

Forgiving Stephen Redmond
Book Club Questions

1. Why is the title of the book *Forgiving Stephen Redmond*, and who has forgiven him? As Steven Redmond and Shalom Rothman are the same person, why does Shalom have to forgive himself?
2. Both this book and the other two books in the series center on the idea of forgiveness. Why is forgiveness such an important concept in these books and in our lives? What effect does carrying hurt have on our lives? Is forgiveness free, or does the offending party have to own what they've done to earn that forgiveness?
3. Detectives Kurchenko and Gonzalez seek help from an old, retired cop to solve the cold case at the center of the story. The old cop has racial and ethnic issues common to his generation. Do you think racism and bigotry was endemic in police forces in the 1960s? In light of what we have seen in our country in the past year, do you think it's still a problem today?
4. Did Erno make the right decision when he told Max he thought he's spotted the man who murdered Max's woman in Santo Domingo some fifteen years earlier? Should he have let sleeping dogs lay? What do you think motivated him?
5. Once Max determines that he has found Tejada (Vargas) he implements a plan to exact his revenge. Is this premeditated murder? Does what Tejada did to Max and his woman and friends in Santo Domingo justify such an act? Is revenge sometimes more important than forgiveness? If Max had actually committed the act would he have achieved the peace he was seeking?
6. Both Erno and Max are Holocaust survivors. Though they didn't survive extermination camps, as refugees, they experienced the same sense of loss that all survivors of the Shoah face. How do you think they dealt with their trauma? Did they and their wives pass their trauma to Stephen/Shalom? Should they, particularly Max, been more forthcoming with his son about his life before the war?
7. Did Stephen's birth bring Helen and Max closer together? Helen accepts Max's contempt for his Jewish background and religion, yet she is happy that Stephen/Shalom has sought to return to the faith. How did their marriage resolve this difference?
8. What does Shalom's decision to become Ba'al T'shuvah, to return to orthodox Jewish observance do for him? How does it help him to live with his past and his parents' past? Does it ground him? Do his revelations about Tejada's murder effect his faith?
9. Pete becomes fascinated by the truths hidden from him by his family and community about the Trujillo era. Do you think learning of the experiences of the Tejada family was cathartic for him? Did it change his view of his own people and culture?
10. In the early years of Latino emigration to the United States, in the 1950s and 1960s, were Latino immigrants afforded proper treatment in the United States? Did the treatment of these immigrant groups differ from that of earlier groups identified as European? Were immigrants from different parts of the Latino world, say for instance,

Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, or Mexico treated the same or differently by native Americans? Is that situation different today?

11. How does learning the truth about what happened at Max and Erno's boarding house change Shalom's life? How does it affect his relationship with his son, Baruch, and his wife Rachel? Does forgiving himself make it easier for him to forgive others?
12. Many people, like Max, Helen, Ava, and Erno, and also the Tejadas experience severe forms of personal trauma. They bury their traumas rather than come to some personal resolution or peace. How does this effect both them and their children? Is the shame of that trauma best left hidden or should it be shared and understood?