



## Reading Group Guide

This reading group guide is intended to support your discussion of *As Long As It's Perfect*, Lisa Tognola's debut novel about one woman's obsession with perfection and how far she'll go to get what she wants, at the cost of herself and her family.

In June of 2007—still heady Wall Street days when banks haven't yet nose-dived and the housing bubble hasn't quite burst—Wim, a 41-year-old Wall Street banker, and Janie, a 40-year-old suburban housewife, are finally getting ready to demolish an old house in Rye, New York, that will be replaced by the home of their dreams.

But when a bulldozer rolls in and crushes their newly purchased “fixer-upper,” more than a wrecking ball hits home. Somewhere between the time that the roof goes up and the siding is delivered, the country is hit with the worst recession in recent US history. They are supposed to be the smart people who understand what is happening. Instead, they are a couple paralyzed by hope and fear, who continue moving further into debt as they launch into a two-year-long construction endurance test that ends with Janie discovering that dreams can be realized, but the way to authentic happiness is through truth and acceptance.

### Discussion Guide Questions for *As Long As It's Perfect*:

(Please find additional questions in the Author's Note section of the book)

1. From the prologue of the book we learn about Janie's playhouse. Why did the author choose to begin the story there? What are the major themes of the book? Does the theme of the book relate to the protagonist's gender? How?
2. What was your initial reaction to the book? Did it hook you immediately or did it take some time?
3. Are Janie and Wim likeable characters? Why or why not? How did your opinion of them change throughout the story? Which character did you relate to the most, and what was it about them that you connected with?

4. How understandable were the motivations of the characters? What motivated the behavior of the characters?
5. At one point in the book, while Janie and Wim are in couple's therapy, Janie says to the therapist, "I think we're ready for an upgrade." Why is this line significant to the story and to her life?
6. Is the period in which the book is set important to the theme? Why? What made the setting unique or important? Could the story have taken place anywhere? In what other location might the book have been set?
7. The novel is told from one point of view with Janie narrating throughout the book and the author using flashbacks. Why do you think the author chose to write the book this way? How did the structure affect the story?
8. How did homebuilding impact Janie and Wim's marriage? Did it help or hurt their marriage?
9. Does Janie experience character growth/transformation? If so, when? In what form? Do you feel hopeful about her future?
10. Did the author leave loose ends? What were they? What do you think happens to Janie and Wim next (after the last page is turned)? How did you feel about the ending? What did you like, what didn't you like, and what do you wish had been different?
11. What do you think the author wanted the reader to get out of the book? Did the book change your opinion or perspective about anything? Do you feel different now than you did before you read it?