

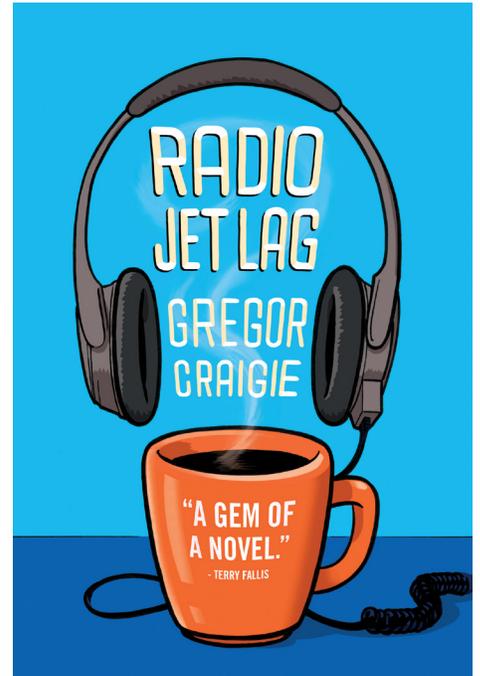
READERS' GUIDE

Radio Jet Lag by Gregor Craigie

INTRODUCING *Radio Jet Lag*

Stephen Millburn moved halfway across the country, from Ottawa to Victoria, to fulfill his dream of being an early-morning radio host, but he's barely holding it together. Trying to balance parental duties (he and his wife have a newborn son) with his work schedule leaves Stephen running on coffee fumes and falling asleep at the most inconvenient times, including mid-broadcast.

Stephen treads a narrow path at C1FU. When he arrived, the station ranked dead last in ratings. Months into his new hosting position, his show and the station are growing in popularity. He's something of a golden boy — but he's a golden boy with a passion for good journalism, which leads him to pursue a story about an encampment of unhoused people on the lawns of the city's court house.



Bleeding heart liberalism is not the stuff that Mr. George Caulfeild, station owner, believes his new audience wants to hear at eight a.m. and Stephen finds himself in a seriously conflicted position. He needs this job to support his growing family and pay down his crippling mortgage, but he knows this exposé is ethically and politically important — and it's a journalist's dream story. Will he be able to pull it all together or is he heading for a downfall?

IMPORTANT THEMES

Juggling Responsibilities — Stephen is a first-time father and a new early-morning radio host, with duties to his wife and son, to his boss and his coworkers, and to his interview subjects and the listening public. His multiple responsibilities often conflict with each other, forcing Stephen to decide what to prioritize.

Journalistic Integrity — Stephen and his producer, Susan, both want to do their due diligence and responsibly report on important issues, such as homelessness in Victoria, without exploiting their interview subjects. But they often clash with Mr. Caulfeild, who wants Stephen to cut down his interviews with unhoused people to appease advertisers and improve ratings.

Finding Solidarity — Stephen and Carole left their old support systems when they moved for Stephen's new job. In Victoria, despite their busy schedules, they both make effort to connect with and support other people in their community, and in turn, they receive help from their friends, family, and coworkers, as well as other locals.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Stephen and Carole gave up their old life in Ottawa for Stephen's new job at cifu. What are their reasons, both professional and personal, for making this drastic move to Victoria? Do their reasons for staying in Victoria change over the course of the book?
2. Stephen is deeply affected by sleep deprivation. How do these physical stressors warp his mental and emotional states?
3. Other characters, such as the local bus driver or Stephen's coworkers, also keep odd hour shifts. How and why are their outlooks on their jobs different from Stephen's?
4. On page 203, Stephen wonders, "Why was he interested in the homeless drug addicts, people paralyzed by mental illness, and sex workers? Was it journalistic interest, simple curiosity, voyeurism?" Discuss his driving motivation(s) to report on these stories.
5. On page 279 – 280, Stephen and Susan talk about how the media has a duty to report, but they also should have Indigenous people tell their own stories. Discuss the considerations they raise regarding this topic and how this reflects the real-life relationship between the media and Indigenous communities.
6. How does this book portray the relationship between journalists and politics — whether that manifests as different political parties, individual politicians, or specific policies? Discuss how this reflects the real-life relationship between the media and politics.
7. Discuss the role that support systems, or lack thereof, play in the novel. How do various characters show up for each other? What troubles do they face when they're isolated?
8. On page 324, Stephen asks, "Why have we left the desperate among us to fend for themselves?" Throughout this novel, how and why are various characters motivated to or discouraged from helping those in need?



ABOUT GREGOR

Gregor Craigie is a friendly public radio journalist, currently hosting CBC Radio One's *On the Island* in Victoria, BC. He is generally well-liked and known for being fair, but will occasionally push people on political and social issues — while maintaining his manners, of course. Inspired by his interest in earthquakes, Craigie's non-fiction book *On Borrowed Time* was a finalist for the inaugural Writers' Trust Balsillie Prize for Public Policy. In an effort to stay healthy and as a tiny offering in the fight against climate change, Craigie bikes to work daily.