



## 15 Seconds

By Andrew Gross  
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### Questions for Discussion

1. The book's epigraph is a quote from Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. How does this set the tone for the events that follow? What are the main characters guilty of?
2. Two life-changing events in the novel happen in fifteen seconds. Talk about how life drastically changes so quickly for the characters involved. Can you think of other events that have happened in the blink of an eye, either to you or someone you know?
3. When Henry is first stopped he argues with the patrolman Martinez, escalating tensions. How would you have responded to a cop like Martinez? When he sees the cop being shot, Henry believes that the whole world will think he did it. Was he right to assume this? What other assumptions does he or other characters make that fuel misunderstandings?
4. After everything that happens, Henry can't despise his nemesis. "Twisted as he was, he was acting as a father, too, a desperate one." Do you agree with this? If you're a parent, how far would you go for your children—either to protect them or punish someone you thought had injured them?
5. Were the elements that held Vance's life together—work, family, dignity—taken from them, or was he responsible for losing them? How much responsibility does he bear for the outcome of his life?
6. Think about the structure of the novel. Andrew Gross begins by telling parallel stories, which eventually connect. How does this build the story's suspense?
7. Were Vance's actions understandable? Was he making a "guilty person" pay? Or was he actually enabling his daughter to shirk from responsibility?
8. Talk about the characters: Henry, Vance, Carrie. What kind of people are they? How do their experiences shape who they are, how they react to events, and the decisions they make?
9. Henry turns to several people for help, including his ex-wife and his nurse. If you were in trouble, who could you trust? What would you do if someone close to you called needing help like Henry? Could you break the law?
10. What made Carrie trust Henry and believe him enough to check out his story? Do you trust the police to do the right thing in an explosive situation like the one Henry found himself in? What mistakes did they make?