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# More Than You Know

by Beth Gutcheon




## About the Book

In a small town called Dundee on the coast of Maine, an old woman named Hannah Gray begins her story: "Somebody said 'true love is like ghosts, which everyone talks about and few have seen.' I've seen both and I don't know how to tell you which is worse." Hannah has decided, finally, to leave a record of the passionate and anguished long-ago summer in Dundee when she met Conary Crocker, the town bad boy and love of her life. This spare, piercing, and unforgettable novel bridges two centuries and two intense love stories as Hannah and Conary's fate is interwoven with the tale of a marriage that took place in Dundee a hundred years earlier.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** What does the title mean? To whom, other than the "boy of my heart" (p. 229), does it refer?

**2.** Hannah begins the story by writing "Some-body said 'True love is like ghosts, which everyone talks about, and few have seen.' I've seen both, and I don't know how to tell you which is worse" (p. 1). What does this mean? Why doesn't Hannah know how to tell which is worse? What prevents her?

**3.** Both Amos and Conary die tragically at young ages. What are the similarities and differences between the two deaths?

**4.** Much of the tension in More Than You Know derives from knowledge and mystery. What do characters' relationships to the search for truth and truth itself reveal about each character? What is your relationship to the truth in this nove?

**5.** Misunderstandings and arguments between Edith and her stepdaughter leave Hannah feeling utterly alone and desperate to get out of the house. What is Sallie's relationship with her mother? What role do Hannah's and Sallie's rather detached fathers play in their daughters' lives?

**6.** Hooks probes the gap between the values many people "claim to hold and their willingness to do the work of connecting thought and action, theory and practice" (p. 90). How does our culture reward those who nurture this gap? What changes would we have to make in society to nurture and inspire the closing of this gap?

**7.** Why does the ghost serve as the catalyst for Conary's death just as he's chosen to return to Dundee with Hannah?

**8.** If Hannah is the narrator of her own story, and if Mercy takes over the telling of the Haskell family story with excerpts taken from her manuscript, who is the narrator from whom Mercy's manuscript takes over? Who is telling that story? What is the effect of switching perspectives?

**9.** Discuss the way in which Beth Gutcheon uses music in this novel.

**10.** Hannah, Claris, and Sallie struggle with their families and feel hemmed in by parental strictures. How do their familial relationships prepare them for love? Is romantic love any less true if it serves as the vehicle for escape from troubles at home?

**11.** What binds the two stories together? Is it an accident of geography, or is there a greater force at work?

**12.** "I know there are feelings that survive death, but can they all? What if only the bitterest and most selfish are strong enough?" (p. 266) are Hannah's final questions. Does the novel provide answers?

## Author Bio

Beth Gutcheon is the critically acclaimed author of the novels THE NEW GIRLS, STILL MISSING, DOMESTIC PLEASURES, SAYING GRACE, FIVE FORTUNES, MORE THAN YOU KNOW, LEEWAY COTTAGE, GOOD-BYE AND AMEN, GOSSIP, DEATH AT BREAKFAST and THE AFFLICTION. She is the writer of several film scripts, including the Academy-Award nominee *The Children of Theatre Street*. She lives in New York City.

## Critical Praise

"An exceptional novel -- thrilling, taut, austere: this is extraordinary writing of a tense, crystalline beauty. "

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