



## **The Opposite of Amber**

*Gillian Philip*

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Ruby and Jinn are sisters and the best of friends, the closest of allies. Jinn is vivacious and beautiful, and does everything she can to look after Ruby. Then no-good Nathan Baird turns up and Jinn changes, neglecting Ruby. What is happening to Jinn? And then Jinn goes missing, just like other local girls!

## **The Opposite of Amber Details**

Date : Published April 18th 2011 by Bloomsbury

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Author : Gillian Philip

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Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Fiction, Contemporary, Teen

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# From Reader Review The Opposite of Amber for online ebook

## Natalie says

Review will be posted on the blog on Friday.

**In a Sentence:** The Opposite of Amber is like fiber--a bit harder to digest, but good for you.

## My Thoughts

The best advice I could offer you about approaching The Opposite of Amber is to leave all your expectations behind. The synopsis provided on the back of the ARC (which is both different and shorter than the one provided above) had me expecting a fast-paced, suspenseful thriller. While The Opposite of Amber did have some characteristics of that genre, I felt it was primarily an in-depth study of the changing lives of two girls: Ruby and Jinn.

For me, The Opposite of Amber was a slow read, but that doesn't mean it was a bad one. It took me about a week and a half to finish the book, because I was averaging about 30-40 pages a day. It was very character-driven novel, and there wasn't a ton of action to keep me flipping pages. I was never bored with the book, it was just slow going, but I could understand how some readers might not be able to make it all the way through. But for those of you who (like me), are big fans of well-constructed characters, then The Opposite of Amber is definitely a book you should put on your to-read list. Gillian Philip did an excellent job with both Ruby and Jinn--creating characters who were multi-layered and extremely lifelike. Furthermore, Philip was able to wonderfully display the intensity of her characters' emotions, as shown in the quote below:

*"When the door finally slammed shut, I was shocked once more by emptiness and silence. The ache in my body had coalesced, in an instant, and at the same time it had filled every bit of me. My skin felt electric and I couldn't shut my eyes. I felt as if I should cry, as if I very much wanted to cry, but it was still impossible. Something inside me clawed to get out but there was nothing I could do to release it; it would just have to dig. And despite that I was inside out, raw and exposed to the night. Cry? Sleep? You're joking." (p. 257, ARC)*

In addition, I thought Philip's writing style was beautiful. It was fluid and detailed, but not to the point of being convoluted. There were several times throughout the book that I had to get out a notebook and write down a quote, because it was just too great to pass up, like this one:

*"And for the first time in ages, I felt I wanted to add something. I wanted to make one of those slender word-chains that kept a person at your side. I wanted to make a rope out of words and loop it round his wrist, invisibly, so he wouldn't get bored and walk away. Words look fragile, insect trails of ink, but they're strong. Words bind people together or bludgeon them apart. Words are a grappling hood, flung skywards to yank a boy off a roof. What I wanted was the daisy-chain words, but unfortunately, I couldn't open my mouth except to lick my lips." (p. 40, ARC)*

For me, The Opposite of Amber was a lot like my experience with Jellicoe Road by Melina Marchetta.

While the two aren't very similar in terms of plot or even characters, I felt the way the authors communicated their respective ideas to the reader had a lot in common with each other. Namely, I don't think I really realized what the book was about until I had finished it. Once I turned the last page, I had the urge to sit and ponder it all night, and then wake up early to read the book over again (which I didn't end up doing because this book is part of an ARC tour, and I had to mail it out to the next participant). I felt like I had held something profound in my hands, but I couldn't quite put my finger on why I felt that way. Either way, I think I'll be picking up a copy of *The Opposite of Amber* to add to my personal collection, once it's released. If nothing else, I'd really like to read the book a second time, and that's should be motivation for some of you to give it at least one shot, right?

On another interesting note, the author, Gillian Philip, has been both shortlisted for the Daily Mail Scottish Children's Book Award and longlisted for a Carnegie Medal.

