

READING GROUP GUIDE

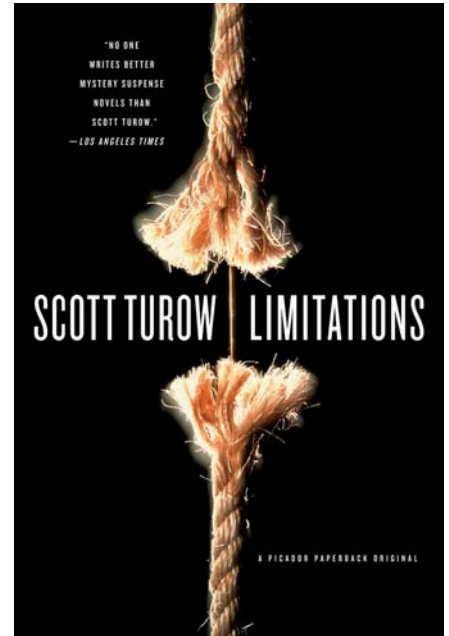
Limitations

A Novel

by Scott Turow

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Limitations* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Limitations*.

About the Book

Life would seem to have gone well for George Mason. His days as a criminal defense lawyer are long behind him. At fifty-nine, he has sat as a judge on the Court of Appeals in Kindle County for nearly a decade. Yet, when a disturbing rape case is brought before him, the judge begins to question the very nature of the law and his role within it. What is troubling George Mason so deeply? Is it his wife's recent diagnosis? Or the strange and threatening e-mails he has started to receive? What is it about this horrific case of sexual assault, now on trial in his courtroom, that has led him to question his fitness to judge?

In *Limitations*, Scott Turow, the master of the legal thriller, returns to Kindle County with a page-turning entertainment that asks the biggest questions of all. Ingeniously, and with great economy of style, Turow probes the limitations not only of the law but of human understanding itself.

“Turow has set new standards for the genre, most notably in the depth and subtlety of his characterizations. . . . The kind of reading pleasure that only the best novelists--genre or otherwise--can provide.”

—*The New York Times*

“Turow brings a literary sensibility to a grit-and-gravel genre: if he calls to mind any comparison, it's to John le Carré. His novels are shaped by [a] studied bleakness, an introspect's embrace of the gray-zone ambiguities of modern life.”

—Gail Caldwell, *Boston Sunday Globe*

About the Author

Scott Turow is the world-famous author of seven bestselling novels about the law, from *Presumed Innocent* to *Ordinary Heroes*, and of the nonfiction works *One L* and *Ultimate Punishment*. He lives with his family outside Chicago, where he is a partner in the law firm of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal.

Discussion Questions

1. Early in the novel we learn that George's feelings about the Warnovits case are significantly influenced by an experience in his own life. How do you think his memory of his first meeting with Lolly Viccino affects his decision about the case over the course of the story? Do you think a judge in George's position should try to shut out personal associations with a case like this, or do they make him more qualified to understand and assess the case?
2. Upon learning that the boys were relatively privileged, how was your reaction to the Warnovits case affected? Would your reaction to the crime have been different change if the boys had been from poor or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds? Would it change things if they and the victim had all been of the same race?
3. On page 43, when George ignores the two young men lurking in the garage, despite feeling somewhat threatened by their presence, we learn that his “entire professional life has been founded on the conviction that he knows himself best under these shadows.” What does the author mean by this? How might this conviction make him a better judge?
4. Did your opinion of George change when you read the account (pages 48-50) of his college experience with Lolly Viccino? Do you think Patrice, his wife, was right to forgive him so easily? How much difference does it make, in your own judgment of his actions, that things were socially and politically different when George was in college?
5. Look at the description of events in involving Mindy DeBoyer (page 3) and those with Lolly. What does the author tell us in each account to distinguish George, and his experience, from the hockey players, and theirs? Do you think there's a significant moral difference between George's actions and those of any one boy in the Warnovits case?

6. Look at George's conversation with Rusty Sabich in chapter 7. How would you describe their respective approaches to the law? How do the differences relate to their own experience outside of their profession? If you were going to trial, hoping for a fair verdict, who would you rather have sitting on the bench?
7. Were you surprised to hear that Lolly didn't seem to remember the events in the dormitory hallway? Or do you think she was pretending not to remember? What effect do you think George's conversation with the grown-up Lolly has on his decision in the Warnovits case?
8. "Principle always comes with certain risks." This is George's thinking as he refuses to cooperate with the kid who's trying to steal his car (and, George believes at the time, trying to kill him.) What principle is he referring to? Can you think of situations like this one in your own life, in which sticking to a right-minded principle backfired?
9. "Could insular John Banion, so shocked and overwrought by what those images stimulated in him—could that man have admitted as much to anybody else?" What do you think the video stimulated in John? Why do you think it unsettled him so much? Do you think George is right that it would be tougher on John to watch the footage than it would be on his female counterpart, Cassie?
10. The title comes from the legal term *statute of limitations*—the period of time after which one can no longer be held accountable for a crime. Why do you think the author chose this title? How is this a story about limitations, George's and those of the other characters? Do you think that the fundamental concepts of right and wrong are constant, or do they change over time?
11. George and Patrice's attitudes about the law—and the world—differ significantly, and we learn that those differences are an essential element of their long-lasting marriage. As an architect, she believes that "Buildings can stand for centuries. Beauty, above all, endures. Attorneys, by contrast, just mince around with words." Do you think most people find meaning in beauty or in justice—on George's side or Patrice's? Do you think the question breaks down along gender lines? Which side do you tend toward?

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