Reader’s Guide Discussion Questions for *It’s Hard Not to Hate You* by Valerie Frankel

1. In the chapter “Hate Happens,” Frankel explains how she came to wear a mask of unflappability as a shield against anger, loneliness and insecurity. Due to a recent health and career crisis, however, her “poker face” started to crack. Hate seeped out of her, at an alarming rate. Have you ever felt out of emotional control? Do you wear a “poker face?” Does it look like Lady Gaga?

2. In the chapter “Why I Have No Friends, Part I,” Frankel describes a BFF-deprived adolescence. She sought comfort in spongy comfort food and self-medicated with marijuana. Have you had a Twinkie? Have you smoked pot? Have you smoked pot, and then craved a Twinkie or, even better, barbecue chicken wings?

3. In the chapter “Yes, Really,” Frankel recounts being snubbed by a snobby neighbor she calls the Biggest Bitch of All. Have you been ignored by a neighbor on the street? Are you ugly? Do you smell? Could there be any other reason she’d look right through you? Do you smile at everyone you walk within five feet of? Of course you do! It’s common freakin’ courtesy. If not, are you the Biggest Bitch of All? You are? Please fuck off.

4. In the chapter “How to Love the Man You Hate,” Frankel cringes at her relationship M.O. back when she was hot, young and stupid. She turned every frog she kissed into a dashing prince. Did you romanticize losers when you were hot, young and stupid? Are you friends with your exes? Are you a masochist? Does your husband know, or is it a dirty little secret? Are you having an affair with one of them right now? Did you reconnect on facebook? Does he have a brother?

5. In the chapter “Hate Your Way to Happiness,” Frankel writes that she’s just deep enough to rue being shallow. Are you self-conscious about being superficial? Do you feel pressure to say something profound at book club? Or do you nod in a cryptically meaningful manner? Did you fail to understand why “deep” people love novels about child rape in Afghanistan, brutal alcoholic Southerners and cancer-stricken teenagers? In that case, you could join Frankel’s club, if she’d have one that would have her for a member.

6. In the chapter “That’s So Great,” Frankel explains her acute case of “freudeschaden,” or taking misery in other people’s joy. By “other people,” Frankel means “other writers.” By “joy,” Frankel means hitting the New York Times bestseller list. Do you relate to Frankel’s professional jealousy? Are you genuinely happy for an inferior or equal who makes more money, has a better job and gets more respect than you do? Are you lying to yourself? Are you delusional?

7. In the chapter “How to Hate the Man You Love,” Frankel chronicles her husband Steve’s penchant for sneaking off to a local bar for a few beers. Is Frankel’s annoyance with Steve justified? Should she, as he suggests, stop bitching and go have a few drinks herself? Is Steve an alcoholic? Should Frankel check him into rehab? Do you know how much that might cost? Does your husband love beer? If beer could cook and had a vagina, would he marry it? Frankel prefers vodka tonics to beer. Do you like vodka tonics? Would you like one right now? Did you know that vodka is low in carbs? Frankel keeps diet tonic in her fridge at all times. Do you have a fridge? Is it running? You should go catch it.

8. In the chapter “Why I Have No Friends, Part II” Frankel recounts how her once wide social circle dwindled to the diameter of a dime. She wonders if her few but fierce friendships are enough. Did you suffer drastic friend losses after you married? Had kids? Would you have more friends if you weren’t so busy? Lazy? Drunk? Do you surround yourself with people you don’t really love? Despite your full calendar, do you still feel lonely and misunderstood? As if you’re screaming in a crowded room, but no one notices or cares? You might want to seek help about that.

9. In the chapter “Why Pot Should Be Legal,” Frankel returns to one of her favorite themes: impatience with rude, selfish and annoying people. Do you find yourself exploding volcanically if seated near a loud cell phone talker? Do you fantasize about beheading incompetent cashiers? Are you driven to lunatic frenzy by subway door blockers? Do you frighten children when in this state? Have you acted on any of your violent fantasies? Did you get away with it? Serially?

10. In a juicy chapter “The Enemies List,” Frankel rehashes several choice, old grievances. Have you nurtured a petty grudge? Do you secretly hate the parent of a kid who once hurt your child’s feelings? Do you pine for the ruin of a colleague who betrayed you years ago? Do you resent the friend who humiliated you in front of your then boyfriend? Is that person in book club? Is she here, right now? Would you like to air out your grievances tonight, in front of everyone? No? (Wimp.)

11. In the chapter “I Hate Your Kids,” Frankel rants about bratty children. Do you have spoiled rotten hell spawn? Frankel probably hates them. Do you hate Frankel’s two daughters? Yes? Screw you. You don’t even know them.

12. In the chapter “Can’t Complain,” Frankel and her family refrain from griping, gossiping and kvetching for a week. Frankel suffers a near nervous breakdown from complaint deprivation. Do you gossip with friends, about your other friends? Do you whine and bitch on occasion? On all occasions? Are you Frankel’s mother-in-law?

13. In the book’s last chapter, “Anger Management,” Frankel concludes that, in order to be happy, one must bravely welcome periods of unhappiness. Frankel finds that negative emotions are muted only when you scream about them. She decides to fly high the Hater flag, and proudly. Do you wish you could be as bitchy as you want to be? Do you dream of becoming your own evil twin? Will reading *It’s Hard Not to Hate You* release your inner Kracken? Should you bet your bad ass on it? Positively.