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### **One Pushy Fox says**

Initially I had a hard time getting into this book. It wasn't the characters, who are intriguing despite their individual sadness, but rather the colloquial language used, as this story is set in Scotland, and a Scottish author. But after a while, I got into the rhythm of it and found myself fascinated by Ruby, thankful to have the insight into her thoughts denied to those around her by her monosyllabic behavior. And through her I fell in love with Jinn, her glittering older sister who was so integral in giving Ruby the love she needed while at the same time complicit in letting Ruby remain infantile in her silence. There are a host of well formed, fascinating secondary characters in this story too, each with their own tale to tell, each searching for salvation, just like Ruby.

Read the full review [here](#).

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### **Mary says**

Set against a backdrop of serial killer on the loose, this is a moving and sometimes distressing look at the bond and interdependence between sisters, Ruby and Jinn.

I took a while to get into the swing of this book, for some strange reason it wasn't quite what I was expecting - I think maybe because the back cover blurb makes a lot of the relationship between the sisters and of the murders happening around town but nothing of Ruby's agonising over Alex's suicide attempt - but after that I was completely hooked.

*The Opposite of Amber* is a very very different book to Gillian Philip's last, *Firebrand*, but an equally compelling page-turner. "Coming of age novel" is a somewhat over-used phrase but I find it difficult to describe this any other way. Ruby has always been overprotected, over mothered by Jinn, then, at this point when she needs someone to turn to, finds Jinn has other priorities and that their roles are even reversed, and Ruby must look after Jinn.

While the story is told through Ruby's eyes, I felt as reader I could sit back just a little further and feel sorry for Jinn and Nathan, so obviously deeply in love with each other but with so many things going against them.

Compelling, frightening, occasionally funny, a book to remember long after the last page. As for the title

which had me puzzling - what IS the opposite of amber? red or green as on traffic lights? - you'll have to read it to find out!

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### **Vicki says**

The Opposite Of Amber is a surprising book. Firstly, I presumed from the publishers blurb on the back it was going to be a murder mystery, tense and full of suspense. It isn't like that at all really, although there is an element of mystery about it. It's really about the relationship between two sisters, Ruby and Jinn and their lives in a run down Scottish seaside town and the traumas which haunt both them and their fellow residents. The second surprising thing was how hooked I actually became to this book. It started off quite slow and I wasn't sure I was going to enjoy it, yet before I knew it the story of Ruby and Jinn had crept right under my skin and didn't let go.

Told in the first person from Ruby, Gillian Philips places the reader directly in this character's head. Ruby's had a lot to deal with over the years and as a result doesn't talk much, so her thoughts are particularly important to the story. They are written so well it's impossible not to become fully involved and care for her and I found her love for Jinn, the sister who brought her up, very touching.

The setting also came across beautifully through both the characters and descriptions. I know towns and people like the ones in The Opposite Of Amber and Philip's portrays them with shocking truth.

The Opposite Of Amber is brutally honest both in language and themes and isn't the easiest book to read but it is a worthwhile one. It's beautifully written using enough dialect and slang to make the characters and setting believable without alienating those who may be unfamiliar with it. This is a book which will open your eyes, make you think and whose main characters Ruby and Jinn will haunt you long after the last page.

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### **Skye says**

This review is also posted on my blog, In The Good Books.

This book begins with what I later find out to be a regular interlude - Counting Games, it's called - where the main focus is on the serial killer and the found victims. The first three pages did an amazing job of mysteriously yet descriptively setting the chilling tone and the scene from an omniscient perspective. I was impressed to the point of shoving the book at anyone who had the patience to humour me and read the first three pages.

I was hooked from the very start, and stayed hooked except for a few bumps along the way at colloquial Scottish phrases (I know a few Scottish people and am pretty okay with their slang most of the time. It might be a bit much at times for people who aren't familiar with it, though). It wasn't packed with action or drama but the foreshadowing tone completely ensnared me and had me feeling like at any moment something was about to tip the characters' worlds on their heads.

The writing style was amazing. I found myself at times just admiring the way the words were strung together and not taking in what they meant (but I was more than happy to reread). The way the author weaved in figurative language and recurring symbols and metaphors was superb. See the quotes I've collected below for

what I mean, because my inferior writing can't do it justice.

