

The *Ghost Ship* Reader's Group Discussion Guide

by Laura Haywood-Cory

Welcome to the Readers' Group Guide for Sharon Lee & Steve Miller's latest Liaden universe® novel, *Ghost Ship*. The Liaden universe® is home to a large cast of memorable characters who interact across a vast, intricate backdrop of interstellar alliances in stories that feature star-crossed love, commerce, war, family rivalry and more, all guided by the overarching Liaden principle of *melant'i* (partial definition: one's honor and reputation).

1. Much of *Ghost Ship* revolves around Theo's new and growing relationship with *Bechimo*, a sentient starship. We are even now asking our machines to do more and more. Do you think machines and computers can—or will—ever become sentient? What complications might arise? What do you think of *Bechimo*'s proposed bonding ceremony? Would you do it?
2. Theo suddenly discovers that her family is larger and more powerful than she could have possibly imagined. Have you ever met long-lost or previously unknown relatives? Was it a positive experience? What sort of adjustments did you and they have to make to each other?
3. Theo is also a child of two worlds, Delgado and Liad. As she learns more about her Liaden heritage, her life becomes more interesting and dangerous. Do you have a dual heritage? How do you reconcile your two halves? Did you discover one part of your heritage after you were an adult, or did you grow up fully aware of your multifaceted background?
4. Does your family operate its own business? Have you interned or taken a job in it? Did doing so change your familial relationships?
5. Another feature of *Ghost Ship* is the showcasing of various lifemate bonds. Do you believe that there is truly someone out there for everyone? Would you want to be lifemated? Why or why not?
6. Liadens live by a code of honor called *melant'i*, which governs everything from how one dresses for dinner to how deeply one should bow to another person to how trade negotiations are carried out. Do you have a personal code that you try to live by? What are its tenets?
7. There are several alien species in *Ghost Ship*. First are the Yxtrang, an aggressive, warlike bunch that some Liadens suspect share a genetic heritage with Liadens and Terrans, though the idea is repulsive to some on Liad (almost seemingly as

- repulsive as the idea that humans and Liadens share a common ancestry). The Clutch Turtles are another featured group; they're large, long-lived and have amazing singing abilities. A third, perhaps least well understood alien is the sentient tree at the heart of Clan Korval's home, Jelaza Kazone. How would you determine a tree's intelligence? How would you communicate with it, and it with you?
8. In the course of *Ghost Ship*, Theo discovers that her father is much more than she realized and that it is indeed, in her words, "complicated." Have you ever discovered secrets about your parents? How did you react? Were you disturbed? Angry? What do you think might happen if Kamele comes to Surebleak?
 9. Theo's friend Win Ton needs *Bechimo's* "remastering unit" in order to be healed. What advances in medicine would you like to see in the future? Would you trust yourself or a loved one to an autodoc healing device or something similar?
 10. Uprooting the clan and relocating to Surebleak causes a bit of chaos and confusion. Have you ever moved across country, or from one country to another? How long was it before you felt at home in your new location?
 11. What do you think is the possible origin of the strange objects, like the teapot, that *Bechimo* has found? Is it really another universe? How might these objects end up in the Liaden universe, and who would have used them?
 12. The Department of the Interior is bent on the destruction of Korval. What do you think are the Dol's motives?
 13. Who are some of your favorite Liaden universe® characters, and why do you like them?
 14. *Ghost Ship* ties together multiple different story lines: Theo Waitley's adventures from [Fledgling](#) and [Saltation](#), and Daav and Aelliana's story from [I Dare](#) and [Mouse & Dragon](#). Liaden is a braided universe, with many entry points to the series. What was your first Liaden novel, and what starting point would you recommend to a newcomer?