



Reading Group Guide

Elizabeth Street by Laurie Fabiano

1. The author says the novel is based on a true story. What do you think is fact and what isn't? Does it matter?
2. Did you know what led so many Italians to emigrate to America? Do you think the reasons for immigration impact how a group assimilates in the United States?
3. The former Italian Squad is now New York City's bomb squad. Compare the recent incident in New York's Times Square with the terrorism of the Black Hand at the turn of the last century.
4. Why do you think that such a significant piece of relatively recent history – Black Hand crime - is not better known?
5. Lieutenant Petrosino tried to get Italian immigrants to trust the police in America. Were they wrong to resist? What about the corruption that was beyond his control? (i.e. suppressing the penal records collected from Italy before the mayoral election.)
6. In her review, Maria Laurino cites the fact that Mario Puzo once claimed that the character of Don Corleone in his book *The Godfather* was based on his mother. Do you think Giovanna was typical of Italian-American women of the era?
7. Could Giovanna and Lucretia have been friends in Italy?
8. Have we lost something with the lessened importance and role of midwives in society or has the trade off with modern medicine been worth it?
9. How does this Italian-American family saga differ from the way Italian-Americans are portrayed in popular media?