

***The Collection* by Lance Charnes**
Discussion Questions

1. Matt is a cheat and liar. On the other hand, so were many of his gallery clients, except what they did was (usually) legal. Matt only conned people *he* thought could easily afford it. Discuss Matt's past and present actions in relation to the hierarchy of criminal behavior. How bad do you think he is?
2. Matt stayed with and tried to care for his severely bipolar wife even as it caused him to slowly destroy his own life. Have you ever had to care for an incurably ill loved one? What sacrifices did you have to make? How far would you go morally or legally in order to keep a sick loved one safe and his/her condition stable? At what point do you say "enough"?
3. How does the depiction of art-related crime in *The Collection* square with what you've seen on television and in films? The use of stolen art as collateral for drug deals is a real phenomenon. What other uses do you think criminals have for stolen or looted artworks?
4. Who was your favorite character, and why? Who was your least-favorite character, and why? Who was the strongest character, and what made him/her seem that way to you?
5. Is Carson's brusque, profane manner a defensive front or a moral defect? Why do you think she's this way? Use examples from the text to support your conclusion.
6. In their first dinner in Milan, Matt says to Carson, "I've never been around a woman like you. You don't know how to talk to me? I don't know how to talk to you either" (page 83 of the print edition). How much do cultural norms and expectations color your interactions with other people? Think back to the last time you met or worked with someone who, like Matt and Carson, didn't fit his/her gender stereotypes. How did it affect your interaction with him/her?
7. What do you think really happened to Belknap? Why?
8. Matt accepts Allyson's job offer because the high pay can help him get rid of his massive debts. However, the work's potentially dangerous, and he'll be helping people he finds distasteful or holds in contempt. Have you ever had to make that kind of personal or professional tradeoff – payoff vs. risk or conscience? Was it worth it? What would you have done in Matt's place?
9. Is Gianna a victim or opportunist (or both)? Why? Whose side do you think she's really on? Do you agree with Matt that "Gianna's the nearest thing we've got to an innocent in this story" (page 265 in the print edition)?
10. With which character do you identify with most closely? Why?
11. Would you have a relationship with someone like Matt or Carson? Why or why not?

12. Did anything happen that shocked you? If so, what and why?
13. Do you sense any chemistry between Matt and Carson? Do you think they would be good for each other? Why or why not?
14. Consider the various fates of the principal characters. Which ones ended up the way you expected? Which ones had outcomes different from what you expected? If you could change one main character's fate, whose would it be, what would you change, and why?