

Brad Graber

Author of the debut novel, *The Intersect*

Reading Group Guide: The Intersect

Introduction

Set against Arizona's political and cultural climate of 2010, *The Intersect* weaves together the lives of disparate characters striving to survive in a world where the strongest link, and most lasting connection, is made among strangers.

When Dave Greenway and Charlie Huff move to Phoenix for Dave's new job, cracks appear in the relationship as Dave struggles with his career decision and Charlie presses to buy a new house. Nearby, Daisy Ellen Lee, a spry septuagenarian, breaks her hip. Isolated from family, and with no real friends, she discovers that navigating the healthcare system alone is a daunting experience. Across town, Anna Garrett, a psychic, prefers channeling the dead to dealing with the living. She hires Ernie Gonzalez, a local handyman, to help install security lights. Ernie's known since childhood that he was brought into the United States illegally from Mexico, yet in his heart, he believes himself to be an American. Henry is a teenager living on the streets, kicked out of his home when he reveals to his parents that he's gay. He's turned to petty crime to get by. Bonnie Devlon is the physical therapist who works with Daisy. Bonnie has a past littered with one-night stands. She's loving, but doesn't trust that she can be loved. Jack and Enid Lee are recent retirees from Michigan and relatives of Daisy's. Upon learning about Daisy's circumstances, they intercede to manage her financial affairs.

Quickly the story unfolds, as characters meet, secrets are revealed, and lives are changed.

About the Author

This is Brad Graber's first novel. Brad spent thirty years in healthcare administration. Upon relocating to Phoenix in 2009, he volunteered with two Phoenix-based non-profits, OnenTen.org, which supports GLBTQ youth, and Duet, which provides support for seniors. He currently lives in the Biltmore with his partner Jeff and their dog Charlie.

1. Why do you think the author named the novel *The Intersect*?
2. Were you surprised by the turn in Charlie and Dave's relationship? What clues did the author provide along the way? What challenges do you think couples face as they go through a major life change? Do you think these stresses are experienced differently by gay and straight couples?
3. How did Charlie and Dave's personality traits contribute to their relationship issues? Did you find it enlightening to have a glimpse into a gay relationship? Was there anything about that relationship which surprised you?
4. When Daisy breaks a hip, she finds herself struggling, afraid of becoming a permanent resident of the long-term care facility. What key factors seem to make Daisy most vulnerable? How have her choices led to her present circumstance? How does she overcome these choices? Are there seniors living in your community who might be at-risk for Daisy's experience? Are you aware of support services that reach out to isolated seniors?

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5. Jack and Enid are new to Arizona. How are the tensions in their marriage manifested in their relationship? Are these tensions the same for Charlie and Dave? What is the difference between these two couples and how they approach life together?
6. Jack struggles to see clearly what is happening to Daisy. How does this parallel his own life struggles? How does his experience of Enid, Daisy, and Bonnie, move his character along an arc of growth? Is Jack a victim or merely unenlightened?
7. Bonnie has a pattern of failed relationships. What characteristics does she possess that explain her inability to connect? Do you think she's like many women in their late-thirties who remain unmarried and career-driven? What will it take to get Bonnie to make a commitment to a man?
8. Anna opens her heart to Henry, yet later in the novel, remains in Mexico with Ernie. Do you think she's abandoned Henry? How can you explain this conflict in her character? Why does she remain unaware of Henry's challenges?
9. Did you feel empathy for Ernie? There are clues throughout the novel about Ernie and his background. Did you catch them? Were you surprised by the final twist? What do you think the author was trying to say about undocumented immigrants who are raised in the United States?
10. The author shares the backstory on many of the characters in the novel. Whose backstory did you find the most compelling? Enid's childhood? Ernie's childhood? Daisy's childhood? Jack's childhood? How did those childhoods contribute to each character's experience as an adult?
11. Henry struggles with his identity. Have you known a family that has trouble accepting their gay child? What about Henry's struggle keeps him from sharing with Anna? What is it about Henry that makes him particularly vulnerable?
12. At the end of the novel, Charlie and Dave's dynamic changes. Do you think it takes a trauma before we shift how we think about the direction of our own life?
13. Which character most closely touched your heart? Which character reminded you of someone in your own life? Which character would you have liked to learn more about?
14. The novel is set in Phoenix. What was your impression of Arizona before reading the book? Has that impressions changed? Has the book made you want to visit Phoenix and see the Biltmore?