

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If *Everyone a Stranger* were set in present day instead of 1943, do you think Virginia could have stayed in Washington, D.C., and exposed the powerful senator for endangering her life? Or wouldn't she stand a chance against a high-profile politician today? Considering the era in which the book is set, do you think moving to a different city and changing her name was her best course of action? What would you have done differently?
2. The concept of "date rape" didn't come into being until the 1980s. With this in mind, do you think Virginia should have gone to the police? Considering the time period, do you think Virginia's friend, Magda, can be forgiven for not quite understanding the depths of Virginia's ordeal when she was sexually assaulted by Ron Callahan Jr. while on a date with him? Or was Magda just not a very good friend to her? Did you notice any other incidents in the book in which the treatment of women seemed appallingly unfair?
3. What with gas rationing, tire (rubber) shortages, troop movements taking priority on trains, overcrowded hotels and expensive airfare, traveling was a challenge during WWII. You see this in the book. But you also see Virginia "travel in style" in a private drawing room for a short while, thanks to an older couple on the train. Do you think we're actually better or worse off with our travel options today? Does long-distance train travel seem like something you'd like to do?
4. Evelyn's extramarital affairs come into focus when trying to solve the mystery. Did you find her to be a complex, sympathetic character? Or did you think she was a selfish, negligent mother? Was she somewhere in between?
5. When Glen takes Tim swimming at the Seattle Athletic Club's "Men Only" pool, they swim naked. This was fairly

common in the day (until the 1970s, most YMCA pools didn't allow swimsuits; it was the same way in several high schools that included swimming in the boys' physical education curriculum). Can you think of any other practices or traditions from this bygone era that seem pretty bizarre today? Do you think life was simpler back then?

6. Considering his difficult background, did you have any sympathy at all for Glen? He definitely feels trapped in his situation. Do you feel he would have been a "decent guy" if he hadn't gotten caught up in the German American Bund? Can basically good people be corrupted by a warped movement or cause?
7. Virginia's boss, Fred Dawson, lives in a mansion with his butler, Henry Daniels. It's clear that they care about each other. The author intentionally made their relationship ambiguous and left it up to the reader to come to their own conclusion. Did you consider them a same-sex couple or just longtime friends?
8. While we tend to think that WWII wasn't fought on United States soil, the book reminds readers that the war came to both coasts—with enemy U-boat and submarine attacks. On the Homefront, everyone knew or was related to someone fighting overseas. With food, gas and supply shortages, black-out drills, war jobs, scrap drives and Victory Gardens, how did the war change the lives of your parents or grandparents? How do you think today's generation would do under such difficult conditions?
9. Virginia could have pretended not to know the man who tried to kill her at the end of the book. It would have practically insured that no one would ever know what happened with the child's real father. But Virginia chose to expose Senator Callahan. Do you think she made the right choice? Is there anything you would have done differently?

10. Alfred Hitchcock is always an influence on the author. This book owes a lot to *Rear Window* and Hitchcock's WWII thriller, *Saboteur*. Did you see some similarities? Did you notice any other "Hitchcock touches" in the book? Speaking of movies, who would you cast in the leads in a film version of *Everyone a Stranger*?