

# Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

## A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

---

- This is obviously an autobiographical novel. Did Betty write her life as it was or as she felt it should have been? (Betty Smith makes the comment “that she didn’t write it the way it was, but the way it should have been.”)
- Katie admits to herself that she loved Neely more than Francie ... is this a natural reaction of mothers?
- Late in the book, Katie chooses Neely to go on to high school. Why not Francie?
- Is this an accurate portrayal of the immigrant experience?
- What passage remained with you after you finished the book?
- Her English teacher graded her down for the realistic essays. Do you think she realized that they portrayed Francie’s life and family?
- What is the impact of women’s relationships in this novel?
- How are men portrayed?
- In the afterword it is mentioned that WWII soldiers read her novel in the trenches. Did this surprise you? Why or why not?
- Does it surprise you that the rape attempt was so vividly portrayed. How do you think readers felt about this?
- What do you think Katie whispered to Johnnie before he left shortly before he died?
- What is the significance of the title?
- Why do you think this book is considered to be a classic?
- If you read this book in the past, what did you think of it then and how do you compare your opinion in your second reading? If you haven’t read it before, did you think it lived up to its reputation?



**Skokie Public Library**

5215 Oakton Street  
Skokie, Illinois 60077  
847.673.7774 / 847.673.7797 fax  
[www.skokielibary.info](http://www.skokielibary.info)