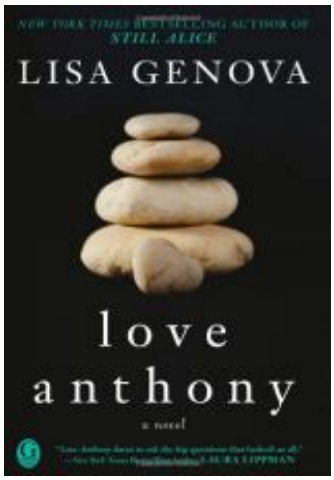
ReadingGroupGuides
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Love Anthony

by Lisa Genova



About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of STILL ALICE comes her heartfelt new novel about two women, each on the verge of change, who meet by accident on a Nantucket beach and are drawn to one another in friendship by their mutual need to make sense of their past, put it behind them, and grow.

Olivia is a young mother coping with the loss of her young autistic son. She comes to the island to separate herself from the life she led as wife and mother, and to start fresh, even as she tries to make sense of her tragedy --- mainly, why was Anthony born autistic, only to live such a short life?

Beth, a stay-at-home mother of three, is struggling with a separation after discovering her husband's long-term infidelity. To bring order to her tumultuous feelings, she rekindles a passion for writing, determined to find her own voice again. But curiously as she does so, Beth also find herself channeling the voice of an unknown autistic boy, exuberant in his perceptions of the world around him--a voice she can share with Olivia --- is it Anthony? --- that brings comfort and meaning to her.

Discussion Guide

1. How much did you know about autism before starting LOVE ANTHONY? Do you know anyone who has autism or an autistic person in his or her family?

2. What significance does the setting of Nantucket play in this story? Would the story have been different if it had taken place in New York City or Chicago?

3. Beth pulls a box out of her attic, filled with remnants from her old life, and is reminded of the woman she once was. If you were to go through a box from your attic, what items might you find?

4. On the subject of marriage and fidelity, Beth?s friend Courtney muses: ?You?re always at the mercy of the people you?re in a relationship with, right?? (p. 171) Do you agree? What do you think of the advice she offers Beth?

5. Do you think the author accurately captured the voice of a young autistic boy in the Anthony chapters? Did these sections enhance Beth?s story for you? What about Olivia?s journal entries?

6. After receiving David?s letter about his impending engagement, Olivia ponders the concept of happiness: ?He?s right. I forgot about happiness. At first, it wasn?t a priority. Anthony had autism, and every ounce of energy went into saving him. Her happiness was irrelevant?And then, just when she was starting to realize that happiness and autism could co-exist in the same room, in the same sentence, in her heart, Anthony died, and happiness was no longer a concept she could fathom? (p. 283). Do you think happiness is a conscious choice? Do you find it telling that Olivia uses the phrase ?saving him? in reference to Anthony and his autism?

7. Toward the end of the story, Olivia has an epiphany when she realizes that ?there was more to Anthony?s life than his death. And there was more to Anthony than his autism? (p. 283). What do you think finally enables Olivia to have this realization? Was it a singular event or a process?

8. When Jimmy and Beth share their homework assignments given to them by Dr. Campbell, were you surprised by Beth?s initial reaction? Why is forgiving Jimmy the one thing Beth can?t do?

9. After reading Beth?s novel, Olivia is convinced Anthony is speaking to her through Beth. Skeptical, Beth discusses the idea with the more spiritual Petra, who feels ?we?re all connected, even if we don?t know how. Maybe communicating through you gives you the something you need in this lifetime? (p. 308). Do you agree or disagree with Petra?

10. Through writing her book, Beth realizes ?this story was more about Anthony the boy than Anthony the boy with autism? she was simply writing about Anthony, a boy worthy of happiness and safety, of feeling wanted and loved. Just like her. The more she wrote about Anthony, the more she realized that she was actually writing about herself? (p. 331). How so?

11. Beth ultimately decides the lesson of her book is ?find someone to love and love without condition? (p. 332). Do you think this could also apply as an overall theme for LOVE ANTHONY? Can you find any others?

12. Which character did you relate to the most and why? Where do you see these characters in five years?

13. What do you think of Beth?s epilogue? Do you think it provides a satisfying ending to her story? To the novel as a whole?

14. Another recurring theme of LOVE ANTHONYis faith --- having faith, losing faith, and taking a leap of faith. Can

you remember a time in your own life when you took a leap of faith?

Author Bio

Acclaimed as the Oliver Sacks of fiction and the Michael Crichton of brain science, Lisa Genova is the *New York Times* bestselling author of STILL ALICE, LEFT NEGLECTED, LOVE ANTHONY and INSIDE THE O'BRIENS, EVERY NOTE PLAYED and MORE OR LESS MADDY.

STILL ALICE was adapted into an Oscar?winning film starring Julianne Moore, Alec Baldwin and Kristen Stewart. Lisa graduated valedictorian from Bates College with a degree in biopsychology and holds a PhD in neuroscience from Harvard University. She is featured in the documentary films *To Not Fade Away* and *Have You Heard About Greg*. Her TED talks on Alzheimer?s disease and memory have been viewed over 11 million times.

Critical Praise

"There?s a point in the narrative where one of the characters becomes so engrossed in reading a book that she loses track of time. Readers of Genova?s latest excellent offering might very well find the same happening to them."
?Kirkus

"Lisa Genova's novels ring true. LOVE ANTHONY, like Genova's two previous novels, is beautifully written, and poignant to the point of heartbreak...Anyone who has had even a passing contact with an autistic child will relate."
?*USA Today*

"Writing with deep empathy and insight, Genova has created an engaging story that fearlessly asks the big questions.?
?Booklist

?Autism is like a Zen *koan* --- a riddle without answers?with effects that are myriad, mysterious, and confounding. The same could be said about *love*. This book upended my perceptions of both conditions, leaving me feeling with my mind and thinking with my heart. Everyone should read this book!"
?Jamie Ford, bestselling author of HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET

"Lisa Genova has essentially created her own genre, the 'Lisa Genova' novel, in which complicated topics become accessible to readers through beautifully-drawn characters and profound, human-scale stories. LOVE ANTHONY dares to ask enormous questions, the big questions that bedevil all of us. Better yet, Genova has the wisdom to know which ones can be answered, and which cannot."
?Laura Lippman, *New York Times* bestselling author of AND WHEN SHE WAS GOOD

"LOVE ANTHONY broke my heart in the best way! I read it spellbound and breathless. If you don't know Lisa Genova's work already, meet your new favorite writer, storyteller, enchanter."
?Heidi W. Durrow, author of THE GIRL WHO FELL FROM THE SKY, winner of the Bellwether Prize

?Genova's deep and empathic insight once again has blown me away --- particularly her intensely accurate portrayal of autism parenting. Her characters are complicated people, with unique, believable and, sometimes frustrating struggles. But perhaps Genova's true mastery is in the way she never fails to give us very real people to love.?

?Susan Senator, author of MAKING PEACE WITH AUTISM

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