

## Reading Group Guide

### *Consequence* by Steve Masover

1. The novel's title implies at least two meanings: a desire to act consequentially, with significant effect; and (punitive) outcome as a result of one's choices and actions. How is each of these meanings expressed thematically in *Consequence*?
2. The Triangle is a household composed of "chosen family". How was the household in *Consequence* portrayed in comparison to other chosen-family households in your experience, in your imagination, or in books you might have read (examples: Doris Lessing, *The Good Terrorist*; Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*; Toni Morrison, *Paradise*; Carolyn Chute, *The School on Heart's Content Road*).
3. Brendan seems drawn to revive his relationship with his former lover, Allison. Christopher hopes a relationship with Suvali might help him emerge from long, simmering, unrequited passion he feels for Allison, and from a solitude he feels despite his close relationships with other housecomrades at the Triangle. How does the longing for intimacy, and its elusiveness, relate to the motivations of characters in *Consequence*?
4. What pulls Chris into the plot hatched by Chagall and Romulus despite doubt, misgivings, and warning signs? What outcome did he anticipate? What sacrifice was Chris prepared to make?
5. Many would call a person like the character Chagall a "terrorist" and consider that there's little more to say about him, relying on "terrorist" as a comprehensive description. How does the novel portray Chagall in more nuanced terms than this simple label? Is the portrayal convincing? How did getting to "know" Chagall change how you think or feel about people who engage in acts of sabotage?
6. What does a reader really know about Chagall? Is the bargain proposed in the Epilogue likely to lead to his capture? If not, what might become of him? What are the moral implications of the bargain? Would justice be served by capturing Chagall?
7. Zac describes Allison, at the end of Chapter 14, as the Triangle's "true believer." Zac says to Jonah that, "In some ways, it's her certainty that keeps us together." How does Allison hold the collective together? How does she hold a place at the novel's center despite the fact that few scenes are narrated from her point of view?

8. What perspectives or insights do readers gain from the novel's minor characters, Suvali and Buzz? What about Chris's father, Professor Kalman?
9. Why might the author have chosen 2004 as the setting for this novel? How does the historical background of that period affect the novel's vividness or its impact?
10. Genetic engineering and agribusiness are the main political issues addressed by the activist characters in *Consequence*; but each of the characters is interested and involved in other issues. What coherent or contradictory political principles drive the novel's activists?
11. How would you describe the emotional tone or 'temperature' of the story at the conclusion of the novel's final chapter? Does that change by the end of the epilogue?
12. What is the author's intent in using past- and present-tense narration in *Consequence*? How does this affect the reader's understanding of the story? [Chagall's and Romulus's chapters are told in present tense; chapters set in San Francisco and the Bay Area are told in past tense, until the end of Chapter 32, at which point the Triangle's chapters switch to present-tense.]
13. None of the members of The Triangle express satisfaction—not even privately—when Chagall and Romulus bring their plan to fruition. Given who the Triangle activists are, is that a realistic portrayal, or was the author being too careful not to show any “approval” of the saboteurs' tactics?
14. How much did sibling rivalry motivate Chris and his brother in their relations with each other? Individually?
15. What do you think *Consequence* is saying about the effectiveness of grassroots protest in today's world, and the people who engage in it? Do you share the author's perspective on the value and purpose of radical political action?
16. What is the value of this novel to the dialog in society on these kinds of issues?

<http://www.stevemasover.net/Consequence>