

# Richard Paul Evans

---

## Reading Group Discussion Guide

### *The Last Promise*

1. How important to the story is the setting of *The Last Promise*? Could the story have been set somewhere else, or do you feel the story is unique to its locale?
2. Discuss the role of art in the lives of Eliana, Maurizio, Anna, and Ross. What, if anything, does each give and derive from art in his or her life? How would each of these characters define the concept of beauty?
3. Do the Italian characters in *The Last Promise* treat the American characters differently than they do each other? Do you think this is true in life as well as literature? How do different cultures respond to visitors? Does your opinion change when the word “visitors” is replaced by the word “tourists”?
4. In addition to bonds of love, the bonds of family play a crucial role in *The Last Promise*. Compare and contrast the relationships of Anna and Maurizio and Ross and Stan.
5. The story of the Vestal Virgins recurs throughout *The Last Promise*. How reflective is that story of Eliana’s life?
6. Richard Paul Evans uses Italian proverbs to limn the theme of each chapter. Were there any proverbs you identified strongly with? Any you disagreed with? Are there some that apply exclusively to Italian life, or are they universal?
7. The love of a mother for her child is one of the strongest forces in nature. Discuss the mother-child relationships in *The Last Promise*. How is the relationship between Eliana and her son different from the relationship between Eliana and her mother? How about Maurizio’s relationship with his mother?
8. Does what *The Last Promise* tells us of Maurizio’s father explain Maurizio’s attitude about his own son, Alessio?
9. How important are food and wine to *The Last Promise* and to your understanding of Italian life? Does it speak more to character or nationality that Ross is willing to cook and Maurizio is not? How about Eliana’s occasional yearning for American foods? Do they reflect on greater desire?
10. Everyone at Rendola seems to like Eliana, but why does everyone (except Maurizio’s own sister) side with Maurizio against Eliana when her relationship with Ross comes to light?
11. Ross tells Eliana that “love doesn’t give second chances.” Do you think this is true? How is this borne out, or not, in the story, in regard to Ross, Eliana, Anna, and Maurizio?

