

Southfield Public Library

Innocent by Scott Turow

Discussion Questions used at SPL -- November 2011

1. Was anyone innocent in this book? Why do you think he called it Innocent?
2. This is a sequel to Presumed Innocent. Had you read that book? If yes, do you think it helped with the story line? If no, do you feel, as you were reading, that there were things you should have known as the story went along?
3. For those of you who read PI, what did you think of the characters, 20 years later?
4. Did you like Rusty in the first book? What about this book? Had he learned any lessons from that first affair/trial?
5. Did you understand his reasoning – if there was any – in having the affair with Anna?
6. What did you think of Anna? It seemed like she had a history of not being satisfied and chasing after new things in her personal and professional life. . .was this what she was doing with Rusty?
7. What about Tommy Molto? Why do you think he went after Rusty on the murder trial? Was it a payback? Did he really believe Rusty got away with murder the first time?
8. Does it seem like they really could have worked together after that first murder trial when Rusty was his boss? And as a judge and lawyer?
9. What did you think of his style of writing. . .the back and forth from the past to the present. . . . Did it flow smoothly for you? How else could he have told it?
10. What did you learn about the relationship between Rusty and Barbara? Why do you think they stayed married all those years? Was it for their son? Was it out of a sense of guilt? Could you stay with someone who you knew was a murderer?
11. What did you think about the relationship between Nat and Anna? What did that tell you about the type of person Anna was? Was it really true love, in your opinion?
12. What did you think of Nat? Was he a strong character? Weak? What was it about him that appealed to Anna?
13. What was his relationship with his parents? How did that play into the trial? How did it compare to the relationship between Sandy Stern and his daughter?
14. Did the author explain well enough for you why Rusty didn't call the police for 24 hours?

15. Did the author do a good job with the court room scenes for you? Did they seem believable?
16. Why didn't Rusty ever tell the truth about his wife? Was it a reflection on him? Was it a type of atonement for him?
17. Do you think Rusty and Anna will be able to keep their affair secret from Nat? Should they?
18. What did you think of Molto's assistant? Did he have ulterior motives in pushing for Rusty's charges?
19. Did you like any of the characters?
20. Who came out of this story the best? Did anyone really grow or learn a lesson?

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General Discussion Questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
 - How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
 - How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
 - How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
 - Did the book hold your interest?
 - How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
 - Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
 - Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?
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Questions from *LitLovers.com*

<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/7877-innocent-turow?start=1>

1. What is the significance of the book's title, ostensibly the legal term for someone found "not guilty"? In what way is it ironic, suggesting a philosophical, moral question?
2. Author Scott Turow uses an unusual structure for this novel, moving back and forth between time frames and viewpoints. Why might he have used this technique rather than a straightforward narrative? Did the novel's structure enhance or detract from your enjoyment?
3. Have you read *Presumed Innocent*, the "prequel" to this novel? If so, how do the two compare? Is it important to have read the previous book? Why or why not?
4. Follow-up to Question 3: If you haven't read *Presumed Innocent*, was it hard to come up to speed on this novel? Having finished *Innocent*—and looking back—would it have made a difference if you had read the first book? If so...in what way? Will you read PI now? Why or why not?
5. How would you describe Rusty Sabitch? What kind of a man is he? Has he learned from his past mistakes?
6. What is Rusty's wife Barbara like? Why have the two stayed married all these years?
7. Author Turow seems as interested in penetrating the mysteries of marriage and the human heart as he is the ins-and-outs of the legal system. What issues does he raise about how two people operate within a marriage? What do we come to learn about Barbara and Rusty's marriage? Do you see parallels to your own relationships?
8. What about Anna Vostic? First of all, will older men ever find age-appropriate women? Or is the answer to that "In your dreams, sweetheart"?
9. Back to Anna: what kind of person is she...and why does she end up in an affair with Rusty's son? Talk about those complications.
10. What about Nat? Is he a sympathetic character or not? Good boyfriend material...good son material?
11. What drives the prosecutorial team—Tommy Molto and Jim Brand? Why is Brand so eager to convict Rusty Sabitch? What evidence does the prosecution have against Rusty? Is it particularly strong?
12. Much of the book is a courtroom drama. Did you enjoy the pyrotechnics between prosecutors and defense attorneys?
13. How does Rusty's secret drive, or shape, his own defense?
14. Does this book deliver? Were you surprised by the various plot twists? Going back over the book, can you pick out where Turow purposely withholds information—then reveals it—to keep readers wondering?

15. What insights does this book offer—or issues does it raise—regarding the country's (or a state's) legal system ?