I really liked Ruby. The book comes from her first-person perspective after the first chapter. She doesn't waste words -- to the extent where several characters remark "It talks!" when she speaks -- and is devoted to her sister, Jinn. She has flaws to add a realness and third dimension to her personality. She's stubborn, jealous, 'gauche' (in her own words). She had the feel of a real person, and even as she gets into problems that she causes herself, she's easy to feel sympathetic for her.

The Opposite Of Amber was more character-driven than plot-driven, highlighting relationship dynamics and character development. A lot of the book focuses on the relationship between Ruby and Jinn - strong initially, slowly but surely weakening as Nathan's presence plays catalyst. All of the characters were thoroughly fleshed out, to the point where you can understand and feel for characters like Nathan who you're predisposed to dislike.

Although that isn't to say that the plot wasn't compelling. It was. Suspense that the opening chapter created held and grew until the tension at the climax had my hands shaking as I hastily turned the page. The build-up was superbly written and the wind-down settled the suspense and gave hope that Ruby would get her life back on track.

The Opposite Of Amber was an emotional, chilling, and quietly intense story of the bonds between sisters and how they break.

I give The Opposite Of Amber a 6 out of 5. A new favourite of mine.

Have some of my favourite quotes from this to go:

"And to keep it right, to make it the same, he put her in the water too. Not the same water, that's true; but it's a good idea, if you don't want to leave traces, to put a girl in water. It's the opposite of amber."

(I'm sad that I read this after my post about great titles. The Opposite of Amber is a great one.)

"Her blonde hair was full of ice and it glittered when they pulled her out into the sun; and quite honestly, the man who found her looked so pale and drained and shocked to stillness, she looked almost better than he did."

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### **Stargazer says**

Some lovely turns of phrase in here and i like the title's meaning but i won't remember it in a few days time.

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### **Mel (who is deeply in love with herself) says**

I automatically think less of a book when the murderer is obvious to me. And this book was especially bad at throwing red herrings in front of us; I worked out who the killer was the first page he/she was mentioned. And I promise you that I am not exaggerating.

The writing was spectacular on occasion, though.

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### **Christie says**

With Young Adult very much dominated by supernatural creatures and tales of romantic angst, *The Opposite of Amber* is a book guaranteed to stand out among its companions on the shelves of bookstores. As if the synopsis and stunning cover aren't enough to make readers flock, once you delve between the pages main character Ruby is guaranteed to take hold of your attention and emotions. She is unlike any protagonist I've ever encountered. Her quirkiness was utterly endearing and made for the perfect narrator of the turmoil her family faced, and the brutal crimes rocking her community.

*The Opposite of Amber* is made up of so many layers, and writing that flows just beautifully. Not an action packed read by any means, but a pacing that keeps readers interested because of the characters you can't help but to care about. Packed full of such a unique cast, and a maze of twists and turns from start to finish. I started reading expecting a murder mystery (which I did get), and found this book contained so much more. I loved the bond between sisters Ruby and Jinn, and was heartbroken as I watched it dissolve when the troubled Nathan entered the scene. Readers experience the dynamics of many different relationships, and how things happening around them causes them to bend and change. I almost felt like I was getting a fascinating lesson in human dynamics.

This is a book that will make readers feel, and leave its impression long after you've finished reading! A must read for anyone craving strong character driven writing. The author did a stellar job of bringing something fresh to the Young Adult scene!

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### **Marwa Abdeen says**

2.5/5. Still can't wrap my head around it.

**I'll write a review soon enough, says depressed and lazy me**

### **SPOILER-FREE REVIEW**

This review can also be found on my blog, *Unapologetic Writer*

Here's what you need to know before reading this review:

I'm usually a reader who's very picky about her reads, and being a slow, beginner at this I usually only pick or buy books that I'm sure I'm going to like. With this particular novel, I bought it in a rush because it was on sale and extremely cheap,

(talk about materialistic trash), and I've never even heard of it anywhere.

Fair enough, I was slightly disappointed.

The Opposite of Amber tells the story of two sisters: Jinn and Ruby. I bet you thought one of them would be called Amber, right? It's fine. I thought so, too.

