



Family Happiness

Leo Tolstoy

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Family Happiness (Russian: Семейное счастье [Semeynoye Schast'ye]) is an 1859 novella written by Leo Tolstoy, first published in The Russian Messenger.

Family Happiness Details

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From Reader Review Family Happiness for online ebook

Ahmad Sharabiani says

???????? ?????? [Semeynoye Schast'ye] = Family Happiness, Leo Tolstoy

Family Happiness is an 1859 novella written by Leo Tolstoy, first published in *The Russian Messenger*. The story concerns the love and marriage of a young girl, Mashechka (17 years old), and the much older Sergey Mikhaylych (36), an old family friend. The story is narrated by Masha. After a courtship that has the trappings of a mere family friendship, Masha's love grows and expands until she can no longer contain it. She reveals it to Sergey Mikhaylych and discovers that he also is deeply in love. If he has resisted her it was because of his fear that the age difference between them would lead the very young Masha to tire of him. He likes to be still and quiet, he tells her, while she will want to explore and discover more and more about life. Ecstatically and passionately happy, the pair immediately engages to be married. Once married they move to Mikhaylych's home. They are both members of the landed Russian upper class. Masha soon feels impatient with the quiet order of life on the estate, notwithstanding the powerful understanding and love that remains between the two. To assuage her anxiety, they decide to spend a few weeks in St. Petersburg. Sergey Mikhaylych agrees to take Masha to an aristocratic ball. He hates "society" but she is enchanted with it. They go again, and then again. She becomes a regular, the darling of the countesses and princes, with her rural charm and her beauty. Sergey Mikhaylych, at first very pleased with Petersburg society's enthusiasm for his wife, frowns on her passion for "society"; but he does not try to influence Masha. Out of respect for her, Sergey Mikhaylych will scrupulously allow his young wife to discover the truth about the emptiness and ugliness of "society" on her own. But his trust in her is damaged as he watches how dazzled she is by this world. Finally they confront each other about their differences. They argue but do not treat their conflict as something that can be resolved through negotiation. Both are shocked and mortified that their intense love has suddenly been called into question. Something has changed. Because of pride, they both refuse to talk about it. The trust and the closeness are gone. Only courteous friendship remains. Masha yearns to return to the passionate closeness they had known before Petersburg. They go back to the country. Though she gives birth to children and the couple has a good life, she despairs. They can barely be together by themselves. Finally she asks him to explain why he did not try to guide and direct her away from the balls and the parties in Petersburg. Why did they lose their intense love? Why don't they try to bring it back? His answer is not the answer she wants to hear, but it settles her down and prepares her for a long life of comfortable "Family Happiness".

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Mohammad Mirzaali says

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Dolors says

This early novella by the famous Russian author won't strike the reader as provocative or subversive like some of his later works. "*Family happiness*" explores the predictable conflicts of marriage within the frame of convention, leaving little space for questioning the social conditions of Russia in Tolstoy's days.

After her widowed mother dies, Masha, a young noblewoman of seventeen, starts looking at the family friend and land owner of thirty-six, Sergey Mikhlaylych, in a romantic way. The difference in age prevents Sergey from expressing his reciprocal love, but after several years of tentative courting they finally get married.

What ensues is ritualistic dance of two people joined at first with the blinding passion of first love but with essentially different expectations that will eventually puncture the bliss of the newly married couple.

The story might be simple in its plot development, but Tolstoy's narrative skill shines as bright as ever. The characters are incredibly human because of their complex and often inconsistent natures, making their emotions easily universalizable and therefore, recognizable to the reader. Masha's need for excitement after the thrill of the first months of marriage embodies the common dissatisfaction that affects most humans at some point in life. Sergey's patient understanding of Masha's evolution is fatherly but also condescending, which somehow speaks of Tolstoy's rather traditional outlook on the role of men and women in the family unit.

"*Family Happiness*" is far from the exultant ode to love that Turgenev professed in "*First Love*" but a cautionary tale about the fleeting effects of young infatuation, where gratitude for the mundane and tolerance towards disillusionment bespeak of maturity and acquired wisdom. Maybe unimaginative, but also a compassionate tale on marriage, a recognition to those who walk side by side, in spite of everything, surviving the hard edges of time.

Siska Nurohmah says

After reading the book, I start thinking.. is reality that ugly and boring?

Well, the world seems so wonderful, colorful, exciting.. and so on.. when you fall in love. You want to spend the rest of your life with someone you love, you consider marriage, you plan everything.. but, after a while, after the hormone stop working, after you become desensitized.. your life turns flat. even flatter than before. And maybe you'll think that it's sickening to have to live with the same person throughout your life.

So ugly.. isn't there any love that last forever?

The book said, yes.. in other forms.. it's appreciation, commitment, respect.. ah, and maybe, conditioning.

Hmm.. Not bad.

Still, I can't stop dreaming about an everlasting love, in the most inspiring form. I hope..

Hero Khalil says

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Misha Mathew says

Tolstoy, I believe, came to me at just the right point of my life - a year which has been, by far, the most turbulent one in my entire life. After reading War & Peace earlier this year, I was convinced that there is no better guidebook to 'better living' than Tolstoy's words. He, seemingly, has advise for everything under the sun.

