

A tree grows in brooklyn paper

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



I. Intro paragraph a. Hook: In the Irish American community of Brooklyn in the 1900's, immigrants faced discrimination and crushing poverty. In the world that Betty Smith describes in "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" however, this poverty is depicted as a kind of virtue, a force that causes individuals to grow, and families to bond. c. Yet, while female characters like Katie and Francie grow from overcoming the hardships brought on by poverty, Francie's father Johnny Nolan is defeated by it and ends up dying of alcoholism.

In the 1900's, gender roles and social expectations of men and women were more rigid than today, and both sexes were supposed to stay within gender boundaries. d. In telling the story of Katie and Johnny Nolan, Betty Smith reveals how often times immigrant women like Katie, who went against gender stereotypes, survived and grew from the hardships of poverty, while men like Johnny, who tried to fulfill their gender role, were defeated by it. II.

1ST Body paragraph a. In the beginning of the novel, he has found a job, but it is as a low paying waiter and unstable.

Even so, he dresses with style, is handsome, and seems content being a singing waiter. He is able to bring home money to his wife, Katie. His daughter, Francie always helps him get his bow tie on and he calls her "pre-Madonna," then she eagerly awaits his return with her brother Neely, for he always bring back treats like caviar and oysters. They are a happy family. However, Johnny loses his job and his family becomes more and more hungry, but he can't help them. He can't find another job. i.

In the early 1900's, men were supposed to provide for their family, but as Johnny Nolan illustrates, this was hard for immigrant men. ii. Perhaps not

being in control and not being able to bring home money to his family makes him feel like a waste and a failure, for as the story goes on, he drinks more and more until he dies of alcoholism. Katie tries to help her husband, " She told him it was a good thing, that suffering would harden him, would teach him such a lesson that he'd stop drinking. But poor Johnny just wouldn't harden. " (P. 98) iii.

Johnny grew up with the gender stereotype of the man of the house being the " breadwinner", and in the Irish American community in Brooklyn, he cannot fulfill this role. III. 2ND Body paragraph i. Yet, Katie has no choice and even though the cleaning job she finds does not pay well, she goes out to work ii. In contrast, Katie, Francie's mother, is able to overcome poverty because she breaks down the gender stereotypes of what a married woman should do in her time; Katie goes out of the house to work. At that time, were expected to stay home and be cared for while caring for the children iii.

Yet, Katie has no choice and even though the cleaning job she finds does not pay well, she goes out to work. Thus, as she faces poverty, we see Katie rise to the challenge by being flexible. In contrast to Johnny, she is able to experience poverty as a learning experience and change. At one point she says to passersby, " Look at that tree growing up there out of that grating. It gets no sun, and water only when it rains. It's growing out of sour earth. And it's strong because its hard struggle to live is making it strong.

My children will be strong that way. " IV. 3RD Body paragraph a. Johnny and Katie Nolan, exemplify a theme of gender difference in the overcoming of poverty for immigrants i. Katie is flexible and able to adapt, so she eventually obtains a better life. She does not stay within her gender role of

remaining in the house, but goes out to work. In contrast, Johnny is unable to be as flexible and his stubbornness in keeping within his gender role and his own idea of his responsibility to his family eventually destroys him ii.

Betty Smith does not judge Johnny in her novel, but rather portrays him as a sympathetic and highly likeable, but he is a conflicted and ultimately tragic character. V. Conclusion paragraph a. In the patriarchal society of the early 1900's that Betty Smith describes in her book "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn", it would seem logical if women did not fair as well as men in times of difficulty. After all women had fewer rights. They could not vote or get the same wages as men i. By going against gender stereotypes, Katie is able to persevere and overcome poverty, while her husband, Johnny Nolan, who tries to follow them, is defeated iii.

In 2012 many women have broken gender boundaries; Hilary Clinton is Secretary of state, Lady Gaga and Beyonce are millionaires and international pop stars. Men too have broken out of gender stereotypes for it is socially acceptable for men to work at home and even earn less than women. In "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn," however, Betty Smith captures a world, gone now, in which strict gender roles defined a person's life. But for immigrants, trying to make a start in America, the need to adapt and go against these gender roles was critical.