

Southfield Public Library

Winner by David Baldacci

Discussion Questions used at SPL April - 2012

1. What did that first chapter do to you? How did it introduce the character Jackson? What did you think of him? Did your view of him change over the course of the book? Could you tell what was in store for LuAnn? Did it hook you?
2. Chapter 2 introduced us to LuAnn. . .what was your first impression of her? Of her life? How did that change through the book?
3. What did you think of her decision to accept Jackson's offer? Would you have done it if you were in her shoes?
4. Why do you think Jackson chose LuAnn for his scheme?
5. Did it make sense that the contract killer would follow LuAnn? Why did he? From your vast experience with such people, did that seem out of character for him?
6. Why was Charlie so nice to her? Did he feel a connection to her? When you first met him, what did you think his role was in the scam?
7. It's always interesting reading about airport getaways pre 9/11.... How do you think that scene would be played out now?
8. P. 171 - "she had always heard that the incredibly rich were never really happy, for a variety of reasons. Growing up in Poverty, LuAnn never believed that. . .Now, she knew it to be true, at least in her own case." Again, from your vast experience with incredibly wealthy people, would you say that money can buy happiness? What do you think having lots of money can do to a person?
9. Remember when Romney made comments about not making very much money on his speeches (3/4 of a million!) and his wife said she doesn't consider themselves wealthy. . .leaving politics out of it, why do you think someone who is wealthy would say that? Does money become meaningless?
10. Why do you think LuAnn came back to the States? Why weren't her reasons clear to the reader from the start?
11. What do you think motivated Jackson to do what he did? He certainly had lots of money. . .
12. How did the story change when the reporter came into the book? How scary was it that he had access to all of those "private" records? Do you think there are more safeguards now? Less?
13. When we first read about Riggs – the fence guy – where did you think that storyline was going?
14. How would you describe LuAnn before and after she won the lottery. Was she different?
15. Do you think people blab as much as that real estate agent did? What sort of guy was he?
16. P 343. . . Donovan's take on the lottery. . . do you agree/disagree/
17. Was LuAnn a type of damsel in distress? In what ways? How was she NOT? Did her "living in the boonies" really prepare her for things in life, like she told Riggs? P 386
18. A theme running through this was the morality of a lottery. . .who is it aimed at? Is it right for governments to do so?
19. How would you compare this thriller to last month's book, Lethal?
20. When you read the part where the FBI was double crossing Riggs, what did you think was going to happen. . . were you doubtful of a happy ending?

21. Were you happy with the ending? How was she going to keep the IRS away from that last 100 million?
22. How did you like the way her daughter reacted to the news?
23. What will happen to Riggs – did he go back in the WPP?

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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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The Winner

Questions from LitLovers.com

<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/1164-winner-baldacci>

1. This is a plot-driven suspense story. Does it live up to its reputation as a "thriller"? In other words, does the story keep you on the edge of your seat? How so?
2. How would you describe LuAnn—what kind of personality does she have? Why does she eventually accept Jackson's offer?
3. Then there's Jackson—the kind of character you love to hate! How about Uncle Charlie and his softspot for LuAnn and her daughter? Finally, were you rooting, or not, for Matthew Riggs?
4. Does LuAnn's fortune play into your own "sudden-wealth" fantasies? What would you have done in her place—accept the offer from Jackson immediately, never accept it, even after Duane's foul-up? Or do exactly what LuAnn does—accept it under duress? And—big question—how would you spend the money?
5. The story, ultimately, is about the possibility of recreating one's identity, changing one's life, and leaving behind a less-than-happy past. For many, it might be wish fulfillment. Is it for you? If you could make yourself over again, what kind of life would you create? Who would you be, what would you do, where would you live? And what would you be getting away from?
6. The title, "The Winner," has a double significance. It obviously refers to the lottery, but what else?
7. Were you satisfied by the ending? Did it fulfill your hopes? Was it predictable, or were you surprised?