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BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR

# Lisa Scottoline

"Powerful, poignant...  
unputdownable."  
—KRISTIN HANNAH

# LOYALTY

A NOVEL

BOOK CLUB KIT

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1.

Sicily's rugged landscape plays a central role in the novel. How do you think various characters—such as Lucia, Franco, Alfredo, and Gaetano—were shaped by their surroundings? In what way does the landscape serve as a metaphor for the often brutal conditions of life in Sicily in the 1800s?

2.

There is a wide range of marital relationships in *Loyalty*. How would you compare and contrast the marriages of Mafalda and Turi, Roberto and Bruna, Gaetano and Maria? Do any of these marital dynamics shed light on the others?

3.

What do you think was the biggest turning point for Franco in his journey toward becoming a mafioso? Was there a crucial scene which, if it had progressed slightly differently, could have changed his path? Did you sympathize with him at any point? If so, did you stop sympathizing with him as the novel progressed? Is he a hero or a villain?

4.

Why do you think the novel is titled *Loyalty*? What role does loyalty play in the lives of each of the main characters and how effectively does it govern their actions? Which characters are more loyal than others? Which are less loyal? How does loyalty in the context of a domestic family relate to loyalty as it is expected within a Mafia family? Is loyalty different from blind faith, and when does it become pernicious?

5.

The lives of Franco, Lucia, Gaetano, Alfredo, and Dante have separate starts in this novel, but over time they intertwine and inform one another. Which meetings between characters do you think were the most important? How do you think these characters would have developed if they had never come into contact with one another?

6.

Gaetano leads a double life for much of this novel, torn between his duty to justice and his duty to his family. Which types of duty clash most in your daily life, and how do you navigate your priorities? Do you agree with the way Gaetano navigated his own conflict?



7.

If you read the Author's Note, you learned that many scenes in the novel were based on real-life settings. Which of these locations would you most want to visit, and why?

8.

Scottoline's Fiorvanti family is fictional, but the origins of the Mafia are depicted accurately in this book, reflecting "legal, social, political, and even agricultural factors," as mentioned in the Author's Note. How did the depictions of the rise of the Mafia in *Loyalty* affect your understanding of that criminal organization? How did it change your perspective on more current depictions of the Mafia in popular culture, such as in *The Godfather* movies? What did you learn that most surprised you?

9.

As a former lawyer, Scottoline is interested in exploring in all her novels where the law comes into conflict with justice and how law can even thwart justice, which seems paradoxical. Where did you see law and justice conflicting in this book, and what did you think of the various characters' decisions when they were forced to choose between one or the other?

10.

Franco vows to buy Violetta's *erbanetti* every month for the rest of his life, and does so. What does this tell you about him? What have been the longest-standing promises in your life, and what do they mean to you? What kind of sacrifices do they take to maintain?

11.

The novel spans many years, most notably with a fifteen-year break in the middle. How did the main characters—Franco, Lucia, Dante, Alfredo, and Gaetano—change during this time? Did any of them change in ways you didn't expect?

12.

The book closes by stating that the most precious of all things is "a loving family." To what extent did the central characters in *Loyalty* have loving families? How might their development have been altered if they had had different families? What did you think about how they created their families?

13.

The novel ends on a happy scene, with the birth of Lucia and Dante's baby. But in the previous chapter, we learn that the Mafia in Sicily has only just begun its reign. What do you think will happen to each of the novel's remaining central characters after the book ends? How do you think the Mafia will continue to affect their lives, and how can love forge hope in troubled times?



# THE STORY BEHIND **LOYALTY**

A Q&A with Lisa Scottoline



## WHAT'S **LOYALTY** ABOUT?

I'm a novelist, so I love to tell a story, and *Loyalty* is the story of four characters who collide and do justice, and injustice, in Sicily of the 1800s. But after I did the research and taught myself what I needed to know, I realized the novel could be an epic story about what gives rise to crime and injustice anywhere. This would be in the go-big-or-go-home category, which may be the kind of thing that occurs to authors as they lose estrogen.

