



FLATIRON  
BOOKS  
NEW YORK

# *Tell Me Everything* Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Tell Me Everything*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to occasionally reveal spoilers. If you have not finished reading *Tell Me Everything*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. *Tell Me Everything* opens with these lines: “I became a private investigator because of my face. It’s an ordinary-looking face, but if I ask, ‘How are you?’ sometimes people start crying.” In what ways do you think these lines set the tone for what’s to come? Why do you think Erika has this experience? How does her life change when she gets a broken nose and her face is no longer the same?
2. When Grayson first approaches Erika with this case, she nearly turns it down because she “didn’t protect women, or make justice happen . . . I was nobody. Unqualified, and too qualified. I understood rape victims and I understood rapists, and I didn’t want to understand either, ever again.” Why do you think she felt this way? And despite feeling this way, why do you think she ultimately agreed to work the case?
3. After buying Daisy lunch in hopes of getting her to agree to testify in court, Grayson observes how Daisy acted toward Erika and asks, “You know Daisy thinks she’s your friend, right?” Erika often worries that she gets too intimate with her subjects and earns their trust only to use them to further the case. What are some of the moral ambiguities of her work, specifically regarding her relationship with Daisy?
4. Erika describes Grayson as someone “who was going to make lemonade from lemons because he wanted lemonade. If there were no lemons he’d squeeze whatever he could find—a steak, a stick, a clod of dirt. And it would taste the way he wanted it to.” How would you describe Erika and Grayson’s relationship? How are their approaches to the case similar? How are they different?
5. In martial arts, Erika describes her approach to winning as “the nail hammers the hammer with tiny, relentless strokes.” What do you make of this line? How does this same mentality reflect in her PI work?
6. During the investigation, one of the football players tells Erika, “The stuff that happens here, well, that happens everywhere. Everywhere. It’s just the general culture of recruiting

trips.” What general culture is he referring to, and in what ways do universities perpetuate it? What do you think should be done to effectively break the cycle?

7. Reflecting on the investigation, Erika writes, “I couldn’t tell which we were dealing with, crimes that created a culture, or a culture that created a crime.” Discuss this passage. Based on your lived experience, do you have an opinion either way?
8. Reflecting on the condition of the building where she earned her master’s degree in English literature, Erika writes, “It was clear what the university valued. What would they do to protect it?” How do these disparities on campus affect students and student life? What are the pros and cons of college sports, as argued in this book?
9. Erika writes about how her mother would often remind her that she was not deserving of love and happiness. She reflects: “I did not understand love, although I had often felt it. I just didn’t know how it was supposed to work once you separated the feeling from itself and turned it into action, doing things together.” What do you think she means? As she continues to investigate the case, Erika feels a pressing need to face her mother and the pain she endured as a child so that she can better understand her work and herself. Why do you think she feels this way?
10. How does Erika’s complicated relationship with her mother and siblings differ from the one she has with JD? How does she struggle in her marriage, and how do she and JD support each other?
11. Erika reflects on the difficulty she felt in speaking out against her own abuser and writes, “I had been taught to keep it to myself.” How does society enable or even promote the silencing of women? What “hidden rules” are women supposed to follow? How do these rules differ for men?
12. While sparring at the Brazilian jiu-jitsu academy, Ernie breaks Erika’s nose. Instead of calling to apologize to her, he calls to apologize to JD. Why do you think he does that? How do you perceive Erika’s gender affecting her experience in martial arts and as a PI?
13. When Riley explains to Erika why she decided to continue working as a trainer after getting raped by a player, she says, “I didn’t want the rape and the team to have control over my life and my future. I didn’t run away. I stayed. At first I felt pretty vulnerable. But now it’s empowering.” What do you think she means? Do you sympathize?
14. When the case implodes and gets dismissed by a federal judge, Erika begins to lose her sense of purpose. She writes, “Justice wasn’t blind—it was random. I felt sickened by the lost case, like I had the flu.” Given how affected Erika was by this case, do you think she should have taken it on in the first place? What do you see as the positive and negative consequences of her work as a PI?

15. Erika contemplates what freedom actually is and reflects on what JD told her: “But JD was right—freedom comes from losing our illusions. It’s not giving up to see clearly ahead of you. Some things we can’t have, even if we try our whole lives.” What does she mean? Do you think Erika finds her freedom, and if so, how?