

What Love Is And What It Could Be

A Reading Guide

1. Jenkins argues that romantic love is “ancient biological machinery embodying a modern social role” (page 82). Do you agree? What specifically does biology have to do with love, and what specifically is the role of society?
2. In chapters 2 and 5, Jenkins looks at some of the ways social expectations about love have changed over time. What do you think is expected of love by the people around you? Are the expectations different, here and now, from what they were at other times in your life?
3. “Amatonormativity” is the view that it is normal and desirable for everybody to be in a romantic love relationship (see chapters 3 and 6). Do you experience amatonormativity? How do you feel about it?
4. Jenkins believes that romantic love has deep roots in patriarchal thinking, but is still salvageable because social constructs can change (chapter 6). Do you agree? Does gender shape your experiences of love?
5. On page 38, Jenkins mentions that people often react to her polyamorous relationships by saying they “could never do that.”

Have you experienced a similar reaction to anything in your own life? What do you think it might mean?

6. Do you think of yourself as a rebel when it comes to love? Do you know any rebels? How has romantic rebellion impacted your life, or the society around you?

7. The Preface explains that *What Love Is And What It Could Be* will approach philosophical questions about love from a personal perspective. How do different personal experiences affect the ways we think and talk about love? Is it possible to be objective about it? What would that require?

8. In chapter 7, Jenkins considers the future of romantic love. What do you think it will look like in twenty years' time? Will it be the same or different? Better or worse?

9. "Love potions" have been around for thousands of years, but in chapter 7 Jenkins cautions against "overenthusiasm" concerning the medical manipulation of love. Do you think we should develop and market drugs to enhance or inhibit love? Why/why not?

10. Jenkins argues in the Coda that we should be free to "choose our own adventures" in love. Do you agree? Should there be any limitations on that freedom? What kinds of limitation are appropriate and why?