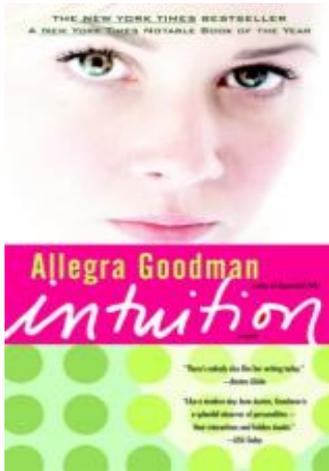


# Intuition

by Allegra Goodman

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## About the Book

Hailed as "a writer of uncommon clarity" by the *New Yorker*, National Book Award finalist Allegra Goodman has dazzled readers with her acclaimed works of fiction, including such beloved bestsellers as **The Family Markowitz** and **Kaaterskill Falls**. Now she returns with a bracing new novel, at once an intricate mystery and a rich human drama set in the high-stakes atmosphere of a prestigious research institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Sandy Glass, a charismatic publicity-seeking oncologist, and Marion Mendelssohn, a pure, exacting scientist, are codirectors of a lab at the Philpott Institute dedicated to cancer research and desperately in need of a grant. Both mentors and supervisors of their young postdoctoral protégés, Glass and Mendelssohn demand dedication and obedience in a competitive environment where funding is scarce and results elusive. So when the experiments of Cliff Bannaker, a young postdoc in a rut, begin to work, the entire lab becomes giddy with newfound expectations. But Cliff's rigorous colleague --- and girlfriend --- Robin Decker suspects the unthinkable: that his findings are fraudulent. As Robin makes her private doubts public and Cliff maintains his innocence, a life-changing controversy engulfs the lab and everyone in it.

With extraordinary insight, Allegra Goodman brilliantly explores the intricate mixture of workplace intrigue, scientific ardor, and the moral consequences of a rush to judgment. She has written an unforgettable novel.

## Discussion Guide

1. The word "intuition" means something different to each reader: it has positive and negative connotations. Is it an apt title? A great title? What role does intuition play in the novel and which characters display it? How?

2. Goodman's novel is set in the mid-1980s, and is rich with details that make it of that time. What did this backdrop add to the story? What might have changed if the action had been contemporary?
3. Are there any parallels between love and science as both play out in **Intuition**? What do Robin and Cliff discover about the experiment of their relationship as it unravels in part III of the novel?
4. Near the end of chapter eight, part IV, Goodman writes: "Robin's case against Cliff might as well have been a case against the status quo, an argument against the natural bumps and jolts of the creative process." What do you think of this statement, both as it relates to the action of the novel and as a theme? What is "the status quo" in a creative process? What influence did a place like the Philpott have on this process? Is there a place for creativity in empirical research?
5. Sandy is a charismatic character. Discuss your reaction to him in various modes: as a care provider with his patients; as a parent and spouse; as the public face of the Philpott. Are there conflicts? Is he likeable? Is he moral? What does your intuition tell you about his fate? Discuss his penchant for "useful" careers --- what do you see for his children?
6. Sandy and Marion are "de facto" parents at the Philpott. How does their professional relationship mirror or not their personal lives?
7. Given the information the novel relates, were the media or ORIS capable of determining the truth about R-7? Why? What did you think?
8. Kate gives Cliff a novel: **The Picture of Dorian Gray**. How and why is this revelatory and appropriate? What does it tell you about Kate as much as about Cliff?
9. Goodman's novels, including the National Book Award-nominated *Kaaterskill Falls*, do bring readers into otherwise closed worlds. What makes this work for you? Did you feel the pressure-cooker atmosphere of the research world, and the subsequent "celebrity" of the teams and how it changed their lives? How is this achieved by Ms. Goodman?
10. What does Marion discover she needs? Where will it come from? Who will provide it? Do you feel she's been betrayed? Why or why not?
11. What will the investigation prove? What did Cliff do? What did Robin achieve?

## Author Bio

Allegra Goodman's novels include *ISOLA* (a Reese's Book Club pick), *SAM* (a "Read with Jenna" Book Club selection), *THE CHALK ARTIST* (winner of the Massachusetts Book Award), *INTUITION*, *THE COOKBOOK COLLECTOR*, *PARADISE PARK* and *KAATERSKILL FALLS* (a National Book Award finalist).

Her fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere and has been anthologized in *The O. Henry Awards* and *Best American Short Stories*. She has written two collections of stories, *THE FAMILY MARKOWITZ* and *TOTAL IMMERSION*, and a novel for younger readers, *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND*. Her essays and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Republic*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe* and *The American Scholar*.

Raised in Honolulu, Goodman studied English and philosophy at Harvard and received a PhD in English literature from Stanford. She is the recipient of a Whiting Writer's Award, the Salon Award for Fiction, and a fellowship from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced study. She lives with her family in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## Critical Praise

"This is a story of love and science both gone wrong, and Goodman handles the narrative and its wide web of details with efficiency and grace, bringing a novelist's eye to bear on a realm too often ignored."

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