

I Heard You Paint Houses

Frank "The Irishman" Sheeran
and Closing the Case on Jimmy Hoffa

A Reader's Guide

Charles Brandt

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Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss Frank Sheeran's World War II experiences. Do you think they changed who he was, or simply revealed who he was? Would he have become a hit man if he had not been a member of General Patton's "Killer Division"?
2. What qualities made Russell Bufalino a leader? What made him successful in the criminal world, and do you think he could have been similarly successful in a "legitimate" line of work, such as business or politics?
3. What qualities made Jimmy Hoffa a leader? Was it necessary for him to form an alliance with the mafia and employ violence against his rivals within the union movement in order to stay on top? If not, why do you think he did?
4. Russell and Jimmy were the two men Frank respected most in the world, and clearly he had deep affection for both. In the end, Russell had more power over Frank than Jimmy did. However, which man do you think meant more to him? Why?
5. Much has changed since the 1960s and 1970s when most of this story takes place. For instance, neither the mafia nor labor

unions wield the power they once did. To what degree and in what ways have societal institutions and practices, such as the media, the police, politics, gender roles and race relations remained the same?

6. Have modern technologies now available to law enforcement, such as electronic surveillance and DNA testing, reduced rampant corruption and criminality in our society, or do you think criminals have simply gotten more sophisticated?
7. What do you make of Frank Sheeran's possible involvement with the assassination of JFK? Do you think Kennedy's murder was a mob hit?
8. Now that you have read Frank Sheeran's confessions as well as the independent corroboration contained in the book's Epilogue and Conclusion, do you have any doubts about Frank's role in the killings of Joey Gallo and Jimmy Hoffa? How much does the fact that author Charles Brandt is a former homicide prosecutor and interrogation expert influence your opinion?
9. Do you think Frank had options when it came to killing his friend Jimmy? Could he have saved him or do you agree with Frank's assessment that "if they had decided not to use me in the thing Jimmy would have been just as dead and . . . I'd have been dead along with him?"
10. Was Frank Sheeran, a man who confessed to the murder of more than 25 people, likeable? Was he a man of honor? Why or why not?