Anyway, to tell a story that big, I realized that for the first time ever, I would have to call upon my thirty-five years of writing thrillers and use that experience to write historical fiction. I don't view historical fiction as a departure from thriller writing, because I've always written about family, law, and justice, and *Loyalty* is a story about family, law, and justice, merely set in a different time and place. A distinction between these genres would elevate form over substance, and nobody wants that, least of all people smart enough to read a lot, or crazy enough to write a lot.

So I went big, with *Loyalty*.

If not now, when?

## WHY DID YOU WRITE **LOYALTY**?

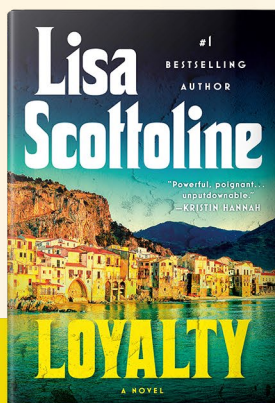
Maybe as we get older, we unpeel layers of identity and learn what really interests us, and every book is the answer to a question you ask yourself. I started writing historical fiction two years ago with *Eternal*, which I wrote because I wanted to understand why Italians followed Mussolini into fascism. I needed an answer as a personal matter because I'm Italian American and identify happily with

both cultures. But I found it appalling, shameful, and necessary to understand what gave rise to the world's first fascist party. *Eternal* answered that question for me, and for its readers.

Almost the same thing happened with *Loyalty*.

Frankly, I'd always been ashamed that the Mafia was Italian and came from Sicily. But at the same time, I loved Mafia books, film, and TV, and I can recite the *Godfather* movies. That's a paradox that bears examination, especially because images of Italian American criminality pervade popular culture, not to the benefit of Italian Americans. So I wanted to know more, and the question I asked myself specifically was: What gave rise to the Mafia in Sicily?

The answer is *Loyalty*.



# TRADITIONAL SICILIAN "S" COOKIES



A delicious Sicilian treat! Also known as *biscotti esse*, these cookies originated in Sicily—and are now a common treat across Italy. Pair them with your morning coffee for a breakfast sweet or enjoy after dinner.

**Prep time:** 10 mins **Cook time:** 15 mins **Total time:** 25 mins  
**Servings:** about 40 cookies

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## Ingredients

- 4½ cups all purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 eggs, plus 1 additional for egg wash
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- Zest of one lemon

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## Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Prepare several baking sheets by lining them with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and baking powder; set aside.
3. Add the eggs, sugar, oil, and lemon zest to your mixer bowl. Mix on low speed until combined.
4. Slowly add in the flour mix ½ cup at a time and mix on medium speed until you have a soft dough. Take care not to overmix the dough.
5. Dump out the dough onto a clean and lightly floured surface. Work the dough just a bit until it is smooth and cohesive.
6. Scoop out portions (2 tablespoons) of the dough and place on the floured surface. Roll each dough piece into a 4-5 inch strand (½-inch diameter). Form into an S and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. You could pull portions of dough and they could be between 3 to 8 inches long. I often have a mix of small, medium, and large cookies. Just bake cookies of the same shape on the tray together so they'll be ready at same time. If you bake large ones with a mix of smaller ones, the small cookies will be ready sooner and will then over bake.
7. Press cookies gently to flatten a little. Continue shaping the rest and place them about 1 inch apart.
8. In a small bowl beat the egg to make the egg wash. Brush each cookie with the egg wash.
9. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Store in an airtight container.

# BRUSH UP ON YOUR SICILIAN HISTORY!



## Did you know?

Sicily was first inhabited  
10,000 years ago.

In 1861, Sicily was incorporated  
into the united kingdom of Italy.

Sicily is home to Europe's  
largest active volcano, Mt. Etna.

The Sicilian language is still  
spoken on the island today. While  
most Sicilians do speak Italian,  
Sicilian is still widely spoken.  
Sicilian is completely different  
from Italian—not just a dialect,  
but a different language!

Sicily has a long history of being  
ruled by many different empires.

In fact, you can find some  
of the best Greek ruins in Sicily.

Sicily is the largest island in  
the Mediterranean Sea.

Sicily's volcanic soil and  
Mediterranean climate make it  
ideal for growing wine grapes.  
(You might just want to grab a  
bottle of Sicily's finest to  
enjoy with your book club!)

The cannoli originated in Sicily.  
The largest opera house in  
Italy is located in Sicily—Teatro  
Massimo in Palermo.