

Readers Group Guide to Star Chamber Brotherhood

1. Frank Werner expressed several principled objections to Dave Lewis before accepting the assignment to assassinate Fred Rocco. How did Werner turn around those same principled objections when persuading other team members to join him on the mission?
2. On several occasions Werner had misgivings about following through with the mission to kill Rocco. What do you see as the key factors that impelled him to continue?
3. In your view, was the Star Team's mission to kill Fred Rocco justifiable? If you had been a prisoner at Kamas, do you think your answer might have been different?
4. What role do you imagine Linda Holt's tarot card readings may have had in firming Werner's resolve to carry out the mission? Can the power of suggestion or the feeling that something is fated or predestined sometimes give us the power to overcome formidable challenges?
5. How did Werner's character develop as a result of his decision to accept the Star Chamber's assignment and the challenges he faced in carrying it out?
6. What was the nature of the Star Committee's authority over the Kamas prisoners that it could induce them to carry out morally repugnant actions like murdering secret government informants inside the camp or former camp officials like Rocco after leaving the camp?
7. When the rule of law is hijacked by tyrants, is it morally wrong to break the law in opposing the tyrants? Similarly, is it right to observe laws whose sole purpose is to tighten the tyrants' grip? If the law is no longer a dependable guide to behavior, what is?
8. What are the limits of permissible action in opposing tyranny? Is nothing permissible that would not be permissible in a free society? Or do the ends sometimes justify the means? If so, does that include all the ends? All the means?
9. How would you explain Werner's taking the additional time and risk to present the paper star to Fred Rocco and formally recite his sentence of death? What role does

ritual or ceremony play in distinguishing legal executions from private acts of vengeance?

10. Compare and contrast the Somerset Club's owner, Jake Hagopian, with Werner's liquor customer, Harry Kendall. Both make a living by doing business with corrupt elements of the Unionist regime. Which man would you say bears the greater moral culpability for his business dealings and why?

11. Why do you suppose the President-for-Life's regime sought to eradicate symbols and traces of the American Revolution in Concord as well as memorials to such liberal American thinkers as Emerson and Thoreau?

12. Recalling Wagner's visit to his daughters' private boarding school in Concord, why do you suppose the President-for-Life moved to outlaw private educational institutions in America and require all students to attend government-controlled schools?

13. How would you characterize Carol Dodge's life goals before she lost her job and how did they appear to change once she began to worry about losing her government-issued apartment? What changes in her life might you expect her to make as the book ends?

14. Why do you think Linda Holt was willing to help Frank Werner in his mission despite the risks to herself and the apparent violation of her Hippocratic oath?

15. How did your assessment of Hector Alvarez change over time? Why do you suppose an apolitical car thief like Alvarez, who saw his primary duty as supporting his family, would volunteer to take on ever increasing risk to help Werner complete the mission?

16. How would you explain Professor Harvey Konig's return to Boston in pursuit of a potential business deal when, as a wealthy émigré and former Money Man, he risked arrest by the Department of State Security? Ignorance, arrogance, deception?

17. Which motives of MIT student Sam Tucker do you think were foremost in his mind when he joined the Star Team? Which motives do you think drove his actions at the end of the book?

18. How do you interpret the final actions of Hank Oshiro in the book's opening chapter? Did he miscalculate or did he draw fire intentionally to protect other members of the team?

19. When Frank Werner recruited Greg Doherty to the Star Team, Doherty was a recovering alcoholic with little faith in himself. His fragile confidence sank further when he shot the wrong man at Harry Kendall's reception. After the shooting, however, Werner persuaded Doherty to leave Boston and make a fresh start. Do you think Werner took unfair advantage of Doherty in recruiting him to the team or, on the contrary, did he leave Doherty better off than he found him?

20. Did Werner's destination in the book's final scene come to you as a surprise? Did the ending leave any loose ends?

21. Did you find Star Chamber Brotherhood to be hopeful or pessimistic? Depressing or uplifting? Why?