

"Fully realized, wholly absorbing and almost painfully suspenseful."

—NEW YORK TIMES

# THE OVERNIGHT GUEST

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

HEATHER  
GUDENKAUF

A NOVEL



# Discussion Guide

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. With Wylie's tragic history, why do you think she would choose to be a true crime writer where she is continually faced with the brutal realities of violence and its impact on victims and their families? Why do you think Wylie felt the need to return to Burden and her childhood home in order to write her book?
2. Discuss the rural setting of the novel. How do you think living in Burden shaped the characters? How would the story be different if it was set in a large city?
3. The child says, "It isn't the dark you should be afraid of...It's the monsters who step out into the light that you need to fear." What do you think they meant by this?
4. Wylie and Becky vowed to be "sisters forever." After all that they've been through, what do you think their friendship will look like? Will it last? Why or why not?
5. *The Overnight Guest* is set in a blizzard and in the scorching heat of summer. What role does weather play in the story, both literally and metaphorically?
6. The child says there are three kinds of dark. What is the relationship each character has to darkness? How does this change throughout the novel?
7. Parenthood is a common theme throughout the story. How does it manifest itself throughout the story? How did each of the characters step into the role?
8. Wylie, Becky, and Josie have been through so much. Where do you see them a year from now? Five years? Twenty?
9. Discuss the ways in which the idea of being a prison is explored throughout the story for each of the characters?
10. By the end of the novel, we learn secrets that change the way we think about certain characters and the way the characters see one another. What character do you think changed the most over the course of the book? How do your opinions of the characters change throughout the story.

## THE OVERNIGHT GUEST IOWA STATE FAIR MENU

*The Overnight Guest* takes place in two very different, very distinct seasons: the blistering heat of summer and in the middle of a brutal blizzard. But who says you can't have state fair food all year round? Take a look at these classic Iowa State Fair inspired recipe suggestions.

### JOSIE'S LEMONADE

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 5 cups water, divided
- 6 lemons, plus additional lemons, sliced for garnish
- Fresh mint for garnish

#### Directions:

1. In a small saucepan, heat 1 cup sugar with 1 cup water until the sugar is dissolved completely.
2. While the sugar is dissolving, juice lemons, enough to make one cup juice.
3. Add the juice and the sugar water to a pitcher. Add remaining 4 cups of water and refrigerate until chilled. If lemonade is too sweet, add a little more lemon juice to taste.
4. Garnish with fresh lemon slices and mint, if desired.



## ANYTHING ON A STICK!

The Iowa state fair is known for cuisine on a stick. Here are some perennial favorites.  
Add a stick and enjoy...

**Corn Dogs - *enough said!***

**Blue Ribbon Pizza Sticks**

**Fried Snickers**

**Chocolate-Covered Bacon**

**Crunchy Street Corn**

**Chicken and Waffle Sticks**

**Salad on a Stick - *it's exactly what it sounds like.***

**Fried Butter on a Stick. Yes - *it's a thing!***

### STATE FAIR DONUT ICE CREAM SANDWICHES

#### Ingredients:

6 cake donuts of your choice

1.5 qt of your favorite ice cream

Garnishes - mix and match - *be creative!*

*Toasted coconut flakes / Slivered almonds, toasted and chopped*

*Mini-chocolate chips / Sprinkles / Chopped bacon / Chopped peanut butter cups*

#### Directions:

1. Select your donuts and ice cream.
2. Cut each donut in half horizontally.
3. Place donuts sliced side down, on grill for 30 seconds to 1 minute or until toasted. Flip donuts and grill for 30 seconds to 1 minute more or until toasted.
4. Place scoop of ice cream on a donut slice and top with the second half.
5. Dip ice cream edges into candy and serve immediately.



# Discussion Guide

## *THE OVERNIGHT GUEST* PLAYLIST

Add a little background music with an *Everyone Is Watching* vibe.  
Check out the playlist on Spotify:

[open.spotify.com/playlist/1zTVOhpPLMLdFG1uv59LKX?si=pUV\\_5vIGRniz5L8M1Clm\\_Q](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1zTVOhpPLMLdFG1uv59LKX?si=pUV_5vIGRniz5L8M1Clm_Q)

1. **Winter Song by Sara Bareilles, Ingrid Michaelson**
2. **Seasons in the Sun by Terry Jacks**
3. **State Fair by Doug Supernaw**
4. **True Crime by Madilyn Bailey**
5. **Summertime Sadness by Lana Del Rey**
6. **Cruel Summer by Taylor Swift**
7. **Winter by Tori Amos**
8. **Stone Cold by Demi Lovato**
9. **This Town by Niall Horan**



# Discussion Guide

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