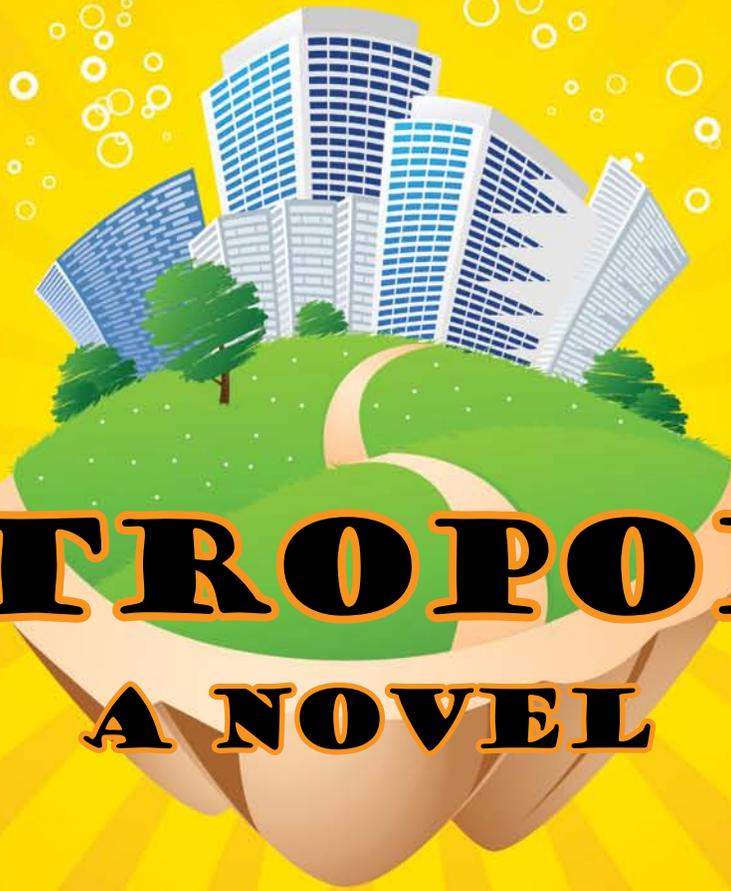


BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE



FATROPOLIS
A NOVEL

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BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR FATROPOLIS

- 1.** When Jenny first stumbles into Fatropolis, she finds herself in a department store where a woman is disappointed that a dress doesn't make her look fat. Why do you think the woman wanted to look fat? What did you think about the thin women in Burley's Department Store who wanted to "plump up"?
- 2.** Why do you think Jenny, who is fat, feels disdain for fat people and is so overwhelmed when she is first faced with a world of fat people? Why do you think she finds it so hard to believe that fat men can ski?
- 3.** In our world, Jenny hears two slender women talking about weight loss and is irritated because "they had no idea what it was like to not fit into a booth at a restaurant, to not have enough room in a public bathroom stall, to sit through a company meeting in a chair with arms that dug into their thighs, or to work at fitting into the unforgiving seats in a movie theater." Why do you think this angers Jenny?
- 4.** Early in the book Jenny is hungry and wants a meatball sandwich with cheese, but orders a turkey and swiss on rye with no mayo. She is embarrassed to eat in public, and later eats ice cream in private while thinking about the sandwich she really wanted but didn't buy. Do you think Jenny's eating behavior is a problem for her, and if so, why?
- 5.** Jenny feels hopeful and in control whenever she starts a new diet. What do you think is at the bottom of that feeling?
- 6.** Why is Jenny so astounded by the ads and shows on TV in Fatropolis? What would you think if such programming were available in our world?
- 7.** While watching a game show in Fatropolis, Jenny notices that "she felt hardly any disgust or disdain" for a fat male contestant's "substantial body." Why do you think she feels less negatively about fat men than fat women?
- 8.** Discuss the Fatropolis world's show *No Pain, No Gain* and the similarities with and differences from *The Biggest Loser* in our world.
- 9.** Dotty says to Jenny, "We sometimes hate the very thing we can't help bein' ourselves...why, even fatfolk themselves in that other place hate the fatfolk, so that makes them hate themselves with a hatred that only the worst kind of brainwashin' can conjure into a body." What do you think Dotty meant by that? Do you think there is any truth to what she says?
- 10.** What is the "brainwashing" that Dotty keeps talking about?

