

DARK SONG



curriculum connections

- ❖ Family Issues
- ❖ Violence
- ❖ Abuse

Ages 15 & Up

by
Gail Giles

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- As the novel opens, Ames states, “Christmas was near, and Boulder looked like a fairy tale.... Our house was a fairy tale, too.... My mom wouldn’t have it any other way.” (p.1) Based on this assessment, what can be inferred about Ames’s mother? In what ways might her mother’s need for perfection and keeping up appearances be a result of her upbringing?
- What are your earliest impressions of Ames’s father, Randal? Do you find him to be a good father? Why or why not?
- How would you describe Ames’s family? Are they in any way similar to your own? If so, in what ways?
- What role does Chrissy play in the family? Does she bring out the best or worst in her family? Consider Ames’s relationship with her; is she a good sister to Chrissy? Why or why not?
- In *Dark Song*, fear both motivates and incapacitates Ames. Consider how she deals with her fears. In what ways does she acknowledge them? Is she able to turn to others for help? What are the consequences of her reactions?
- Em tells Ames, “I’ve been trying to get this through your head since we were, like, ten. Parents lie. It’s what they do.” (p. 46) Do you agree with her assessment? Are there instances where a parent’s choice to be dishonest to their children is the right thing to do? If so, share examples where a parent’s untruthfulness is justified.
- How would you characterize the relationship between Ames and Marc, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
- Explain the significance of the title, *Dark Song*. In what ways does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel?
- Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Ames and her mother, Ames and her father, Diana and her mother, Robin. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
- Ames is profoundly affected by her family’s destruction and her relationship with Marc. Given these emotional obstacles, she often finds herself unable to confront his need to control her. Identify the catalyst(s) that drives Ames to be able to overcome these challenges. In what ways do you expect her to be changed by these experiences?
- Describe Ames. What makes her a dynamic character? Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- Dark Song* is told in the first person; how would the story be different if someone besides Ames were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Would it offer the same emotional impact?
- Describe Em. Do you find her to be a good friend to Ames? Using textual examples, support your position.
- Throughout the novel, readers witness the complexities of the various relationships among the characters. Consider whose relationship seemed most similar to one of your own personal relationships. What about it reminded you of your experiences?
- Consider the novel’s cover. In what ways are the images represented symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?

Additional Resources

THINK FIRST:

<http://www.thinkfirst.org/teens/ViolencePrevention.asp>

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND:

<http://www.endabuse.org/>

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECT:

<http://www.familyviolenceproject.org/>

TEEN VIOLENCE STATISTICS:

<http://www.teenviolencestatistics.com/>

JUST FACTS: <http://www.justfacts.com/guncontrol.asp>

BRADY CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE:

<http://www.bradycampaign.org/>

about the book



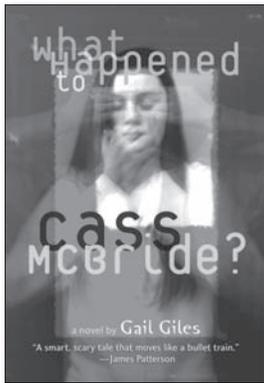
Dark Song
by Gail Giles
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Ames is not the person she was a few months ago. Her father lost his job, and her family is crumbling apart. Now, all she has is Marc. Marc, who loves her more than anything. Marc, who owns a gun collection. And he'll stop at nothing—even using his guns—to get what he wants. Ames feels her parents have betrayed her with their lies and self-absorption, but is she prepared to make the ultimate betrayal against them?

★ “Giles is a gifted writer of suspense.”—*Voya*

“This timely, riveting novel will resonate with readers.”—*Booklist*

also by Gail Giles



What Happened to Cass McBride?
978-0-316-16638-6 HC
978-0-316-16639-3 PB



Right Behind You
978-0-316-16636-2 HC
978-0-316-16637-9 PB

about the author



Gail Giles, acclaimed author of several psychological thrillers, such as *Shattering Glass*, *Dead Girls Don't Write Letters*, *Playing in Traffic*, *What Happened to Cass McBride?*, and *Right Behind You*. All of these titles have received numerous starred reviews, state awards and teen choice awards.

You can visit Gail online at www.gailgiles.com.