

Discussion Questions for *The Christmas Train* by David Baldacci

(Some questions taken or adapted from <http://www.davidbaldacci.com/web/content/view/297/186>

Page references are to the Warner Books paperback)

1. Did you like the book? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Did you like the characters? Did you find them believable? Who was your favorite? Least favorite?
3. Did you find the dialog in the story realistic?
4. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot? Did the plot take turns you did not expect, or did you find it predictable?
5. What is Tom Langdon's first impression of train travel in the United States?
6. What roles do Regina (the sleeping compartment attendant) and Agnes Joe (Tom's well-known train neighbor) play in the novel?
7. How does Eleanor deal with seeing Tom again?
8. How does setting the novel at Christmas time add to the storyline? What themes and premises emerge as a result of this holiday setting? Do you consider this to be a Christmas book?
9. Discuss how the snow blizzard adds to the character development.
10. Most of the book is told from Tom's viewpoint. Is he a reliable narrator? How does the author use point of view and tone to develop his character?
11. Do you think the portrait of a cross country train trip is accurate? Does anyone have any interesting train stories to tell?
12. Who has seen the movie *North by Northwest*? Any comments on the way Tom refers to it? Any comments on his frequent references to Mark Twain?
13. Near the beginning of the book (p. 14), before Tom even departs, he muses: "Trains had a nostalgic magnetism that was undeniable, even for the many Americans who'd never even been on one." Do you agree with this?
14. A downsized employee of the railroad says (p. 133): "Future doesn't look too good for long-distance passenger trains. Government's talking about busting Amtrak up, privatizing, spinning off the Northeast Corridor." This is followed by a bit of a lecture about the value of passenger rail in the US. Any comments or reactions?
15. Any comments about the way the book ended? Does the ending lend itself to the holiday theme of renewal and second chances?
16. Are there any questions you would like to ask?