings the doctors’ childhood, teenage, and young-adult anecdotes vividly to life. Honest personal remarks from the doctors at the end of each chapter provide context and advice.

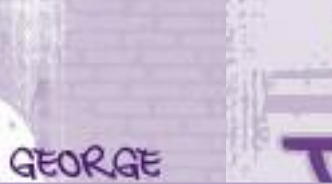
PRAISE FOR *WE BEAT THE STREET*

“All readers will be riveted by the profoundly inspirational stories”—*Booklist*

“An epiphanic story The writing . . . is simple and accessible and there is plenty of action for reluctant readers.”—*School Library Journal*

“Readers searching for role models [will] find much to cheer and emulate here.”—*Publishers Weekly*

New York Times Bestseller • VOYA Nonfiction Honor List



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this story of three New Jersey inner city youths, we see the negative and positive influences of peer pressure. Cite some examples from the story. How did the characters in the story react to these situations? Have you ever felt peer pressure? How did you react? Why? After reading this book, has your outlook on peer pressure changed? Explain your answer.
2. What were the turning points for each of the young men that led them to enroll in the Seton Hall University pre-med program?
3. Supportive family and friends are very important in the development of our lives. They can help shape our personalities and goals in life. How did the following people influence the lives of Sampson, Rameck, and George? Use examples from the story.
 - a. Carla Dickson (student development specialist at Seton Hall University)
 - b. Ma (Rameck's grandmother)
 - c. Reggie (Sampson's martial arts instructor)
 - d. Miss Johnson (George's third grade teacher)
 - e. Jack (owner of the local neighborhood store)
4. The three doctors grew up on the inner city streets of Newark, New Jersey. a) How does this environment (the school, the neighborhood, etc.) affect the actions and development of each of the doctors? b) Discuss with your students what constitutes an "inner city." Draw parallels between the inner city setting in which the doctors grew up and that of your students. Explain how obstacles and peer pressure can appear in all kinds of neighborhoods.
5. Discuss some of the mistakes that the young men made throughout the story (i.e., Rameck and Sampson ending up in prison). How do those experiences change them for the better? What lesson does each one learn from his mistakes? What can you learn from their mistakes?
6. How are the experiences that the three young men faced during their teenage years similar to those faced by teens today? How are they different? What extra challenges did they face as teenagers?
7. Analyze each of the three young men. Make a list of some of their strengths and weaknesses, as mentioned in the story. Discuss how each of these traits eventually helped to lead each of the young men down his current path. Have your group create their own list of strengths and weaknesses. Then have each person in the group talk about one of their own strengths or weaknesses. Discuss how each of these traits can be an asset or a hindrance to their future goals.
8. What personal characteristics and behaviors are important for achieving one's goals as depicted in the story? How would you assess your own academic efforts?
9. "It's amazing how much of a positive effect one teacher can have on the life of a student." —Dr. George Jenkins. Give an example from the story that shows the impact of influential teachers. Have your group think of a person that has inspired them; it can be a teacher, a parent, or even a mentor. Students should be allowed to voluntarily share their response with the rest of the class.
10. What is the attitude of the three young men concerning learning, studying, and acquiring knowledge? How did they deal with friends who looked down on them or made fun of them for excelling in school or for dreaming of going to college?

11. The "drug scenes" are important parts in the unfolding of the story. Why do you think these are included? Investigate the problem of drugs in school communities and neighborhoods. What steps can be taken by various agencies to help eliminate this problem? How can friends help other friends who seem to be enticed by drugs?
12. Young people who have no social outlets, no place to go for fun or to play sports often tend to get into trouble as Sampson and Rameck did. What can be done to solve this problem?
13. Determination and perseverance are key ingredients in each of the young men's success. Have each student in your class pair up with a partner and research a person in history who has had to overcome great obstacles to succeed. What was their motivation? How can their story help to inspire others? Each pair should then report their findings to the entire class.
14. Why do the doctors feel that forming a pact is so important? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer. If you were to form a pact, what characteristics would you yourself look for in others? What positive traits would you bring to the pact?
15. What makes a friendship? How can friends be both an asset and a liability? How does one keep the positive friends and stay away from the negative ones?
16. In Swahili, Ujima means 'collective work and responsibility to the community,' and is known as one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. According to the book, what significance does Ujima have in the doctors' lives and why is it so important to them?
17. Pretend that the movie *We Beat the Street* is set to open next month. Your graphic design company is selected to promote the movie. Design a poster (or perhaps a website) to advertise *We Beat the Street*. Have each group briefly outline the rationale for their design and its relation to the book.
18. Have each student start a weekly journal. Allow your class to use one of following quotes as a springboard to reflect on their own life experiences. Feel free to encourage students to use more than one quote if they need help in getting ideas for their journal entries. This assignment is not meant to be graded, just used as a form of self-expression.
 - a. "Sometimes the smallest, most insignificant events in life can develop into something large, important, and life-changing. Look for those moments and grab on to the possibilities." —Dr. George Jenkins
Food for thought: Think about events in your own life that have been life-changing. How have these moments helped to make you a better person?
 - b. "Getting good grades and staying out of trouble are really cool and really, really smart. It also makes you a leader." —Dr. Rameck Hunt
Food for thought: What does it mean to be a leader? Do you consider yourself to be a leader? Explain. To be a leader, you need to be focused. How do you manage to stay focused?
 - c. "I feel strongly that giving back is a responsibility for all to embrace." —Dr. Sampson Davis
Food for thought: How have others positively influenced your life? In what ways can you "give back"?
 - d. "Everybody goes through difficult periods in life. The person who is successful is the one who doesn't quit. Failure was not an option for me. It never was and never will be." —Dr. Rameck Hunt
Food for thought: Think about times when you were about to give up on something; it can be as simple as working on a school project. What kept you from quitting? How can this lesson be applied to your future endeavors?