

***The Ice Princess* by Camilla Lackberg**

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Erica's initial involvement in the mystery of Alex's death is purely coincidental, but as time goes on she becomes obsessed with uncovering the truth about her childhood friend's past. What do you think motivates Erica to pursue this case so relentlessly?
2. Both a gifted painter and Fjällbacka's neighborhood drunk, Anders Nilsson lives a contradictory existence. As Lackberg writes, "he was born with an insatiable need for beauty at the same time that he was condemned to a life of filth and squalor" (page 160). What is your impression of Anders and how did it change as the novel progressed?
3. Alex and Anders form a close bond based on the shared trauma of their pasts, a relationship that is truly loving but also profoundly marked by sorrow. Reread Anders' description of Alex on page 217. What do you make of their relationship?
4. Erica continues to write her book about Alex's life despite having many reservations. Lackberg writes, "For the first time an idea for a book had really filled her with enthusiasm. There were so many other ideas that hadn't panned out and that she'd rejected over the years; she couldn't afford to lose this one." (page 300). Do you think the project is exploitative, or even selfish, or will Erica offer a respectful, balanced account that humanizes her subject? Do you think Erica has the right to publish this book?
5. Anna and Erica's strained relationship improves markedly after Anna leaves her abusive husband. How do both women begin to view each other differently once Lucas is out of the picture? What do you think they will resolve to do with their parents' house?
6. How do Anders's italicized passages contribute to the narrative as a whole? When did you discover the identity of the man in these scenes and what was it that tipped you off?
7. Karl-Erik and Birgit's decision to raise Julia leaves Alex with a constant reminder of the trauma of her childhood. But as Lackberg writes, "The sad thing was that—even if it was true that they had looked at Julia many times and were reminded of the horror of the past—she would never realize how much they loved her" (page 386).

Do you think that Karl-Erik and Birgit were well-intentioned in their decision or were they simply trying to sweep the tragedy under the rug?]

8. *The Ice Princess* is rife with examples of dysfunctional and adulterous relationships—from Alex and Henrik, to Dan and Pernilla, to Anna and Lucas. Do you think Läckberg intentionally paints a bleak portrait of marriage in general? Will Erica and Patrik fare any better as a couple?
9. Despite the quaint and scenic backdrop that Fjällbacka provides, the town has a dark and disturbing past. Discuss how the setting of this book influences the story. How does the uncovering of Fjällbacka's secrets parallel the demise of some of its most prominent residents?
10. The difficulty of parent/child relationships is a recurring theme in *The Ice Princess*, from Erica's frustration with her cold and distant mother, to Vera's fierce protectiveness of Anders, to Julia's deep-seated bitterness toward Karl-Erik and Birgit. How are the characters in this book influenced by their relationships with their parents?
11. Vera Nilsson's motive for murder stems from a desperate need to salvage her son's reputation: "Everyone would have pointed at him and talked to him," she says. "I did what I thought was right" (page 429). Do you think Vera is at all sympathetic? Why or why not?