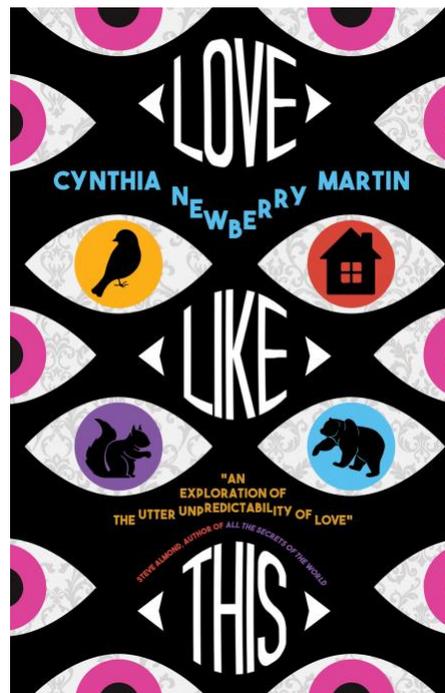


# READING GROUP GUIDE

## LOVE LIKE THIS

BY CYNTHIA NEWBERRY MARTIN



After twenty-two years with children at home, Angelina has been counting on the empty house to rediscover who she is, but it turns out her husband Will has been counting on something else. After only nine days, he announces he's been fired and is home to stay. So Angelina takes a job as a home health care nurse and is assigned to Lucy, an unpredictable woman with an uninhibited son, a billboard painter named John Milton.



## QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Twenty-two years is a long time to do anything. Angelina is ready for something else, and so is her husband Will—only not the same thing. How do you measure the value in sticking with something versus the value in changing things up? If you have a spouse, do they feel the same way you do?
2. What do you make of Angelina taking her clothes off in Chapter 1?
3. Why do you think Angelina goes back to work once Will is home to stay? In Chapter 15, when her daughter asks how it feels, Angelina responds that it feels the same. What does she mean?
4. How do you feel about Lucy when you first meet her and does that change during the novel?
5. Angelina and Lucy make quite a team. Why is that? After the incident with the dead squirrel, what changes for Angelina?
6. How would you describe John Milton? Why is Angelina intrigued?
7. Both Angelina and Lucy enjoy candy. What role does candy play in their relationship? How does candy factor into Angelina's relationship with Will?
8. Let's talk about Will. Angelina does a good job enumerating his weaknesses, but he has a lot of strengths. What are they?



9. Houses, houses everywhere. Discuss the different ways Angelina, Will, Lucy, and John Milton relate to houses. In what unexpected places do houses pop up?

10. Families of origin are powerful influencers. How do we see that reflected in Angelina, in Will, and in John Milton? How do you see it in your own life?

11. In novels, sometimes place works to unite characters. Would you say that's true in *Love Like This*? Think of the porch, the billboard, the trailers, Best Buy, the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River, the gym, Running on Empty, the Blue Ridge mountains.

12. Discuss the role of water in the novel. What does it mean to Will? To Angelina?

13. In the first half of the novel, movies and other books are an important way that Angelina relates to the world. In the second half of the novel, Will mentions a book. What do these references add to the overall experience of *Love Like This*?

14. In Chapter 39, Will says, "They were a hub. Thanksgiving and then Christmas." Do you know what he means by this? What are Angelina and Will holding together? What is holding them together?

15. In this novel, there are two points of view. Did you find yourself siding with one spouse or the other? If you have a spouse, do you think they would feel the same way you do?

16. In Chapter 45, Angelina wonders "if up against different people we become different people." Do you think that's true? Have you seen it in your own life? Does it make you want to meet new people?



17. Are Angelina and Will good for each other? What about Angelina and John Milton? How does the book's title apply to these relationships? How does it apply to the other characters and their relationships?

18. From the boxes Will makes in his basement workroom, he's able to build a new vision for this time in his life. How does he do this and what else contributes to his new vision?

19. Over the course of the novel, what do Angelina and Will learn about each other and marriage? Did *Love Like This* change your perception of the possibilities of marriage?

20. At the end of the novel, what do you think Angelina plans to do? What do you think Will thinks Angelina is planning to do? What would you be planning on doing?



## PRAISE FOR *LOVE LIKE THIS*

"*Love Like This* is an astonishment... An exploration of female identity, desire, and the utter unpredictability of love... The story shocked and delighted me." —**Steve Almond**, author of *ALL THE SECRETS OF THE WORLD*

"[M]y heart was stolen by Lucy and her son John Milton, characters whose lives are unusual and compelling. I will reread the billboard scene many times." —**Alice Elliott Dark**, author of *FELLOWSHIP POINT* and *IN THE GLOAMING*

"Intimate, brutal and compelling, this beautifully-paced novel is [Angelina's] Buddha's journey down from the hilltop..." —**Pam Houston**, author of *DEEP CREEK*, *FINDING HOPE IN THE HIGH COUNTRY*

"*Love Like This* renders the subterranean longings of women and men in midlife and midstream—at the end of one way of being and at the beginning of the next." —**Samantha Dunn**, author of *NOT BY ACCIDENT* and *FAILING PARIS*

"[E]ven the smallest, most ordinary events in Angelina's life are packed with powerful drama. At one point a character tells her 'The world is full of wonder.' So is this book." —**David Jauss**, author of *GLOSSOLALIA: NEW & SELECTED STORIES*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Newberry Martin's first novel, *TIDAL FLATS*, won the Gold Medal in Literary Fiction at the 2020 Independent Publisher Book Awards and the 14th Annual National Indie Excellence Award for Fiction. *LOVE LIKE THIS* is her second novel. *THE ART OF HER LIFE*, her third novel, will be published in June of 2023. Her website features the How We Spend Our Days series, over a decade of essays by writers on their lives. She grew up in Atlanta and now lives in Columbus, Georgia, with her husband, and in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in a little house by the water.