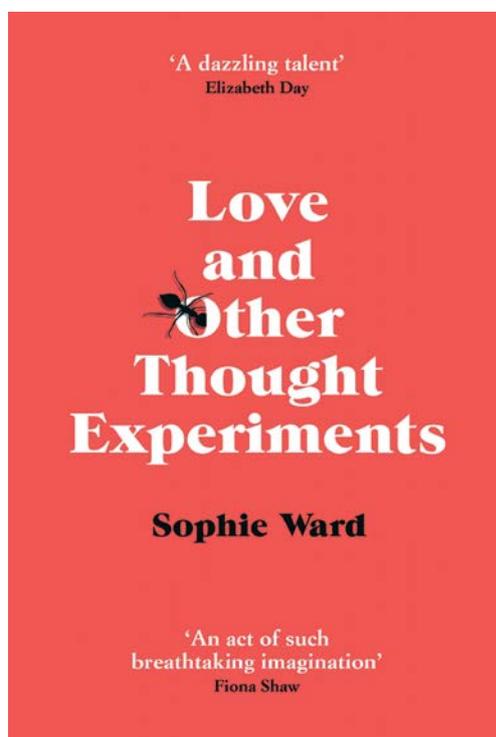




Readers' Guide



Love and Other Thought Experiments Sophie Ward

Corsair

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Sophie Ward was born in London, UK in December 1964. She is an actor and writer. She has a degree in Philosophy and Literature and has a PhD on the use of narrative in philosophy of mind. She has published articles in *The Times*, *the Sunday Times*, *the Guardian*, *the Observer*, *the Spectator*, *Diva* and *Red* magazine. Her short stories have been published in the anthologies *Finding A Voice*, *Book of Numbers*, *The Spiral Path* and *The Gold Room*. Her book, *A Marriage Proposal; the importance of equal marriage and what it means for all of us* was published by the Guardian short books in 2014. In 2018, Sophie won the Royal Academy Pin Drop Award for her short story, 'Sunbed'. *Love and Other Thought Experiments* is her first novel. She lives in London.

About the book

Rachel and Eliza are hoping to have a baby. The couple spend many happy evenings together planning for the future. One night Rachel wakes up screaming and tells Eliza that an ant has crawled into her eye and is stuck there. She knows it sounds mad – but she also knows it's true. As a scientist, Eliza won't take Rachel's fear seriously and they have a bitter fight. Suddenly their entire relationship is called into question.

Told in ten interconnecting but self-contained chapters – each from a different character's perspective – and inspired by some of the best-known thought experiments in philosophy, particularly philosophy of mind, *Love and Other Thought Experiments* is a story of love lost and found across the universe.

What the judges thought

'This debut is an extremely original, genre-bending novel that melds Anglo-American analytical philosophy with realist social drama and futuristic science fiction, featuring travel across time, space and multiple dimensions. It's a mind-expanding, bold, constantly surprising book, full of zest and a spirit of adventure; its intellectual verve is balanced by a deep human warmth, in the rich portrayal of two women, their son and an ever-changing world.'

Discussion points

Love and Other Thought Experiments moves between character perspectives and time periods. What did you think of this narrative structure?

Did the philosophical dilemmas at the beginning of each chapter shape your reading and understanding of the narrative that followed?

What does the ant represent, and what do you think about how it impacts Rachel's life?

Discuss the role of science within the novel.

Themed reading

Sophie's World by Jostein Gaardner

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/feb/06/love-and-other-thought-experiments-sophie-ward-review>

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-children-s-hour-first-novels-brim-with-close-family-observations>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9YB_krC_Zk

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