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This aerial view depicts Diamond Head on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Near Waikiki, this tuff cone formed many thousands of years ago by an active volcano. In *The Descendants*, the fictional Brian Speer lives in a neighborhood near Diamond Head. Photo by Provelt, online via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#). Click on the image for a great view.

We begin our virtual journey on the island of Oahu, where Matt King and his family live. From their home - in the Maunawili area of the island - they can see the Ko'olau Range.

With its beautiful waterfalls, and magnificent rainbows, that Range is more volcanic-remnant than mountain-stunning. It is what remains of a really ancient volcano which collapsed on itself eons ago.

Ancient asphalt paths - used by today's hikers - are also nearby. One leads to the Maunawili Falls.

Looking for Brian Speer, Matt and his daughters - together with Sid, a friend of Alex - leave their side of the valley for the Diamond Head area of Oahu, near Kapiolani Park. They find Brian Speer's house, but he's not home.

Matt learns that Speer is on the island of Kauai, so he books a flight for himself and the kids to that destination. Some of Matt's land holdings are on Kauai, so he knows the island well. He makes a reservation at one of the most beautiful resorts in the world - the Princeville, near Hanalei - located on Kauai's northern shore.

If Matt were a golfer, and he didn't have a preexisting mission to occupy his attention, he could have played a few rounds on a golf course with incomparable views of Hanalei Bay. Making the Makai Course even more spectacular, the 7th Hole is played over the ocean.

Enjoying the beauty of Kauai - and exploring places like the Kilauea Lighthouse, Anahola Beach, the Secret Falls, the Queen's Bath, the rugged coast lines and local churches - is not the purpose of the King family's trip. They have to find Brian Speer, to give him the bad news about Elizabeth ("Joanie").

Traveling to their Kauai destination - via the King's Trail, among other roads - the King family (and Sid) settle into their Princeville resort rooms.

While running on the Hanalei beach one morning, Matt sees him. Not sure what to do next, he watches Speer finish his own run and walk to the cottage where he and his family are staying.

With his mission accomplished - locating Speer and delivering the news about King's dying wife - Matt and the children return to Oahu. It's an important day. Matt and his cousins are meeting, in Honolulu, where everyone is waiting to hear his decision: Which buyer gets to purchase the land their royal ancestors entrusted to them?

Thinking about what he should do, Matt reflects on the very different parts of his heritage. On one side, he is descended from American missionaries who came to the island to help the locals. They told native Hawaiians to wear clothes, work hard and stop hula dancing.

The other side of Matt's ancestry - the royal Hawaiian part - bestowed on him (and his cousins) the gift of land ownership. Wealthy because of that bequest, Matt's current relatives wear few clothes (mostly running shorts and T-shirts), rarely work (if at all) and enjoy dancing (including the hula).

Marveling at the irony of his family's present situation, Matt considers how to best honor the gift they were given and, especially, the people who had bestowed it on him.

Everything started with King Kamehameha and his descendants.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FINDING-BRIAN-SPEER-The-Descendants>

Questions 2 Ponder

What Are the Options for Delivering Bad News?

In “The Descendants,” a novel and film (based on the book), Matt King has to decide how he will tell his wife's friends and family members that her serious accident will cause her death. He could make phone calls; he could send emails; he could make personal visits.

King decides to notify close friends and family members, about his wife's condition, by traveling to see them in person. Is that a good plan, if it's feasible? Why, or why not?

Do you think this would ever happen in real life - or - are these events more about the plot line (and the author's way of telling the story)? Explain your answer.

Are Distractions a Help During Times of Crisis?

In “The Descendants,” Matt King faces a deadline to decide whether his family should keep, or sell, their inherited property at the same time as his wife is dying.

Does the decision which he has to make, about his family's inherited property, help him work-through the looming loss of his wife - and his children's mother - or does it distract him?

Setting aside the story line of a fictional book, do you think distractions are a help or a hindrance during times of crisis? Explain your answer.

Media Stream



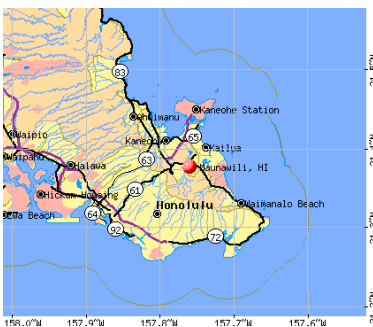
Oahu - Island Home of the King Family

Aerial photo of the eastern side of Oahu by Mila Zinkova, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Location of King Family Home - Maunawili

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Ko'olau Range

Photo by ErgoSum88, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Ancient Asphalt Paths - Maunawili

Image of an ancient asphalt path, in the Maunawili area of Oahu, online courtesy "Sundoingculturalcom" at Word Press. Click on the image for a greatly expanded view.

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Maunawili Falls - The Descendants

Image of Maunawili Falls, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, online courtesy "Sundoingculturalcom" at Word Press. Click on the image for a greatly expanded view.

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Diamond Head - Brian Speer

Aerial photo of the Diamond-Head area of Oahu by Provett, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Kauai - Location of Matt King's Land

Aerial photo of Waimea Canyon, depicted in the sun and the rain, by Big Dave Diode, online courtesy Flickr.

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Princeville Area - North Shore of Kauai

Image online, courtesy Princeville Resort.

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Makai Golf Course - Princeville, Kauai

Image online, courtesy Makai Golf Course.

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Makai Golf Course

Image online, courtesy Princeville Resort.

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Makai Golf Course - 7th Hole

Image of Makai's 7th hole, online courtesy Princeville Resort.

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Kauai - Southern Coast at Sunset

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Kilauea Lighthouse - Kauai

Photo of the Kilauea Lighthouse, taken by PA3 Michael De Nyse on October 29, 2008 for the United States Coast Guard.

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Anahola Beach - Eastern Shore, Kauai

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Secret Falls - Kauai

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Queen's Bath - Kauai

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Rugged Coast Line - Kauai

Photo online, courtesy Trip Advisor.

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Kauai - Missionary Influence

Photo of the church at Kilauea by JungleJim. Copyright, JungleJim, all rights reserved.

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Hanalei Beach - Princeville Resort

Image of Hanalei Beach and pier, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Matt King Sees Brian Speer - The Descendants

Image of George Clooney - in character in a scene from the film, *The Descendants* - copyright Fox Searchlight, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

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Cottage at Hanalei Beach - The Descendants

Image of Hanalei Beach cottage online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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FINDING BRIAN SPEER

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