Family Happiness begins at a lonely country house somewhere in Russia. We meet our protagonist, the seventeen year old Masha, just after her mother's death living a secluded life with her younger sister and governess. We follow Masha's story through 2 crucial periods of her life, both of which lead to an awakening of sorts or a sort of maturity. She is what you can imagine any teenager to be - longing for stimulation and city life, repressed by the isolation of the country. Yet this changes as she meets her late father's friend, the middle aged Sergey Mikhaylych, which is the first crucial period. Sergey's presence and company changes her teenage daydreams dramatically - her dreams change from one of want of stimulation to those of a desire for quiet domesticity and a life that's more giving. As they get married, the initial months are blissful ones. That changes as she slowly tires of the quiet country living that she had so desired. That's when we see her enter the second crucial stage of her life - the one where her marriage begins to fail, and the love which had seemed so strong and ideal seems to fade.

From what I have read of Tolstoy, there seems to be some common themes running through his novels. One of those themes seem to be a search for happiness. What is happiness to Masha? At first, happiness for her is Sergey alone. Then, as she encounters the society at St. Petersburg and experiences the flattery, fame and the stimulation that it offers, that becomes happiness to her. Finally, when she leaves society behind, disillusioned and with a failed marriage, she finds herself miserable as she tries to regain back the former marital happiness to no avail.

Tolstoy suggests that there's no point in pining away for or attempting to resurrect what can't be brought back, but to instead find newer avenues of happiness. Things change and so do people. Once gone, these cannot revert back to the former state. So, there's no point in mourning for a past that won't come back.

At the same time, he seems to stress on how momentary joys are not real and are mere illusions.

It's interesting - this whole notion of evolving happiness, for it's human tendency to mourn for what will not come back, reminisce about what seems like the spotlessly beautiful past in hindsight. Either one can spend one's life being miserable about what is lost or one can make an effort to move forward into the future. The

choice, in the end, is what decides happiness.

Neeraj Chavan says

"A quiet secluded life in the country, with the possibility of being useful to people to whom it is easy to do good, and who are not accustomed to have it done to them; then work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbor — such is my idea of happiness."

"The whole world that sky, that garden, that air, were different from those that I knew. We were walking along an avenue, and it seemed to me, whenever I looked ahead, that could go no farther in the same direction, that the world of the possible ended there, and that the whole scene must remain fixed for ever in its beauty."

"Passion, said the other voice and then it was still for a moment. "It is a necessity to me. I cannot live without it. To make life a romance is the one thing worth doing. And with me romance never breaks off in the middle, and this affair I shall carry through to the end."

This is by far the most beautiful Tolstoy book I've ever read. This book is a gem. A priceless gem in true sense! To start with, the story begins with the narrator, a lady who falls in love with a man who's much older than her in age. And about how her passion and youth yearns for it. The story explores many fascinating and profound themes like love, life, passion, youth, ambition, nostalgia, melancholia, happiness, marriage, society and the meaning and purpose of life. All this woven beautifully in a tale that manages to capture your imagination. And what can I say about Tolstoy, he's indeed the master of human emotions! The story has that existential undertones which make it a delight to read, as I'm a fan of existential works. The book ends with a conclusion about how time changes our lives and how we humans keep changing with it. Evolving and growing with it. And how this affects our relationships and the people around us.

Overall, this is one of the best works of Tolstoy, in my opinion a must read for everyone! One of the best books I've read in 2017!

Dana Al-Basha ???? ?????? says

What brought me to this book by Tolstoy is Dolly Thatcham from Cheerful Weather for the Wedding movie! I want a yellow copy like this one!

Amina says

Magnifique! ?

Ce n'est qu'à la fin de presque 100 pages qu'on arrive vraiment à comprendre le but de cette histoire.

Les sentiments, tels qu'on les connaît au début d'une relation peuvent prendre une autre forme qu'il n'est pas

facile de reconnaître ou bien d'accepter mais on doit pourtant s'y faire.

C'était un peu frustrant, le moment où l'entente et la façon de se compléter de ce couple sont arrivées à leur fin.. mais la fin n'est toujours qu'un autre début et une nouvelle phase de bonheur se dévoile pour Katia.

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Alessandro says

Impressive. This tale has almost one hundred pages and they only exist to pave way to the last few lines where a moral conclusion is reached. Feelings and ideas have their own life-cycle. They don't last forever and people need to learn to deal with it. Human beings constantly need to reinvent their perspectives since they can't help but learn, change and evolve. Let what has come to pass become history for you cannot get it back. It's an elegant concept. The book portrays this in a powerful fashion. It is pretty traumatic to notice that your lover, that once utterly understood and completed you, can't relate to you anymore and vice-versa. Time has worked its magic.

On a completely different note, this book would be a feast for a scholar of Existentialism. Existentialism is all about that one defining experience that is so powerful that shapes your very existence. Not rarely, it's a love affair as such the one described in the book. However, all things must come to an end. What's a person to do when its defining experience suddenly is no more? Will he give in to a feeling of desperation or will he find resignation?

