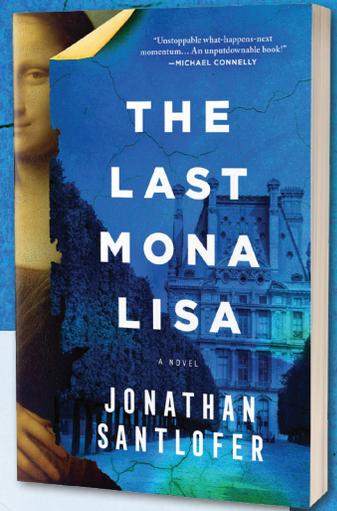


THE LAST MONA LISA

BY JONATHAN SANTLOFER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



1. How do you define art? What would you say makes a masterpiece?
2. Art theft and forgery are complicated and fascinating crimes. Why would someone prefer to own a masterpiece (which must be kept secret) rather than viewing it in a museum? Is forgery an art unto itself?
3. Had you heard of Vincent Peruggia's theft of the *Mona Lisa* before reading the book? What else did you learn while reading?
4. Early on, Luke seems to have a different sense of time from the Italians around him and is told to be more patient. How do American values contribute to impatience? How can we slow down in our daily lives?
5. John Washington Smith decides against using official INTERPOL channels when Luke's communications with Quattrocchi first catch his attention. Why did he want to pursue the matter personally? What were the consequences of his decision?
6. Describe Alex. What does she want? Do you think she is justified in doing what she does?
7. While posing as an art dealer, Smith suggests that buying and selling art doesn't contribute to the betterment of mankind. Do you agree? How do monetary transactions shape our ideas of artistic and social value?
8. Vincent resists becoming involved in the theft for a long time. What finally convinces him to steal the *Mona Lisa*? How does economic inequality perpetuate crime?
9. Smith describes making and collecting art as an addiction. Do you think his viewpoint is supported by the events of the book? Can you think of any real-world examples that prove him right?
10. Chaudron is meticulous in his forgeries, but he can't resist signing them. What do you think motivates him to endanger his work, even subtly? Would you take such a risk in his position?
11. What drives Luke to break his long record of sobriety? How does it compare to his temptation in Florence?
12. Why does Luke keep digging after he returns to New York? Would you have been so persistent in his place?