Jinn and Ruby were always inseparable since the death of their mother, Lara. Jinn is obviously portrayed as a caretaker since the beginning. She's always speaking for her shy, anti-social sister and understanding her needs without Ruby having to mouth a word. Ruby always felt that she was going to be safe and grounded and was completely fine with her social anxiety, because Jinn will always be there to telepathize with her, right? It was right, until Jinn met Nathan Baird.

Nathan Baird is a magnet of disapproving looks from everyone who knows him and knows about his family history. It is always normal to have trust issues with such people, but Ruby's suspicion grows doubled by several factors. For one, Nathan is slowly stealing away Jinn from her with his charm and effortless charisma. Ruby is about to discover the horror she never thought she'd have to face; the horror of losing her sister's protection and guidance. Afterwards, she's discovering how she's the one who needs to look out after her older sister. Jinn is losing her mind and is doing things that are out of her nature. Gradually, everyone who was under the spell of Jinn's charms in Glassford is drifting away, rather apologetically. Jinn is changing and is losing her light, while Ruby is trying to figure out the real source of the damage. Unable to push her doubts away, she starts stalking Jinn and Nathan, while falling deeper in love with the silent, telepathic Cameron Foley.

The synopsis hardly offered any real glance at the characters in this book, because there were many of them that played sidekick but important roles in this story. There was Alex Jerrold, who spends most of his time throughout the story trying to regain the grip around his mental health after a failing suicide attempt. And there's Tom Jerrold, Alex's bigger brother, who falls into suspicion after Jinn goes missing. (it's not a spoiler, I promise. It's in the synopsis). There was also Wide Bertha, whom happened to be Jinn's boss and the only character I resonated very well with. And then there's Inflatable George (as called by our two sisters), Wide Bertha's secret lover.

Personally, I think Ruby was all tolerable at first, until she became whiney and attention-seeking and just couldn't handle the fact that her sister was getting a life. At times I felt that her extreme, out-of-the-limit selfishness was disgusting me. She was yearning for anyone to stroke her hair and tell her that was all beautiful and awesome, but then again, don't we all need that one person? Except that Ruby was going out of her way and hurting people in the process of trying to regain her sister.

The ending was quite shocking, which is the only reason I gave it 3 stars instead of 2. But the thing is I couldn't make the connection between that discovery and how Jinn's metamorphosis was taking place. It was quite confusing, but still shocking.

For a thriller, it was supposed to include more suspicion and confusion, but most of the time towards the middle it felt like any other Drama novel, with events that were dragging rather meaninglessly. I was expecting more of it, but was met with utmost disappointment.

I'd also wanted the author to handle the responsibility of talking about mental illness in a better way. The mentally-ill characters mentioned were not portrayed well enough. They needed more depth and more potential, but she has given none of it.

Oh well, expectations are more disappointments waiting to happen.

Stay awesome,

Marwa.

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### **Kate says**

In thinking back about The Opposite of Amber, the phrase "don't judge a book by its cover" instantly comes to mind. Don't let this cover fool you.

The Opposite of Amber was nothing like I thought it would be. This novel is not a happy-go-lucky novel. It is a dark, thrilling read that surprised me with its depth. Even now, days after reading it, I feel like a lot of me is still trying to digest Philip's message.

Going into this novel, I was looking for a fast-paced thriller. And I got some of that. But Philip and her prose completely deserve more than being declared a fast-paced read. Because, in all honesty, this is not a fast read. It literally took me days to finish it. And that is not a bad thing. Philip has created a very character driven novel which focus more on understanding the characters, the situation, and their feelings than a quick slasherish read with little substance. And substance is definitely a department that The Opposite of Amber is lacking in.

The Opposite of Amber is a novel that deserves to be savored. If you are like me, it may take you a little while to get into the novel.. to like the characters. But once you hit that stride, The Opposite of Amber will become a novel that will be hard to put down.

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### **Erica says**

This was a really awesome book! It was really touching and intriguing. Once I started, I had a hard time putting it down, and the pages couldn't seem to flip fast enough. It was addicting, and I needed to know what was going to happen next and what twists Gillian Philip would throw at readers next.

