

The Rosie Project

Graeme Simsion

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About Graeme Simsion

Graeme Simsion was born in 1956. He is an IT consultant and data analyst with an international reputation. He has taught at four Australian universities and is currently a Senior Research Fellow at Melbourne University. He is a founder of Pinot Now, a wine importer and distributor, and is married to Anne, a professor of psychiatry who writes erotic fiction. They have two children.

In 2007, Graeme completed his PhD in information systems and enrolled in the professional screenwriting course at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He has made a number of short films and his screenplay, *The Rosie Project*, won the Australian Writers Guild / Inception Award for Best Romantic Comedy Script in 2010. Following this, Graeme turned the script into a novel which in June 2012 won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished fiction manuscript.

A reader's introduction to *The Rosie Project*

Opposites attract. The course of true love never did run smooth. Love conquers all. We all know the clichés and the formulas of romantic comedy. *The Rosie Project* takes all of the usual elements—a mismatched pair overcoming various obstacles to fall in love and live happily ever after—and turns them into something fresh and new. Endearing and clever, *The Rosie Project* is a feel-good comedy of errors with a cracking plot and one of the quirkiest and most likable couples in romantic fiction.

Don Tillman is a professor of genetics in Melbourne. He's socially awkward, wears quick-dry clothing and the best four days of his adult life to date have been spent at the Museum of Natural History in New York. He eats the same lobster meal every single Tuesday night and he times his showers to the second. He's never been on a second date, and a series of dating disasters has convinced him that it's unlikely he ever will. Then a chance encounter gives him an idea: What if he designed a scientifically researched questionnaire that was guaranteed to find him the perfect partner? And with that, the Wife Project is born.

There are only two problems with Don's methodology:

- a) many women fill in the questionnaire but no one satisfies Don's strict criteria
- b) for some reason he is spending all of his time on the Rosie Project instead...

Rosie Jarman is also looking for someone. She's determined to find her biological father, a search that a certain DNA expert might be able to help her with. Rosie is fiery, intelligent and extremely attractive. She also fails almost every single criterion of the Wife Project. It's clear to Don that she is totally unsuitable as a life partner. Luckily, Rosie doesn't seem all that interested in Don either. Instead, they embark on the Father Project and a series of richly comic mishaps unfold as they attempt to collect the DNA of Rosie's various—and unsuspecting—potential fathers.

In addition to universal themes of love and acceptance, *The Rosie Project* also includes a wonderful night of cocktail-making, a life-altering trip to New York City and a hilarious dance sequence at the Faculty Ball. Book clubs who have slogged through gloomy prize-winning literary novels will delight in the intelligence, warmth and humour of Don and Rosie's romance.

Questions for discussion

1. *The Rosie Project* is about becoming open to seeing things from a different angle: Don must reconsider his strict criteria in order to find love, Gene needs to reevaluate his behaviour in order to save his marriage, and Rosie has her own set of prejudices and expectations to overcome in terms of Don and her non-biological father, Phil. What was stopping the characters from making these discoveries earlier? Did the novel change your own perspective on anything?
2. Don describes people with a scientific level of detail, yet makes very few assumptions about their personality based on their appearance. As a reader, did you find yourself reading between the

- lines to make your own judgments? Were there any instances when you misjudged someone based on what Don did or didn't say?
3. Don's 16-page questionnaire for prospective partners elicits a very different reaction from Rosie and Bianca. Rosie is offended and claims that it objectifies women, while Bianca says it is nice to finally meet a man who is more interested in her than himself. What do you think?
 4. Does the humour in the novel come from Don's awkward responses to social situations or the absurdity of falling in love in general? Do you feel as though you are laughing with Don or at Don?
 5. Don says: 'Humans often fail to see what is close to them and obvious to others.' Pg 93. What are some of the things that the characters in *The Rosie Project* fail to see that are obvious to you?
 6. At the conclusion of the Father Project, were you surprised to discover who Rosie's real father was?
 7. Don changes as the book progresses—he begins to relax some of his rigid standards. This is shown in his interaction with Kevin Yu. What are some other examples? Do you think that the changes are solely due to Rosie's influence?
 8. Imagine the book had been written from Rosie's perspective. Would it have been as enjoyable? Would you have understood Don's actions and behaviour had he not been the narrator?
 9. What was your favourite scene in the novel? Why?
 10. Rosie's belief that Don can't feel love makes her reluctant to be in a relationship with him. He tells her that he does feel love — it's the ability to empathise that he struggles with. Do you agree that empathy and love are two separate things? Do you think Don can feel love?
 11. At what point do you think Rosie starts to view Don as a prospective partner? Did your own feelings towards Don change at a particular point in the novel?
 12. What conclusions did you make about Don's character from his description of his relationship with Daphne?
 13. On a number of occasions Don makes reference to Gene's affairs in front of Claudia. Do you think Don has a full understanding of how Gene and Claudia's marriage operates? Why do you think Claudia puts up with Gene's affairs?
 14. *The Rosie Project* can be read as a novel about tolerance and acceptance, but it also makes a case for people to take control of how others perceive them and change their behaviour if necessary. Do you agree with this view? To what extent do you think Don changes himself for Rosie?