



READING GUIDE

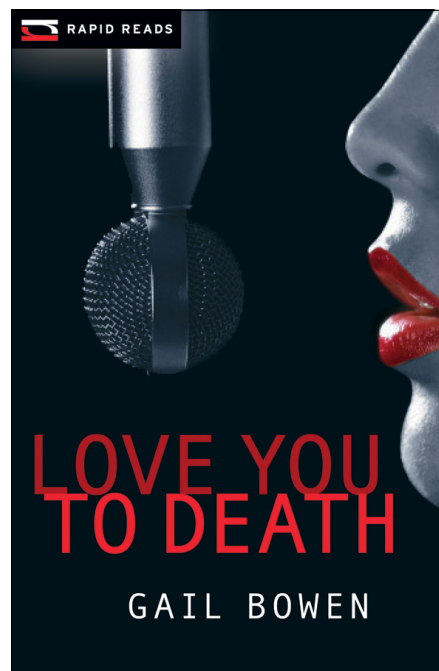
LOVE YOU TO DEATH GAIL BOWEN

Reading level: 4.2

Interest level: Adult

Themes: mystery, suspense, literacy

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Summary

When radio host Charlie D hits the airwaves at 11:00 every night, he leaves behind Charlie Dowhanuk: heartbroken, unable to trust, a blood-red birthmark covering half his face. Behind the mic, Charlie D is a charismatic, wise-cracking stud who holds people together as their lives fall apart. His show, *The World According to Charlie D*, has a huge following. It's where people turn when they don't know where else to go.

But lately, several among Charlie's faithful flock of listeners have turned up dead. Clues have been arriving in the station mail—clues that point to one of Charlie's listeners as the killer. Charlie and his producer, Nova, agree to help the police flush out the killer during tonight's broadcast. He or she will be listening; there's no doubt of that.

All night, Charlie probes his callers for clues about who's behind the violence. Every fan is a suspect. Charlie is forced to dig deep within himself to keep his cool when he has to listen to what seems to be the death of one of his most loyal followers. The pressure's on: he's got to pinpoint the perpetrator before anyone else gets killed.

But true to her obsession, the suspect can't stay away from Charlie for long. In a surprise maneuver that puts Nova's life at risk, the murderer reveals herself at the radio station. In person.

When the killer learns the man behind the voice is no match for the perfection she'd envisioned, her dream is shattered. But in bringing Charlie to the edge, she helps him realize he has nothing to hide.





Questions for Discussion

1. Early in the story Charlie D says that 90 percent of life is just showing up. What does he mean?
2. What's the attraction in assuming a different personality? How does radio allow Charlie to do this? What other avenues are available to people for presenting a different face to the world than who they really are?
3. The psychologist asks Charlie to call him Dr. Apple—but says he'll address Charlie by his first name. Nova says it's a power thing. Have you witnessed a similar power imbalance in the real world? Explain.
4. How does the author create real characters through her descriptions? Find a descriptive passage and share it with the group.
5. What do you know about the word *emo*? What does it represent?
6. Nova and Charlie understand the personalities of many of their listeners. How does this help them as they work to solve the mystery?
7. In chapter three, Charlie tells us that words can lie, but voices can't. Do you agree? Why or why not?
8. Charlie says sooner or later, even the greatest love brings us grief. What's your opinion of his statement? Is he right?
9. At the end of chapter six, Charlie is afraid he's losing control. Why does this scare him so much? Is he unique, or do many of us feel this way?
10. Nova's grandmother once said, "We have to grow where we're planted." What did she mean? Do you agree with her wisdom?
11. The network stopped taking Marion the Librarian's calls, saying she didn't fit the target audience of the show. She was too old. Can you think of other instances in the real world where we have been quick to dismiss the wisdom of older people? What do you think about the current craze for youth in our culture?
12. How did Janet's identity as a police officer help her gain access to Charlie?
13. We're often taken by surprise when we meet someone in person whom we've only known on the radio, online or by telephone. Why is this? Discuss the importance of "putting a face to a name." Why does it matter so much to us?
14. How does Charlie's relationship with Nova change through the course of *Love You to Death*?
15. When Janet finally meets Charlie in the control booth, she is disappointed to find he isn't what she had imagined him to be. How is this a metaphor for real life?