The plot was not predictable by any means. Gillian Philip made readers suspect so many different characters and would switch the facts around to make other characters look just as guilty. I was constantly switching my opinion on who I thought was behind everything. My sole issue with the book was there were a few brief moments was that I was slightly confused at what was happening. It would take me a few pages, then I'd realize exactly what I had missed.

I loved all the characters in The Opposite of Amber. They were all really well written and very well rounded. I really liked Ruby. She was very personable and easy to connect with. She was just a ton of fun. The relationship between Jinn and Ruby was really well done. It was so easy to see how Ruby was the younger sister, and yes, at times annoyed Jinn, but the bond they had was incredible. Jinn was such a good hearted person you couldn't not like her if you wanted to. As much as Ruby despises Nathan Baird in the book, you couldn't really hate him either. He had unpleasant qualities, but behind those it was easy to see how much he cared for Jinn. I loved Foley and his sister, Mallory as well. Mallory was absolutely hilarious and even the little things she did made me smile. Foley was just an all around nice guy.

I would whole heartedly suggest The Opposite of Amber! It was a fantastic read, that will captivate readers until the very last page.

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## Sheep says

//One of the books that i grabbed at random in the local library (and i wonder if it's been borrowed before at all, judging from its 99% new condition and the empty return-stamp slip?)

Just a quick random post-reading ooze of thoughts as this book is, seriously, unlike any of the books ive read before (but possibly because i havent read that much) and i feel like i should write everything down before the thoughts vanish from my mind.

For the start I didnt expect anything in particular as i seldom read the book intro of any kind before reading/as part of the reason i choose to read the book. So i clearly had no idea what the story would be about. After finishing it i still get the impression that i am not 100% clear with the story - not because of the writing or the plot, but i feel like i have to read it once again to (try to) fully grasp everything. And scrolling through the reviews i found a lot of the same thoughts as mine. This isnt like the usual thrilling, action-packed page turners or other popular YA fictions in the category. It's quite a slow read as the plot and character developments are basically driven by character and everyday events which some may found to be boring. So the first 1/3 was a bit hard to get into, but once you get used to the narrating tone and the pace it gets better. (but I liked Ruby right from the first few pages because of her weirdness and relatable sense of humor ha) And this book kind of reminds me of Rainbow Rowell's Fangirl and i havent clearly figured out why, but i guess it's because of its (seemingly) normalness and simpleness and the humor and the sibling relationship (though not really similar as the story goes on).

It's hard to define the category of this book because it doesn't quite fit with those thrilling mystery-solving novels, though the elements are certainly part of the plot. Maybe it's because everything just appeared to be so normal and it's more like reading a random diary of someone, and then slowly you unraveled the darker, more complicated side of her world through the stories when you start to get to know about her and put the pieces together. Again, maybe I'll be more clear-headed if i re-read the book (but which i wouldn't seem to be doing just quite yet). But overall i enjoyed it. It's the kind of writing style that i love, so colloquial and fun and smooth and...you get the idea if you've read it and liked the way Ruby tells the story.

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...And i should mention i freaked when i saw Doctor Who (and unintentional 'docotor who' on the first page) in the lines when i was using a Doctor Who bookmark for reading.

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## Jessi says

This book grabbed me right away with its sense of realism by using the every day events of life to convey the deep, dark themes and meanings the author wants to convey. The atmosphere is somewhat melancholy due to the relationship between the sisters and quite dark and brooding and sinister in the threat that lurks in the mysterious killer of women.

Gillian Philip's prose is stunning! I've been sitting here cycling through adjectives to try to convey how powerful it is... It's intensely beautiful in places, filled with meaningful quotes and passages that can be kept and savored later on. At the same time, it's also very realistic in terms of dialogue and Ruby's thoughts. Being an American, I loved reading the British colloquialisms in each scene. It added a little something extra

for me as well.