- 11.** Why is Jenny so enamored with the bathtub in Fatropolis?
- 12.** In Fatropolis, Jenny searches the bathroom “for the scale that would tell her what kind of day she was going to have.” How could a scale tell a person what kind of day she would have?
- 13.** Dotty says, “Scales are fer measurin’ ingredients fer the bakery, not people...” Do you think it’s possible to live without measuring people’s weights? What do you think that might be like?
- 14.** Why did Jenny feel so ill at ease about the spread of food for breakfast at the boarding house?
- 15.** When Jenny overhears a conversation between Trixie and Clara in which Clara is upset because Argus has broken up with her, why is Trixie glad the two have broken up? What do you think of Trixie’s perspective?
- 16.** While in the courtyard with Dotty, Jenny says, “It’s scary to think that the limitations I’ve been living with [her low self esteem] were put there by society, but kept there—*by me.*” What do you think about this? Do you agree?
- 17.** Dotty says to Jenny, “Only the Lord knows why a lot of the folks in yer world feel uncomfortable bein’ around us hearty-folk. Deep down inside, they must think we overshadow them, and make them feel small. That’s where the prejudice comes from—not wantin’ people, especially the women-folk, to take up too much room in the world, to be too big...” What do you think about Dotty’s theory that people don’t want others, especially women, “to take up too much room—to be too big”?
- 18.** When Jenny is preparing to leave Fatropolis, she reminisces in her room at the boardinghouse about “the painful experience of realizing how much she’d hated to look at fat people, including herself.” Why do you think a fat person can hate to look at another fat person?
- 19.** When Jenny goes back to work for the first time since visiting Fatropolis, she purposefully enters her place of work with “her coffee in one hand and her doughnut in the other. She didn’t care what people thought about her eating a doughnut.” Why is this a big deal for Jenny?
- 20.** While eating lunch with Jenny for the first time, Leland tells her that he’s not ready to go back to Fatropolis to see his mother, and says “She put me through a lot, and...she wouldn’t be happy to see me so—so trim. It’s difficult when someone—when your own family can’t accept you for who you are.” Leland also tells Jenny that women in Fatropolis wanted him to try harder to gain weight. What do you think about Leland’s experiences in Fatropolis? Do you see any parallels in our culture?
- 22.** Jenny realizes that she “had to love herself before she could ever really love anyone else.” Do you think there is any truth to this?
- 23.** Leland makes an offer to Jenny: “If you ever want me to show you how to do proper sit-ups, just let me know.” At another time he almost doesn’t let Jenny get another sliver of cake. Why does Jenny react as she does to Leland’s statement and action?
- 24.** What did you think about Trixie’s implication that Argus is not healthy because of his size/weight? Do you think a person’s size/weight is a good indicator of their health? Why or why not?
- 25.** While the twins and Jenny talk out in the courtyard, Trixie says, “So that must be why the

brainwashing works so well over there...you actually have proof, everywhere you go, that you're too big. You don't fit in a lot of places, so naturally you think you need to get smaller...no wonder people over there are so crazy about being thin. If they aren't, they don't *fit* in." If everything in our world (seats, toilets, bathroom stalls, clothing) were made to accommodate even the largest bodies, how do you think it would affect attitudes toward size?

- 26.** How did you feel about Trixie's experience at the doctor's office?
- 27.** Jenny's experience with fat privilege at the restaurant in Fatropolis (where the waiter ignores Argus but gives her and other fat patrons extra attention) makes her feel uncomfortable. Why? Do you think thin privilege exists in our world?
- 28.** Dotty says to Jenny, "Ya can make your own little Fatropolis in yer world where no one can make ya feel bad about yerself again. Hatred is somethin' ya have to buy into. It doesn't just come natural." Do you think it's possible to make "your own little Fatropolis"? If so, how, and what would it be like? If not, what are the obstacles?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Fatropolis is fiction, but if you're interested in facts about weight and health and culture in our world, or assistance in creating your own body-positive Fatropolis here, **Pearlson Press** and *Fatropolis* author **Tracey L. Thompson** recommend the following readings and resources:

The Diet Survivor's Handbook: 60 Lessons in Eating, Acceptance & Self-Care
by Judith Matz & Ellen Frankel

10 Steps to Loving Your Body (No Matter What Size You Are) by Pat Ballard

When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies: Freeing Yourself from Food and Weight Obsession by Jane Hirschmann and Carol Munter

Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight by Linda Bacon, Ph.D.

