



A TREE GROWS in BROOKLYN

By Betty Smith

This is a story about Francie Nolan, who is 11 years old, bright, lonely, and resourceful. “...Francie is her daddy’s ‘prima donna’ and she treasures his love while fighting to win her mother’s. Although she never achieves the place in her mother’s heart that her brother holds, her strength and sheer perseverance guide her through difficult times.”

Francie has a great love of reading, and “... her favorite time of the day is on Saturday when she can go to the library, then rush home with her treasure and read the afternoon away on the fire escape of her Brooklyn tenement.” True to her nature of doing everything heartily, she is determined to read all the books in the local library, from A to Z.

She seems to take all the negatives in her life in her stride, including her family’s impoverished circumstances, her drunken father, and the odd relationships that exist in the family. She has dreams of moving up in the world, of having an education, a better life, and sets out to accomplish those goals.

Like the sturdy tree that grows outside her window and survives all catastrophes, Francie persists through all the hardships that befall her.

CAMELOT COMMENTS

- I read the book as a teenager, and wanted to read it as an adult. At the beginning of the book, I thought “Oh, do I need choose a different book?” But then I got into it and found it’s kind of neat to see how I can relate to it.
- This was my first time to read the book - I tried to put myself in the shoes of the characters. I enjoyed it - that era. It’s so different from what we know in Texas.
- Enjoyed the book - I liked that it was really a child’s story, but could relate to it.
- I liked it from the perspective of being in New York. And how the kids used their money for the family and didn’t resent it. We think of Brooklyn as unsafe and dirty. We walked all over Brooklyn and found some of the old buildings referred to in the book: the tobacco shop, Health Department buildings, the glove factory.
- I’d read it twice before and didn’t re-read it. It was interesting to me because I grew up in the New Jersey area and remember hearing stories from my grandmother.

- ❑ It's wonderful that these kids were happy with so little. Just a copper penny was a treasure to them.
- ❑ I could relate to Francie - tall and skinny - so many parallels with her life. And it got better and better as I continued reading.
- ❑ I truly loved it. Loved the way they talked about God. And the story of her first love - Francie was very strong. I'm glad I read the book.
- ❑ It's one of my all-time favorites. The characters were so real. And the metaphor of the tree is a favorite quote.
- ❑ I liked it that it high-lighted the daily reading of Shakespeare and the Bible, something that no doubt affected Francie's life greatly.

NEXT MEETING

When? Friday, May 18, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

Where? At Anne Simms' house

Why? To have fun, and to discuss

The Namesake

by Jhumpa Lahiri

(A fine novel about a transplanted Bengali family)

Hostesses coming up: June, Ann Seher *The Paris Wife*

July, Suzanne Tuite

MEETING NOTES

The afternoon gave us another gorgeous spring day and we met at Karen's wonderful house. Of course, we caught up on neighborhood news (which wasn't much!) And Ann Seher made us aware of another unbelievable story from her past. It was shockingly stunning. And, do you think you'll read it here? Not on your life. Everything that happens at Camelot stays at Camelot.

Karen served a delicious chocolate sheet cake, which wound up a lovely afternoon.

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A Child's Letter to God

Dear God, I didn't think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset you made on Tuesday night. That was really good. from Frank

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