The relationship between the Ruby and Jinn is very masterfully conveyed. As they become more and more removed from each other due to Jinn's relationship with Nathan Baird, Ruby's outlook on life becomes more dire. The complex emotions between the sisters are very spot-on realistic. The emotions of all the characters, in fact, are well-done. All of the characters in this book add something to it - even the minor ones. Each person is there for a purpose that makes the book stronger and more meaningful as a whole.

This is a solidly well-done, likable book filled with all the complexity that makes me love something!

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### ♥ Ashleigh ♥ contrary to popular belief i'm not actually mad! says

WOW. what a wonderfully told story. bitter sweet and sad but beautiful. packed full with emotions and hard to face truths.

So we start off with two very different sisters who are completely intertwined with each other. Jinn, the Nurchurer, always looking after others - even at the cost to herself. Jinn is the one that everyone notices and likes often being described as the shinning blond with life in her eyes. than there's Ruby - our narrator.

This is Ruby:

*"And for the first time in ages, i felt i wanted to add something. I wanted to make one of those slender word-chains that kept a person at your side. I wanted to make a rope out of words and loop it around his wrist, invisibly, so he wouldnt get bored and walk away.*

*Words look fragile, insect trails of ink, but they're strong. Words bind people together or bludgeon them apart. Words are a grappling hook, flung skywoods to yank a boy off a roof. What i wanted was the daisy-chain words, but unfortunately I couldnt open my mouth except to lick my lips."*

Ruby is humanly flawed and comes across as a real person (actually all the characters do) she could be called a day-dreamer, though maybe a slightly in-sane one with some of the things she comes up with. she liked to put herself first and became annoyed if others didnt follow her plan, she grudgingly let go of precious words for fear of saying something wrong therefor screwing everythin up.

Anyways on with the story. as im sure you can guess with these two sister being as thick as theives that something was bound to come between them, and you would be correct, but this story doesnt end with a HEA like you might expect, it pretty much goes down hill from there until everything derails then The End.

So while you may have an idea of how this story is going to unfold - it will no doubt surprise you. even if it didnt it's hard not to get caught up in the lives of all these unique people. there where a couple og laggy parts where i just wanted to get to the next part but overall i was fairly sucked in and emotionally impacted by the book - which i always take as a good sign (though maybe not as impacted as the author had hoped for)

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## **Jessica says**

Let me begin by saying that this is not a "happy" book. Beautifully written yes. Deep and moving yes. Happy? Not so much. If you are looking for a light and airy read, this book is not what you are looking for. However if you are ready to dive into a story filled with prose and a character driven plot, you are in for a treat.

From the very beginning of the story our main character Ruby is dealing with a lot. As I mentioned above, it seems as though she is barely hanging on to what she has left. The story begins with Ruby obsessing over her friend Alex who attempted suicide by jumping off a roof. Ruby feels responsible because she made a backhanded comment at him that she thinks pushed him off the edge. That alone is a lot for to deal with, but poor Ruby has so much more hidden away.

In fact, Ruby's whole world in this book is built around guilt and isolation. Her sisters are there, but not, and Jinn, her oldest sister, is the one thread she has left to hang on to. Jinn has become the stand in mother for Ruby, and when she starts to drift away Ruby feels like she is losing everything she has left. Watching these two characters interact is truly what immersed me in the book. As Jinn floats farther away from Ruby, you can see Ruby's attitude change. Her outlook on life becomes more dire, and it is heart wrenching to watch.

Wovens seamlessly into Ruby's story is a story of a mass murderer and his 5 victims. All of them so far have been prostitutes, or so the murderer believes. At first I wondered what significance this inner story had to Ruby's life. However as I read on, Gillian Phillip made the purpose of it blindingly clear and I was in shock. The Opposite of Amber is a book that I fell so in love with that I'm still thinking about it, even though I sent it on to the next reader over three weeks ago. That's how invested I was in this book.

I suppose what I'm going on about is simply this: The Opposite of Amber is a simply stunning book. This is well worth your time to pick up when it releases. It might take a little bit for you to adapt to the colloquial language, but once you do you'll find yourself immersed in the lives of the characters instantly. I cannot wait to get a finished copy of this book. It gets the highest recommendation I can give.

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