

Kenzie Gilmore

Gilt Edge

Biba Pearce



Discussion Topics

Choose your book below to download the accompanying discussion guide.

Be warned! There are spoilers in the guides, so make sure you've finished reading the book first.

Discussion Topics for *Gilt Edge*

1. Cultural Restitution and the Ethics of Art Collecting

- **Topic:** The catalyst for the plot in *Gilt Edge* is the murder of pharmaceutical magnate Malcolm Hargreave, who acquired rare Japanese antiquities—including a ceremonial katana stolen from a temple in Yamagata—through illicit shell companies. Kenzie's *New York Times* article on stolen art is found sitting on his desk at the crime scene.

- **Discussion Angle:** Does private ownership of looted cultural heritage justify drastic measures of restitution? How does the book explore the moral boundary between legal art collecting and cultural theft?
2. **Crowdsourced Justice vs. Online Vigilantism**
- **Topic:** The novel heavily features "The Evidence Room," a private Discord server where amateur sleuths, tech experts, and retired cops dissect crime scene photos and crowdsource leads. While Kenzie uses the group to gather intelligence under the alias "ReporterGirl", Reid views such groups as nuisances that leak confidential evidence and obstruct formal police work.
 - **Discussion Angle:** What are the benefits and dangers of armchair detectives participating in active murder investigations? Does public digital engagement democratize justice, or does it encourage dangerous vigilantism?
3. **The Psychology of the Performative Killer**
- **Topic:** The "Samurai Killer" (revealed as Arlo Brandt, using the handle *FieldNotes*) stages elaborate, theatrical crime scenes using tetrodotoxin (pufferfish poison), ceremonial katanas, and public placements. His true motive is not cultural ideology, but a narcissistic desire to curate the "perfect mystery" for the online true-crime group to solve.
 - **Discussion Angle:** How does Arlo Brandt manipulate online true-crime culture to feed his own narcissism? In an era of viral true-crime media, how do performative killers exploit public interest for fame and control?
4. **False Identities and Calculated Misdirection**
- **Topic:** Throughout *Gilt Edge*, false identities are used to steer the investigation away from the truth—FieldNotes steals the identity and car of an innocent man (Jeff Oliver) to act as his patsy, while Mason Radloff (*AlexR*) harbors secret personal trauma regarding his sister Emily's unresolved death.
 - **Discussion Angle:** How do the various characters' secret identities and hidden motives build mistrust throughout the story? How did the killer successfully use public bias toward ideological motives (e.g., Japanese nationalist groups) as a red herring?
5. **Evolution of Kenzie and Reid's Professional Dynamic**
- **Topic:** Compared to their early, fraught interactions in *Afterburn*, *Gilt Edge* shows Kenzie working as an official, vetted department consultant for Sweetwater PD while also producing her own investigative podcast, *Off the Record*.
 - **Discussion Angle:** How has the relationship between Kenzie and Reid evolved from *Afterburn* to *Gilt Edge*? How do they balance their romantic partnership with the professional boundaries required by police protocol and investigative reporting?