

## Manuscript 2,746

*One day, Imam Malik was asked forty-eight questions about God.  
He answered thirty-two of those questions with the words "I don't know."*

### About the Book

"... a tense, relevant story." —*Publishers Weekly*

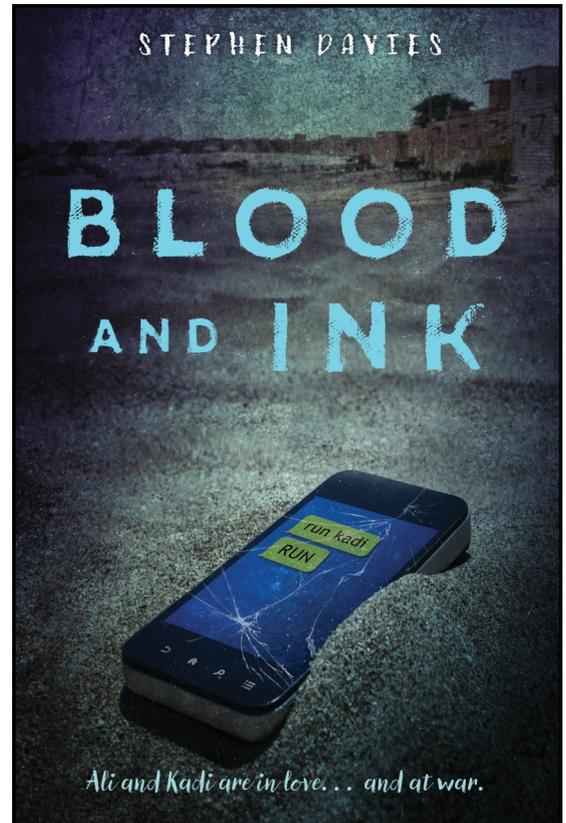
When Ali and Kadi meet, it's hate at first sight.

Kadi is the daughter of a librarian in modern-day Timbuktu. A lover of music and literature, she will one day become a guardian of an ancient manuscript collection.

Ali has been conscripted by the Defenders of Faith, an arm of Al Qaeda. He helps to occupy Timbuktu and impose a strict Islamic state.

By circumstance, the two teenagers are thrown together. As they get to know more about each other, both let their guards down. But when Ali discovers the secret vault where Kadi's family keeps their sacred manuscripts, Kadi is forced to risk a smuggling operation to save the manuscripts from destruction. And Ali must decide where his loyalties lie.

Part thriller, part love story, this exciting drama takes place in the midst of true-to-life events in Mali in 2012.



978-1-58089-790-7  
E-book editions available

### About the Author



Stephen Davies lived among the Fulani herders in West Africa as a missionary for thirteen years. He has written picture books, middle grade, and YA, many of which have been set in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

Visit Stephen [online](#).

## CharlesbridgeTEEN Readers' Group Guide

1. Why do you think Stephen Davies opened the book with Ali's story?
2. What do you think of Ali's situation in the first chapter? What is happening?
3. Is there any indication in the first chapter that Ali has doubts about his mission?
4. Do you see any similarities between Ali and Kadija after reading chapter two?
5. What is the significance of the manuscript room? Is there anything that excites you as much as the contents of the manuscripts does Kadi?
6. Kadi says most people think Timbuktu is an imaginary place. Had you heard of it before?
7. Ali identifies with his namesake. What about the prophet does Ali admire?
8. Why do the members of Defenders of the Faith think that the citizens of Timbuktu are infidels? Do you agree that they are?
9. Who are the Tuaregs?
10. Why do you think Abel Diallo and the others risk their lives for the manuscripts?
11. When Kadi meets Ali for the first time, she is not afraid. What does this say about her?
12. The scene in which Ali and his colleagues destroy La Détente and Kadi's friends instruments is heavy. Describe how that made you feel. How is this destruction justified?
13. At what point do you think Ali begins to have feelings for Kadi? When do you think Kadi begins to have feelings for Ali?
14. Why does Ali warn Kadi that the Defenders of Faith are coming after the wedding party? Why does he turn them in?
15. When Kadi programs the ringtone on Ali's phone and then calls him during prayer, does she know he will be in trouble? Do you think she did the wrong thing?
16. Why do you think Ali changes his mind about his faith in the end? Or, does he?
17. Do you think this story is exciting? Scary? Are there funny moments you can recall?
18. Do you like Ali and Kadi?
19. What is the significance of the inclusion of the stories and quotes from the sacred manuscripts? Did you enjoy reading them? Did you learn from them?
20. What did you learn about Islam and the ways people practice their faith? Do you feel it's important for you to understand?
21. In the afterword, Stephen Davies reveals that the character Redbeard was based on a real person. Did this surprise you? What were your thoughts about Redbeard?
22. We learn a lot about the story behind the story in the afterword. Do you want to learn more about Timbuktu and its history?