

***A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (by Betty Smith) Study Guide:
Questions for Reflection Before and After Reading**

BOOK ONE

1. What kind of tree grows in Francie's yard? What significance do you see in it?
2. What did Francie say happened in a neighborhood in which this tree grew?
3. What did the library represent to Francie? Why do you suppose she enjoyed reading so much?
4. Describe Johnny Nolan. Why do you suppose Francie prefers him to her mother?
5. What was the importance of bread, both fresh and stale, to the family?

BOOK TWO

1. Describe the relationship between Mary and Francie Rommely.
2. "...the Rommely women...were made out of thin, invincible steel..." Explain.
3. The characteristics of the Nolans was vastly different from the characteristics of the Rommelys. Explain.
4. What advice did Katie's mother give her after Francie was born? What does this tell you about her character?
5. Why did Katie finally stop depending upon Johnny? How did her relationship with Johnny, Francie, and Neely change?
6. Describe the life of the children in the summer.
7. Explain why they moved to Williamsburg.

BOOK THREE

1. Once again a tree is mentioned. Can you see significance to this?
2. How does this neighborhood differ from Lorimer Street? What were the stores there and why did they fascinate?
3. "A person who pulls himself up ...has two choices. Having risen above it, he can forget it, or he can rise above it and never forget it and keep compassion and understanding in his heart." Explain to what this quotation refers. How did Francie surprise them?
4. What lessons did Francie learn the first day of school?
5. What new experience does Johnny try to give his children and Tilly? What is the result? What does this experience reveal of Johnny's character?
7. Describe the problems the family had after Johnny's death.
8. Explain the way Katie showed her pride when the family went for ice cream after Francie's graduation.

BOOK FOUR

1. Describe Francie's work experience after her graduation.
2. "But in their secret hearts, each knew that it wasn't all right and would never be all right between them again." What has happened? Why is it important?
3. How did Francie manage to begin college?
4. A new tree had grown from the stump and its trunk had grown along the ground until it reached a place where there were no wash lines above it. Then it had started to grow toward the sky again." Can you apply this to Francie's family?