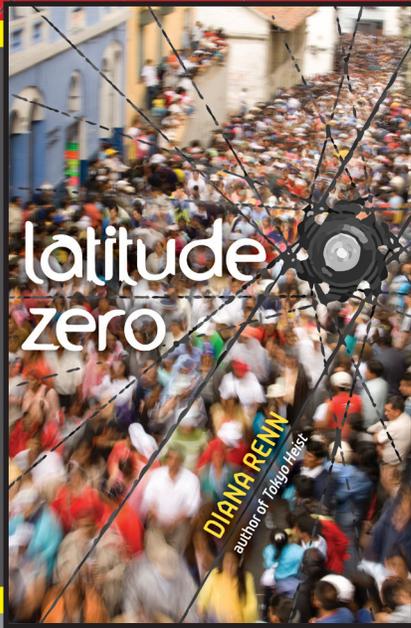


DISCUSSION GUIDE



“I have to run,” said Juan Carlos. “You will call? Please? It is very important.”
“Yes. I will call. Definitely. At two.”

That’s what Tessa promises. But by two o’clock, young Ecuadorian cycling superstar Juan Carlos is dead, and Tessa, one of the last people ever to speak to him, is left with nothing but questions. The media deems Juan Carlos’s death a tragic accident at a charity bike ride, but Tessa, a teen television host and an aspiring investigative journalist, knows that something more is going on. While she grapples with her own grief and guilt, she is being stalked by spies with an insidious connection to the dead cycling champion. Tessa’s pursuit of an explanation for Juan Carlos’s untimely death leads her from the quiet New England backwoods to bustling bike shops and ultimately to Ecuador, Juan Carlos’s homeland. As the ride grows bumpy, Tessa no longer knows who is a suspect and who is an ally. The only thing she knows for sure is that she must uncover the truth of why Juan Carlos has died and race to find the real villain—before the trail goes cold.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ❑ How does Juan Carlos’s cultural background set him apart from his teammates? Why do you think his teammates and coaches, who interact with him every day, crack jokes about his background? Why does Tessa sympathize with Juan Carlos when his teammates make fun of him?
- ❑ At the beginning of the novel, Tessa claims that she is bandit riding with Jake in order to help “relight his fire.” However, there is much more brewing underneath her clean-cut image. What other motives might she have to participate in this charity ride without paying the fees?
- ❑ You’re taking all the energy you put on to Jake and transferring it to this [Juan Carlos] guy,” Kylie says to Tessa when Tessa begins spending hours at Compass Bikes volunteering for his cause. Do you agree? Why or why not? Why do you think Tessa was so invested in solving the mystery of Juan Carlos’s death?
- ❑ Volunteering plays an essential role in the events of this novel, from Chain Reaction to KidVision, Compass Bikes, Volunteer, and Vuelta. Why do so many characters share this same basic instinct to help others? How are their motivations similar or different? Do you currently volunteer? What is your motivation? Would you volunteer for any of the organizations or causes mentioned in the book? Why or why not?
- ❑ Even though it originally started as a way for her to bond with Jake, Tessa feels a strong attachment to cycling. Why do you think this is? How does her attitude toward cycling change throughout the book, and what causes it to change? Have you ever adopted the interests of someone (a friend, a crush, a boyfriend/girlfriend) as your own? Did the interest outlive the relationship with the other person?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- ❑ The Ruizes seem to connect more with Mari, possibly because of her Ecuadorian background. Could Tessa have done more to connect with the Ruizes, or vice versa? How would you describe Tessa's feelings about her host family? Do they change in the novel? Have you felt cultural divides in your life? How have you tried to overcome them?
- ❑ At one point, Tessa laments, "Why did I always manage to let people down when I was trying to do the right thing?" In what ways does Tessa feel she lets people down? Can you think of other examples where doing the right thing for some people may involve doing the wrong thing for others? Is there a way to avoid this paradox, in the novel or in life?
- ❑ Upon learning that the equatorial line in Ecuador was off the mark by a few yards and had to be remapped, Tessa reflects that "our lines about what's right or wrong" are always shifting as well. Do you agree with the conclusion she comes to about ethics? Do you believe right and wrong depend on circumstances, or are they absolutes?
- ❑ Did the relationship arc between Tessa and Santiago end the way you thought it would? Compared to Jake and to Juan Carlos, does Santiago seem like a better fit for her? Why or why not?
- ❑ What do you think of Tessa's talents as a sleuth? What skills does she bring to her sleuthing, and where might she fall short? How would you have handled the same situation?
- ❑ What skills does Mari bring to the table as a Tessa's sleuthing partner? What motivations were behind Mari's involvement in uncovering the truth of Juan Carlos's death? How might this story be different if Mari were the main sleuth?
- ❑ Why do you think the world of professional cycling (or sports in general) may be susceptible to corruption? Which characters in the cycling world seem particularly vulnerable to the temptation of getting involved in illicit activities? In what ways do they give in to this temptation -- or resist it? Can you think of other sports that seem vulnerable to corruption?

Questions by Lourdes Keochgerien, YARN (Young Adult Review Network) Editor-at-Large
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See next page for activities!

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ACTIVITIES

- ❑ Create your own fantasy cycling team. (Or a team for some other sport). Imagine you are the owner or manager of this team. What would the team be called? What companies would sponsor it, and why? How would you encourage companies to invest in your team? Think of the challenges that Team EcuAbar management faced in *Latitude Zero*. How would you try to combat similar challenges that your own team might face?
- ❑ Many pro cyclists on the international stage have come out of Latin America, mostly Colombia. Visit The Cycling Inquisition blog (<http://www.cyclinginquisition.com>) or another resource to learn about one or more cyclists from Ecuador, Colombia, or another country in Latin America. Do they have anything in common with Juan Carlos or other cyclists depicted in *Latitude Zero*? What similarities and differences can you find? Create a poster presentation or a blog post about this athlete to introduce that person to a wider audience.
- ❑ In *Latitude Zero*, Tessa creates a vlog (video blog) to profile teens who are working for good causes. Create a vlog that profiles kids or teen who volunteer, or a volunteer organization that you know of.
- ❑ List all the volunteer activities related to bicycles or bicycle advocacy that are mentioned in *Latitude Zero*. Then research similar volunteer activities in your area. Create a web page, brochure, or other type of guide to these activities. Or, choose one volunteer activity, and persuade an audience of the importance of getting involved. If you can't find any bike-related volunteer activities, invent your own, and convince people to donate time or money to your cause!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diana Renn writes contemporary mysteries for young adults. TOKYO HEIST (Viking/Penguin), an Indie Next Pick, was published in 2012, and her next novel from Viking, LATITUDE ZERO, releases in July 2014. Diana has published numerous short stories and essays, and she is also the Fiction Editor at YARN (Young Adult Review Network), an award-winning online magazine featuring short-form writing for teens. A Seattle native, Diana now lives outside of Boston with her husband and young son.

