

Title: *Bad Ideas* by Missy Marston

- What is Together We Read?
- About the Author
- Author Letter
- About the Book
- Get the Book
- Discussion Questions
- Read-Alikes

Together We Read

Together We Read is a Digital Book Club featuring participating libraries in Canada. During this two-week program, from September 3-17, there will be no waitlists and no holds for the selected eBook. Download the OverDrive or Libby app to borrow the free eBook from your library using your phone or tablet. [Browse the list of past Together We Read titles](#)

Author Letter

Dear Reader,

It makes me very happy that *Bad Ideas* has been selected for Together We Read this summer.

It is a novel about a family of girls and women living in a small town whose lives are disrupted – whose whole community is disrupted – by outsiders. And it is about both the good things and bad things that come from these disruptions.

Preston Mills is a fictional town in Eastern Ontario on the shore of the St. Lawrence River. Like many real small towns between Kingston and Cornwall, Preston Mills is flooded when the river is widened in the 1950s to accommodate shipping traffic. Tens of thousands of men came to these towns – most with populations of less than 1000 people – and dismantled them. Houses and churches and schools were moved or demolished or burned to the ground. Even the dead were relocated: dug up and moved to new cemeteries. And then the towns were flooded. I grew up in one of these towns. Relics were everywhere: smashed up foundations, sidewalks and roads that started on

shore and disappeared beneath the water. There was a feeling that the town had no center. Or that the center had been washed away.

I knew I had to write about it eventually. And I wanted to think about it from a very personal perspective. I chose to write about a teenage girl living in the town and a worker running away from his own life, in another small town, to work on the Seaway project. This is the story of Claire and Darren.

The second disruption comes in the form of a 1970s daredevil, loosely based on Ken Carter, the Mad Canadian. Believe it or not, Ken Carter built a giant ramp near my childhood home when I was eight years old. It was gigantic. Stories high. He planned to jump over the St. Lawrence River in a rocket car. This was the beginning of a long, alternately exciting and sad saga that both captivated and infuriated people in my hometown. Again, it begged to be written about. And, again, I wanted to explore the impact of this mad event from the perspective of a young woman just going about her boring, vaguely depressing small town life. Just minding her own business. This is the story of Trudy and Jules.

Enjoy the book. I hope it moves you. I hope it feels real and I hope it makes you laugh. And I hope, if you grew up in a small town, it reminds you of people and places you know.

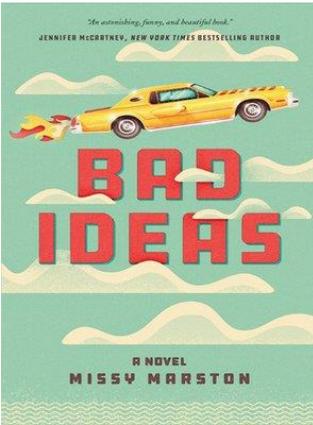
Happy reading,

Missy Marston

About the Author

Missy Marston's first novel, *The Love Monster*, was the winner of the 2013 Ottawa Book Award, a finalist for the CBC Bookie Awards and the Scotiabank Giller Prize Readers' Choice. She lives in Ottawa, Ontario.

About the Book



Trudy works nights in a linen factory, avoiding romance and sharing the care of her four-year-old niece with Trudy's mother, Claire. Claire still pines for Trudy's father, a St. Lawrence Seaway construction worker who left her twenty years ago. Claire believes in true love. Trudy does not. She's keeping herself to herself. But when Jules Tremblay, aspiring daredevil, walks into the Jubilee restaurant, Trudy's a goner.

Loosely inspired by Ken "the Crazy Canuck" Carter's attempt to jump the St. Lawrence River in a rocket car, and set in a 1970s hollowed-out town in eastern Ontario, *Bad Ideas* paints an indelible portrait of people on the forgotten fringes of life. Witty and wise, this is a novel that will stay with you a long time.

Book Reviews

"I'd follow Missy Marston's writing anywhere, even off an ill-conceived launch ramp across the St. Lawrence River in a rocket-car. In *Bad Ideas*, she tells a story with hard edges, humour, and so much tenderness, affirming her place as one of Canada's funniest and original writers." – Kerry Clare, author of *Mitzi Bytes*

"An unusual story of both familial and romantic love, the strange dreams humans have, and the cost and benefits of loyalty." – *Kirkus Reviews*

"*Bad Ideas* is all heart, packed with humour, vivid and memorable writing, and unforgettable characters." – *Open Book*

"*Bad Ideas* is a great read, a well-balanced mix of pathos and humour...The way Ms. Marston brings all the threads of each character's past into the present is a marvel of writing that makes *Bad Ideas* well worth reading. Put it on your Summer Reading List." – *Miramichi Reader*

Author Interview

Missy Marston is interviewed about *Bad Ideas* by All Lit Up. [Read the interview](#)

Get the Book

Download *Bad Ideas* from OverDrive in your preferred format: [Ready to read now](#)

Discussion Questions

For discussion tips & tech support: [How to Start Your Own Online Book Club](#)

1. Each major character gets to narrate a chapter from their own point of view. Did you enjoy this form of the novel? Did hearing from another narrator change your impression of the other characters?
2. Which of the characters did you like, or empathize with, the most? The least? Why?
3. What did you think of Trudy? What did you like and dislike about her? Given the circumstances, do you think you would have acted any differently in Trudy's place after her sister Tammy ran away?
4. This novel takes place in a rural Ontario town in the 1970s. Why is this setting significant?
5. Love is a really prevalent theme throughout the book. Discuss the differences in the way each character gives and receives love from both familial and romantic perspectives.
6. Trudy is adamant about not believing in love until she falls in love herself. Why do you think this changed?
7. There are several scenes throughout the book where Trudy (p. 32, 107); Fenton (p. 115) and Jules (p. 216) look out at ships on the water. Discuss the motif of ships coming into or leaving harbor – what significance might this have for these characters?
8. Did you pick out any other major themes in the book? How did they connect with each other? Why do you think the author ended the book the way she did?

Read-Alikes

- [Anything Is Possible](#) by Elizabeth Strout
- [The Home for Unwanted Girls](#) by Joanna Goodman
- [The Girl Who Fell From the Sky](#) by Heidi W. Durrow
- [Nightwoods](#) by Charles Frazier