

Zrada by Lance Charnes
Discussion Questions

1. Carson, *Zrada's* protagonist, is a hard-nosed, profane, wronged police detective who's comfortable with violence. This is not only unusual for a female literary character, but also outside society's typical concept of womanhood. What do you think made her this way? Use examples from the text to support your theory. Have you ever known a woman like her?
2. Stepaniak, Mashkov, and Rogozhkin each have very different uses in mind for the ransom money. Whose do you consider to be the best use, and why? What would you do with a windfall of this size?
3. Carson describes Galina as an "idealist" (page 101 of the paperback edition). Rogozhkin describes her as a "zealot" (page 249). How do you define these two terms? Which do you think best suits Galina? Why? Have you ever dealt with either of these two types of people? If so, how would you characterize that experience?
4. Have you ever been compelled to leave a place you consider to be "home," as Galina is? If so, what were the circumstances, and how long did it take you to consider your destination to be "home"? If not, what would it take to make you leave home against your will? How would you choose a new home?
5. Carson says, "I keep my promises...even when they suck" (page 262 of the paperback edition). Do you consider this honorable or foolish? Do you personally believe in keeping your promises no matter what, or do you reserve the right to renege when the cost or wisdom of fulfilling the pledge becomes problematic?
6. Galina and Carson tussle over the fate of a 500-year-old icon that Carson's supposed to retrieve. Galina says, "It belongs in a church" (page 92 of the paperback edition) and the priest at St. Nikolai's asks, "Do you think an art museum in Germany is an appropriate home for that precious object?" (page 93). Carson says, "Doesn't matter if it's appropriate. The museum owns it" (page 94). Who do you agree with, and why? Is the priest's description of what the icon's role is in the Orthodox Church (page 94) more or less compelling than Carson's prediction of what will happen to the icon if she leaves it (page 96)?
7. At a key point in the narrative, Carson finally achieves a goal she's pursued for most of the first half of the story...and realizes it's not what she expected ("Wanting this moment and having it are two very different things" [page 172 in the paperback edition]). Have you ever been in this position? How did the reality square with your preconception of it, if at all? Did you recognize the mismatch before or after the situation was resolved irrevocably?
8. Taking into account the totality of Carson's actions and intentions in this story, do you consider her to be a good person or a bad person? Why? Use examples in the text to support your position.

***Zrada* Discussion Questions**

9. 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?
10. If you also read *The Collection* or *Stealing Ghosts*: did you learn anything about Carson that surprised you? If so, what? Does this new knowledge change your opinion of her or make you like her any more or less than before? Why or why not?
11. With which character do you identify with most closely? Why?
12. Did anything happen that surprised you? If so, what and why?