

A tree grows in brooklyn essay sample

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Poverty is defined as the deprivation of food, shelter, money and clothing that occurs when people cannot satisfy their basic needs. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means vulnerability to violence, and it often implies living in fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. In short poverty is simply a lack of money, a barrier to everyday life. One third of deaths in the world are due to poverty related causes.

Poverty is a big problem in America. I personally have never had to experience the hardships that poverty brings people. That doesn't mean I don't know what it can do to families. Poverty can either make or break a family. It can force closer and helps them find the strength to carry on, or it can tear them apart by causing arguments about money and food.

Poverty is a key component in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. In this novel characters constantly think about how poor they are. They are always thinking about how they will but their next loaf of bread, or what one neighborhood looks like compared to another. Every activity and game is planned around a limited amount of resources. The main characters aren't the only people going through hardships in the novel. The whole community has to face what the Nolan's are facing. Children are forced to collect garbage off the streets and sell it. After the children have collected their pennies store owners take advantage of them. They sell them candy and have them play games that they will never win. The games are always rigged so that the children won't win and the store owners will keep making money. The Nolan children are better than most when it comes to saving money. Neeley and Francie would split the money in the most fair way they

could. Neeley was in charge of the money though, “‘ Eight cents for the bank.’ That was the rule; half of the money they got from anywhere went into the tin can. ‘ And four cents for you and four cents for me’” (Smith p 8-9). No matter how hard they tried poverty followed them everywhere they went.

Journal Entry #2- Chapter 11-20: Education:

Education can be formal or informal. Formal education is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Informal learning is used to describe learning that is done independently.

At a young age, education was the worst thing in the world for me. As I got older education became so much more than that. Education has always been a big part of my life. I was always pushed to do better and better when it came to grades in school. I’m very grateful for that because now if you don’t have an education you don’t have a job.

Johnny and Katie had completely different personalities, but when it came to education they had the same views. Francie and Neeley both had the opportunity to get an education. In the novel you can clearly see that Francie was more excited for school, “ School say were anticipated by Francie” (p142). School wasn’t anything that Francie thought it would be. Francie would never be a teacher’s pet. Only the girls with freshly curled hair and new silk hair bows would get that privilege. The school was very full as well. Three thousand children crowded into a school that was supposed to be for one thousand. The teachers weren’t qualified and were very mean. The

cruellest teachers were the ones that came from the same area that the children did. Not all of their teachers were horrible though. There were those occasional nice teachers, but they never lasted long. Francie liked school despite all of the meanness, cruelty, and unhappiness.

Their education wasn't just learning arithmetic, they also took piano lessons with Miss Lizzie and Maggie Tynmore. Katie also took lessons from the Tynmores. Francie and Neeley never really paid attention, but Katie was very interested in learning. After every lesson with the Tynmores Katie would teach the children what she had been taught. Piano lessons were the only type of lessons that Francie didn't enjoy.

Journal Entry #3- Chapter 21-30: Gender:

Even now, in the 21st century, it's still a male dominated world. Depending on what gender you are, it can have a big impact on your life. It's been shown that woman make 17% less than their male counterpart. There will always be that little bit of history that says males were once considered better than women, and that will never go away.

Gender role is a set of social and behavioral norms that are considered appropriate for a man and woman in a relationship. Society was once based on men bringing home the money and the woman taking care of the home, but in A Tree Grows in Brooklyn it's completely different. Katie was the strong one who made most of the money, while Johnny was a drunk. Aunt Evy was the strong one while Uncle Flittman was an imbecile. Francie was very smart and strived to be better while Neeley didn't really care, but Neeley was still the favorite.

Gender discrimination was showed in multiple ways during the novel. Whether it was when it came to who brought home the money or who got to go to school. Francie wasn't allowed to go to high school while Neeley was. Francie was the one who actually wanted to go while Neeley was indifferent. Even in the beginning of the novel Francie couldn't go into Cheap Charlie's because it was a boys only store. There were " good" housewives in the novel. They are described as, " The good housewives, their arms filled with bags of vegetables and brown paper parcels of meat" (p232). These woman were considered good because they stayed home and took care of their children. Most of the other woman went out and worked instead of staying home, completely disregarding what the norm was. The way that these woman were working the norm meant nothing to them.

Gender roles played a huge role in this novel. Katie and Francie completely disregarded the gender roles and did something with their lives. They didn't wait around for a man to come and do all of the work for them. They worked hard to get what they needed and eventually they did.

Journal Entry #4- Chapter 31-40: Perseverance:

Perseverance is the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition. Perseverance is definitely an important part in every human's life. Without perseverance most of the world would be poor and homeless.

