



READING GUIDE

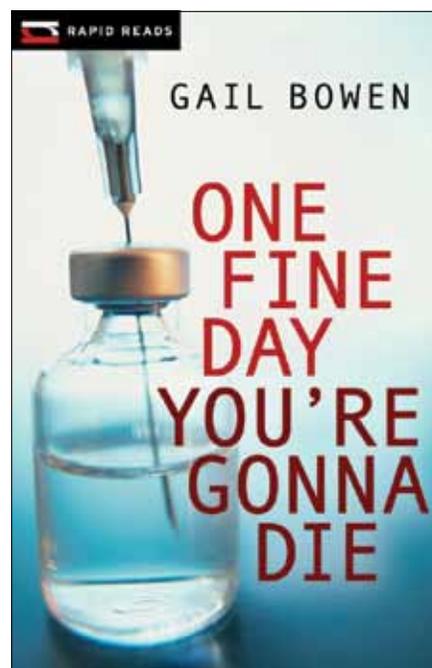
ONE FINE DAY YOU'RE GONNA DIE GAIL BOWEN

Reading level: 4.2

Interest level: Adult

Themes: mystery, suspense, literacy

978-1-55469-337-5 PB



Summary

For the Halloween broadcast of his late-night radio call-in show, *The World According to Charlie D*, Charlie has invited Dr. Robin Harris in to talk about death. As a thanatologist, Dr. Harris' expertise is in helping people deal with the "heavy lifting" that is often required in the face of a loved one's passing.

The problem is Dr. Harris doesn't appear to be terribly good at her job, as Charlie D finds out once she starts taking calls on the air. When grief-stricken callers simply need a receptive ear to unload their guilt and pain, Dr. Harris comes across as insensitive and pedantic. Charlie soon realizes that perhaps she wasn't the best guest for such an emotion-packed evening.

When Nova, the show's producer, allows Dr. Harris's jilted lover on-air and he reveals his imminent plans for killing himself, the good doctor loses her composure and walks out of the studio. But Charlie realizes Gabriel Ireland isn't making empty threats about the full vial of saxitoxin he's got at the ready. He sends Nova after Dr. Harris.

Pressed back into service at the microphone, Dr. Harris learns that Gabe has kidnapped her daughter and is planning to inject her with the deadly toxin too. With the stakes suddenly higher than she ever imagined, Dr. Harris finds herself completely unmoored by a situation over which she has no control. It's up to Charlie D to help her navigate the tricky emotional terrain in order to save her daughter's life.





Questions for Discussion

1. While on the air, Dr. Harris tells Charlie D that most of our suffering is self-induced. Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?
2. When an author gives the reader hints about what's coming up in the story, we call this *foreshadowing*. Reread the schoolyard rhyme at the end of chapter 1. How does this hint at what might come later? Can you find other examples of foreshadowing in *One Fine Day, You're Gonna Die*?
3. Charlie's first caller challenges Dr. Harris's ability to listen to other people's problems. Why does this threaten Dr. Harris so much?
4. At one point in the show, Charlie D observes that the door to the control room separates it from the world outside, where no one can control anything. How do you see it? Do we mostly have control over our lives? Or not? Explain your reasoning.
5. When is it good to be able to control things? Is it ever good to *not* be in control? Provide examples to support your reasoning.
6. Dante, a famous Italian poet of the Middle Ages and the author of *The Divine Comedy*, said: "There is nothing more painful than remembering happy days in times of sorrow." Do you agree? Explain.
7. As Gabe prepares to end his life (and Kali's), young Danny calls in to the show and explains the butterfly effect to him. He says that by killing his brother Liam, he robbed the world of what might have been. Think about this. If you had never been born, what impact would this have on the world? How would the butterfly effect work if someone you love had never been born? What if the last serious problem you faced had never happened? What would be different now?
8. Which saying do you prefer: *Tomorrow is another day* or *Nothing lasts forever*? Why?
9. Dr. Robin Harris has a strong need to feel like she's in control. Find selections from the story that support this fact.
10. In *One Fine Day, You're Gonna Die*, everybody's got some sort of issue. None of the characters are what we would call particularly "balanced." How does this make them interesting? Can you see any parallels to the real world?
11. At one time or another, day-to-day life can be difficult for each of us. Some people become overwhelmed and choose to pull the plug. Yet most people soldier on. Discuss.
12. What is it about death that we hate so much? What is the significance that Dr. Harris chose to center her life's work on studying it?
13. Dante also said that one of life's nasty surprises is that even our suffering is not unique. Why not? What other universals do humans share?
14. As you see it, what is the significance of the hearse that appears in both the first and last scenes of the novel?
15. In the last chapter, when Charlie says he wants to stick around and see what comes next, what do you think he means?

