

# The Opposite of Success

## ELEANOR ELLIOTT THOMAS



### About the book

All Lorrie wants is to get promoted, accept her body and end global warming. By Friday. Is that really too much to ask?

Council employee Lorrie Hope has a great partner, two adorable kids and absolutely no idea what to do with her life. This Friday, she's hoping for change: it's launch day for her big work project, and she's applied for a promotion she's not entirely sure she wants. Meanwhile, her best friend, Alex, is stuck in a mess involving Lorrie's rakish ex, Ruben—or, more accurately, his wife. Oh, and Ruben's boss happens to be the mining magnate Sebastian Glup, who is sponsoring Lorrie's project...

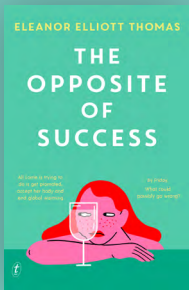
As the day spirals from bad to worse to frankly unhinged, Lorrie and Alex must reconsider what they can expect from life, love and middle management. *The Opposite of Success* is a riotously funny debut novel about work, motherhood, friendship—and the meaning of failure itself.

### About the author

Eleanor Elliott Thomas worked for many years as a lawyer before devoting herself to writing full-time. She lives in Melbourne with her partner and two daughters. *The Opposite of Success* is her first novel.

### Discussion questions

1. When Lorrie wakes up at the beginning of the book, she thinks 'Mama is dead' (p1) in response to her daughter's call. How does this thought set the tone of the novel, but also work to signpost Lorrie's own behaviour throughout the day?
2. Although *The Opposite of Success* is a light-hearted and easy read, it explores complex, timely themes of motherhood, climate change, and capitalism. Discuss the way that the book's humour allows for a greater, less-defensive engagement with these topics, and your own personal response.
3. Who is the ideal reader for this novel? Do you think readers will feel more aligned with Lorrie or Alex, or neither? Why?
4. 'Ruthie, after all, was just doing what Lorrie herself did, treating her body as a joke' (p28). Does Lorrie's attitude towards her body shift over the course of the novel? What is the significance of the orange-and-pink jumpsuit in this transformation? Where do the pressures on her body come from?
5. Are Philomena's reasons for passing Lorrie over for promotion valid? Consider this alongside Ruben's hypocritical expectations of sexual freedom. In what ways do these two threads of the narrative speak to the hypocrisy of gender expectations? How are these storylines similar or different?



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6. How would you summarise the novel's position on the relationship between work and identity?
7. *The Opposite of Success* examines the tension between who Lorrie and Alex think they should be, and who they are, via the realities of love, motherhood, bodies and work. Do either of them find a satisfying way to navigate this tension, or are they doomed to always feel dissatisfied?
8. Is it ethical to have a baby given the state of the economy and the planet? For Alex, the idea of motherhood is repellent on both a global and a personal level. But for Lorrie, motherhood is a role in which she feels happy, and additionally it allows her to 'opt out' of some aspects of capitalism. What thoughts do each of these positions raise about the choice to become a parent, and the realities of work, care and choice?
9. How do Alex and Lorrie navigate their (occasionally significant) differences throughout their friendship? What are the ties that keep them together?
10. Consider the book's title – what is the opposite of success? Is it, as Philomena's get-well card suggests, failure, or is it something else? What do you think the book is trying to say about success?