Perseverance has helped me and everyone around me in so many ways. If my parents hadn't persevered I probably wouldn't have been where I am now. I would've been living in Africa, and probably wouldn't have the

opportunities that I have now. If I hadn't persevered I wouldn't have even been in this English class. My perseverance has led me to bigger and better things. Persevering through all of my problems I've gotten opportunities that most people don't have.

The Rommely woman were considered the strongest in this novel. When Francie was born ill she persevered and her mother never doubted her. When Katie had her children she only became stronger. Sissy tried as hard as she could to have a child. She when through three husbands and ten still born children. Her husband John didn't want to adopt though. When Sissy asked him if he loved children he replied, " Sure I like children. But they got to be my own and not some other bum's" (p265). Sissy eventually tricked her John into thinking that Lucia's child was her own. Even though Sissy finally had her a child she wanted one of her own. She went against the norm and went to a hospital to get help from a doctor. Not only a doctor, but a Jewish doctor. Katie was surprised that Sissy would do that, but after 10 stillborn children, Sissy finally had a child of her own. No matter how many stillborns Sissy had she wouldn't give up. Sissy was one of the best examples of perseverance in this novel. She tried as hard as she could to have a child of her own. Pretending that Lucia's child was hers wasn't enough for her. She had to have a child of her own and that drive got her what she wanted. Sissy had a baby, and it lived.

Journal Entry #5- Chapter 41-50: The American Dream:

The American Dream is defined as a set of ideals in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility achieved through hard work. The idea of the American Dream is in the <https://assignbuster.com/a-tree-grows-in-brooklyn-essay-sample/>

United States Declaration of Independence. It says that all men are created equal and that they are given certain rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But what does the American Dream really mean? When immigrants come to America they are not always accepted with open arms. They aren't given the same opportunities as others because of their religion or ethnicity. I believe that The American Dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is exactly that, a dream. There will always be those people who cut you down because of where you came from or what religion you are. The American Dream is a great motto to live but that is it. Although, we are getting closer and closer to fulfilling that dream you can tell that we aren't there yet. Who knows we might not ever get there.

You can tell that every single one of those immigrants in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* were looking for The American Dream. Some were disappointed. They found that when they got to America they weren't able to find jobs because of the bias against them. Mary and Thomas Rommely both came to America searching for the American Dream. They left Austria looking for a better life for their children. The dream of a better life in America drives the Nolan's to live their life the way they do. When Mary Rommely gives her advice to Katie at the beginning of the book, she tells Katie how she should raise her children so they have more opportunities. Mary is illiterate and knowing that Katie and her family can read and write, makes her believe that the American Dream is coming true for her family. Even though she never got to hear the words, " I, M. Frances K. Nolan, am now in college" (p 430), she was still proud.

Journal Entry #6- Chapter 51-56: Theme

I think that Betty Smith is trying to say that things do get better. The Nolan's were poor, but eventually came out of poverty when Katie married Sergeant McShane. For them to come out of poverty Johnny had to die, but Johnny wasn't helping them come out of poverty anyway. I think she was also trying to say that education means a lot to immigrants. For immigrants to have a chance at anything they would have to get an education. Education goes along with gender. It's even harder to get somewhere if you are a woman and you don't have an education. Women were supposed to stay home and take care of the house. They weren't supposed to go out and get an education. Francie broke down those barriers and got an education. She persevered and eventually got accepted to University of Michigan at sixteen years old. According to Mary Rommely the American Dream was achieved, but not really. Katie did end up having the opportunity to climb up the social ladder, but not because of hard work but because of marriage.

There is a lot of things on my cover page. I drew a picture of Francie Nolan's head. Inside there are symbols that represent her and things she has done in the story. The broom and scissors represent her work in the barber shop. The road represents the road she lived on while Johnny was still alive. The ladder coming off the road shows her climbing up the social ladder when Katie marries Sergeant McShane. The pennies are a symbol of her time collecting junk and getting pennies for it. The typewriter shows her time making money as a typewriter. The diploma represents her graduating from secondary school, unlike most kids from her area. The piano keys represent the piano

lessons she took with Miss Tynmore. The candies represent the candy that she bought when she sold junk.

The pencil and paper stand for her education. The musical notes are a symbol of her piano lessons and her father and his singing. The books represent the times when Francie would go to the library every Saturday and read the books there. The paper with her name on it represents the first paper she ever got published. The needle represents the sewing class that she took at the Settlement house. The triangles represent the Neeley's geometry book that Francie was studying from. The ring represents one of the most important things to happen in Francie's life, " Katherine Nolan, I'm askin' to keep company with you. Object, a weddin' in the fall" (p 469). Sergeant McShane asked Francie's mother, Katie, to marry him allowing Francie to go to college. The tree on the side represents perseverance, one of the most powerful concepts in this novel.