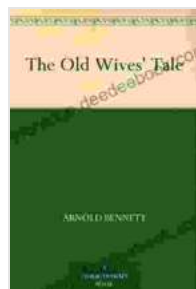


# The Old Wives' Tale by Arnold Bennett: A Journey of Lives and Loss

Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* is a sprawling epic that follows the lives of two sisters, Constance and Sophia. Published in 1908, the novel is considered a masterpiece of Edwardian literature and has been praised for its realism, its exploration of female experience, and its depiction of working-class life in late Victorian England.

The novel follows the sisters from their childhood in the Five Towns, a group of industrial towns in Staffordshire, to their old age in Paris. Along the way, they experience love, loss, and the challenges of a rapidly changing world. *The Old Wives' Tale* is a deeply moving and insightful novel that offers a profound meditation on the human condition.



## The Old Wives' Tale by Arnold Bennett

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 790 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 489 pages
Lending	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported



## Characters

*The Old Wives' Tale* features a large cast of characters, but the novel's main focus is on the two sisters, Constance and Sophia.

- **Constance Baines** is the older of the two sisters. She is a kind and gentle woman who is devoted to her family and her home. Constance is content with the simple things in life and finds happiness in the everyday moments.
- **Sophia Baines** is the younger of the two sisters. She is a more ambitious and restless spirit than Constance. Sophia dreams of a life beyond the Five Towns and of escaping the mundane existence that her sister has accepted. She is determined to make her own way in the world and to find a life of passion and adventure.

In addition to the two sisters, *The Old Wives' Tale* features a number of other memorable characters, including:

- **Samuel Povey** is the sisters' father. He is a successful businessman who is determined to provide a good life for his family. Samuel is a kind and loving father, but he is also a man of his time and his beliefs are often shaped by the conventions of the age.
- **Harriet Baines** is the sisters' mother. She is a gentle and pious woman who is devoted to her husband and children. Harriet is a source of comfort and support for her family, but she is also a woman who has been worn down by the hard realities of life.
- **Cyril Povey** is Constance's husband. He is a kind and gentle man who is devoted to his wife and family. Cyril is a successful businessman and he provides a comfortable life for his family.

- **Gerald Scales** is Sophia's husband. He is a charming and ambitious man who is determined to make his way in the world. Gerald is a successful lawyer and he provides a comfortable life for his family.

## Plot

*The Old Wives' Tale* is a sprawling epic that spans more than 50 years. The novel follows the lives of the two sisters, Constance and Sophia, from their childhood in the Five Towns to their old age in Paris. Along the way, they experience love, loss, and the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

The novel begins in the Five Towns in the 1860s. Constance and Sophia are young girls who are growing up in a world that is rapidly changing. The industrial revolution is transforming the Five Towns, and the sisters are witness to the rise of a new working class.

As the sisters grow older, they begin to experience the challenges of adulthood. Constance marries Cyril Povey, a kind and gentle man who provides a comfortable life for her. Sophia marries Gerald Scales, a charming and ambitious man who is determined to make his way in the world.

The sisters' lives take very different paths. Constance is content with her life in the Five Towns. She is devoted to her husband and her home, and she finds happiness in the everyday moments. Sophia, on the other hand, is more ambitious and restless. She dreams of a life beyond the Five Towns, and she is determined to find a life of passion and adventure.

The novel follows the sisters through their adult lives. They experience love, loss, and the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Constance and

Sophia are both strong and resilient women, and they find ways to overcome the challenges that life throws their way. In the end, they both achieve a sense of peace and contentment.

## Themes

*The Old Wives' Tale* is a novel that is rich in themes. Some of the most important themes include:

- **The passage of time.** The novel follows the lives of the two sisters from their childhood to their old age. Bennett uses this long time frame to explore the ways in which time changes people and the world around them.
- **The power of love.** The novel explores the power of love in all its forms. Bennett shows how love can shape our lives, give us strength, and help us to overcome adversity.
- **The challenges of female experience.** The novel explores the challenges that women faced in the late Victorian era. Bennett shows how women were often limited by societal expectations and how they struggled to find their own place in the world.
- **The importance of family.** The novel explores the importance of family in our lives. Bennett shows how family can provide us with love, support, and strength.

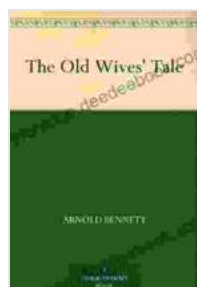
## Significance

*The Old Wives' Tale* is a significant novel in English literature. It is considered a masterpiece of Edwardian literature and has been praised for

its realism, its exploration of female experience, and its depiction of working-class life in late Victorian England.

The novel has been adapted several times for film and television. The most notable adaptation is the 1992 film starring Maggie Smith and Judi Dench.

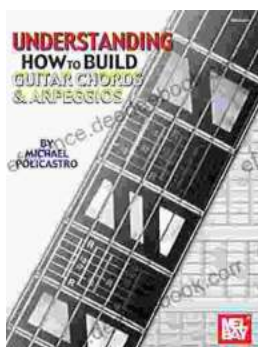
*The Old Wives' Tale* is a deeply moving and insightful novel that offers a profound meditation on the human condition. It is a novel that is sure to stay with you long after you finish it.



### **The Old Wives' Tale** by Arnold Bennett

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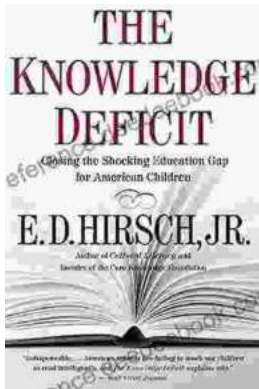
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