

Discussion Questions for *Quiz Show*

Some of the major characters to watch for: Herb Stempel, Dan Enright, Charles Van Doran, Dick Goodwin, Al Freedman, Jack Barry

1. How do you think that the quiz show scandals of the 1950s (and there were others) influenced television, if at all? Are you familiar with recent television programming that has taken a similar approach (e.g., representing itself as reality when it is instead scripted)? And why might that matter?
2. But what's the big deal? This is television. People don't expect it to be truthful. It's *entertainment*, not real life. That's the NBC producers' point at the end in their testimony to Congress. Besides that, one says, everybody wins when it the show is rigged—the public is entertained, the ratings go up, the network and sponsors make money, the contestants win money and become celebrities. So what's the problem?
3. Comment on the character of Charles Van Doran—his conflicts and decisions and possible rationales for these decisions. Why did he do it? And what, if anything, can we learn from his journey?
4. Late in the movie, Charles asks a question of Dick that could be asked of each one of us: “If someone offered you all this money to be on some rigged quiz show, instant fame, the works, would you do it? ... Throw the whole thing in, the cover of *Time*, \$50,000 a year to [be on the Today Show—about \$450,000 in 2014 dollars]. Would you do it?” His point is that the temptation is too great to resist. At what price do you think you might compromise your integrity?