Big Fat Lies: The Truth About Your Weight and Your Health by Glenn A. Gaesser, Ph.D.
(Ignore the last third of *Big Fat Lies*, which is a diet plan Gaesser's original publisher forced him to include that is contradicted by the first two-thirds of the book.)

Fat Politics: The Story Behind America's Obesity Epidemic by J. Eric Oliver, Ph.D.

Talking Fat: Health vs. Persuasion in the War on Our Bodies by Lonie McMichael, Ph.D.

Acceptable Prejudice? Fat, Rhetoric & Social Justice by Lonie McMichael, Ph.D.

The Association for Size Diversity and Health
www.sizediversityandhealth.org

National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance
www.naafa.org

More of Me to Love
www.moreofmetolove.com

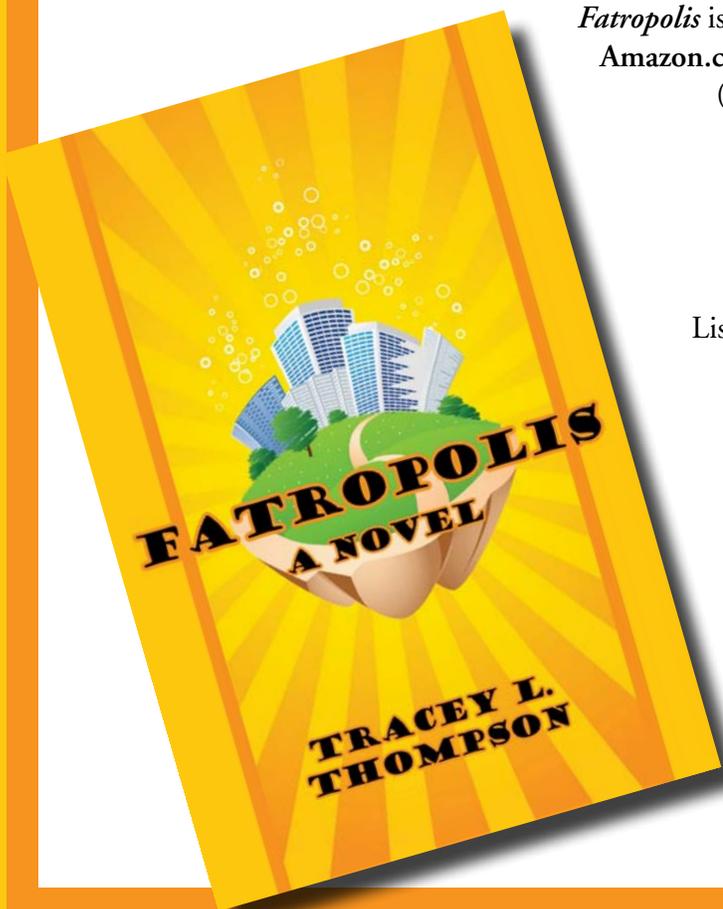
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was born and raised in southern California and now resides in northern Virginia. She overcame domestic violence, divorce and single motherhood to earn a master's degree in psychology with a specialization in marriage and family therapy. In the last twelve years she has worked for hospice, with at-risk youth and their families, and training military families about aspects of resiliency, and now does social work at the community level assisting needy families and the homeless. She is a wife and the mother of five children. *Fatropolis* is her first novel.



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Fatropolis is available in original trade paperback and ebook at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, The Book Depository (U.K.-based retailer with free shipping worldwide), Apple's iTunes bookstore and other retailers, as well as directly from the publisher at www.pearlsong.com/fatropolis.htm.



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