

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn **Book Review by Juan Leon**

If you want to read a book about overcoming hardships and having perseverance and hope to overcome challenges, than this is the perfect book for you. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith is a very interesting book. This novel tells the story about a young girl and her family growing up in Brooklyn, New York. In this novel, Francie and Neeley are the main characters. Katie and Johnny are the parents of Francie and Neeley.

Francie and Neeley are born into a small family. Francie's family is poor and is struggling to make ends meet. With barely enough money to pay rent and for the basic necessities, life has become very hard for Francie and her family. As the book begins, we read about how Katie and Johnny fall in love with each other. They are very happy and they begin to form their family. Sadly, Katie always loves Neeley better. Neeley is her favorite. This was very sad for me, because Francie always tried her best to strive to make Katie happy. No matter what she did, Katie always loved Neeley more. Just to make things a little clearer, Johnny loved Francie and Katie loved Neeley.

My favorite part of this novel is when Katie and Johnny loved each other. They had an unbreakable love for each other. The only thing that could break them apart was death. I also liked how peaceful it was in 1912, when this book takes place. There were no gangs or if there were, only a little bit. Also there was little violence and little crime. It was a perfect time to be alive.

I found this book at home, and I immediately thought that it might be a good book to read. When I read the back, there were all kinds of praises saying the book was well written and it was highly recommended. So I decided to put its reputation to the test. My opinion on the book is that it is okay. I like some parts of the book, but I think it could be better. Something I did not like about his book is it talked a lot about the surroundings. For example, it talks a lot about what is going on around Francie instead of her perspectives. Overall, it was an okay book.

In this book, the Nolan Family is very poor and has many hardships. I would compare this book with Black Boy by Richard Wright. This book is a memoir and also tells the story of a poor boy that faces struggles with his life and education. Another thing that also happens is Richard loses his mother when Richard is still young. In A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Francie loses her father and also faces barriers to a higher education. In both Black Boy and A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, it shows the struggles to get a better life and what hard work and determination will do. Also, this book relates to the lives of many people today. Many young adults are facing barriers to their education and many are the first person in their family to go to college or high school. Yet, without perseverance or hard work these barriers cannot be overcome.

I would recommend this book to people who are facing struggles to get a better education, and to people who need money to be able to get a higher education and succeed in life. This book will help you remember that with hard work and perseverance everything will be okay, and you

will be someone in life. This book will help you make the best of your life, and it will also teach you that with family you can get past any challenge.

Something that I learned from reading this book is that deciding not to get an education is not an option. Education is the thing that gets us good jobs and helps us out in the long run; and as a result is valuable. Education is what makes the difference between a job, and a career or a profession. We read, "Education! That was it! It was education that made the difference" (Smith 204). This quote explains the difference between being rich or poor. Education gives you a better and easier life. Education gives you a better opportunity over other people. Katie is very proud that her daughter can read and write. In my book, Katie is filled with happiness that Francie is on her way to a meaningful and humble life. For me, education is important because like Francie, it is my ticket to a meaningful life. Education is also my way out of poverty. So, the lesson I learned is education is a way out to overcome poverty because it gives us opportunities and gives us a meaningful life.

My second claim is that perseverance, hard work, and determination are necessary to achieve what you want. For example, Katie says "I am your mother and father" (Smith 293). This quote relates to the hardships Francie and her family went through after the death of her father. After Francie's world came crashing down, she was greatly devastated. However, with the help of the three magic words (perseverance, hard work, and determination) she got through it. Just like the tree on the cover of the book, Francie got through it. When the tree lacked water, good soil and maybe some sunlight, it still kept growing and moving forward. Just like that Francie got through her hardships and was okay in the end, and resumed her search for the American Dream.

Lastly, many people do not like to hear the truth. People do not like to open their eyes to reality. When Francie exposed this truth she received a bad grade. Well I think that that was wrong. For example we read "Beauty is truth and truth beauty" (Smith 315). This quote demonstrates how many people do not like to reveal the truth. When Francie wrote daily in her journal what was happening around her and in her life, the teacher did not like it; she did not like poverty. While Francie is growing up, she faces reality and the poverty around her. So, I do believe that many people do not want to hear what is happening around them. Instead they ignore it and live their life without helping others as does Francie's teacher. So, overall this was a good book since it has valuable lessons we can take away from it.

Work Cited

Smith, Betty. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. New York: Harper Perennial, 1992.