



In the Springtime of the Year

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Set in a rural English village, *In the Springtime of the Year* is an astonishingly acute novel built around young Ruth Bryce's struggle to deal with the sudden and accidental death of her husband, Ben. Suddenly alone, Ruth must cope not only with Ben's death but also with his family who view her with suspicion and hostility. Her sole companion is Ben's fourteen-year-old brother who understands Ruth's quiet determination to emerge from this tragedy with her integrity and independence intact.

A young woman's ability to collect herself, by herself, in the face of oppressive circumstances, is the force behind this novel. Told in a voice that is both honest and unsparing, it is an important addition to the oeuvre of a writer of real scope and power.

In the Springtime of the Year Details

Date : Published April 1st 1992 by David R. Godine Publisher (first published September 12th 1975)

ISBN : 9780879238520

Author : Susan Hill

Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review In the Springtime of the Year for online ebook

Deborah Pickstone says

I am in two minds about this book. On the one hand, the prose was beautiful and I was very much present in the story - but on the other hand, it was melancholic and depressing - hardly unlikely given the subject matter - and yet it didn't quite ring true. The perspective is from a 21 year old girl whose husband has died after a year of happy marriage - but it *felt* like a woman of mature years looking back on a longtime happy marriage and so I couldn't quite keep her character straight in my mind.

I characterise this story with the author's 'ghost' stories, which all have the same cold, depressing flavour - unlike the Simon Serrailer series, which I found completely different and very 'alive'. How odd!

Phil says

i read this book about twenty five years ago, not long after the death of my baby son who, coincidentally, was also named ben. as i read it, i realised that the author had known grief intimately and that she too had journeyed into a profound sorrow and through deep and utter despair in a similar way to that which i was experiencing. this book was a source of great comfort to me through those difficult times.

Bernadette Robinson says

I enjoyed this book on the whole. However, I did find it very descriptive in parts. I found that I could sympathise with Ruth and her predicament following the death of a loved one and her relationship with his family following it. None of us know how we will cope with bereavement and grief until it happens to us.

Claire McAlpine says

I enjoyed this as much as the other 3 I have read in the last year, it seems I can't go wrong with Susan Hill. All the books I have read so far are situated similarly, some small, poor village in rural England where not much happens and we are witness to an inner transformation after some event.

It rambles along quietly, wonderful, poetic writing, perceptions change slowly so that when there is an actual event, no matter that it isn't exactly dramatic, it seems so just by its contrast with the inner world we have been languishing within.

This story follows Ruth, an almost 20 year old woman who has become a widow, she shuns contact and travels through the stages of grief until finally she achieves some resolution. Brilliant. And many more of her novels still to come, reassuring.

Bobbi Naylor says

Although Susan Hill's prose is beautiful, as usual, I felt that the characters in this book, the protagonist in particular, didn't progress in any way much, or if so, did so too little and too slowly for my taste. I certainly recognized the grieving procedure described; in fact, it was a bit too realistic to be comfortable at times. Not a book to read if you're already feeling low.

David R. Godine says

"In the Springtime of the Year... speaks of home-truths, of rituals, of long-established ways of life and of a sense of sharing... (of a woman's) progress through stages of grief. It is less a novel than a portrait of an emotion, and as this it is poignant and convincing."

— *The New York Times*

Maha says

One of the saddest books I've ever read. It doesn't lie to you and tells you that things in the end are going to be better. No it rather shows you that the wheel of life is still turning and you must move with it even if you can't or not strong enough.

I liked how the book dealt with death (though a bit too much), and it's not the person who died that is mourned it's who is left behind.

Francesca Nield says

Ruth instinctively feels the moment of death as her young husband Ben is killed by a falling tree. Overwhelmed by grief, she becomes increasingly isolated with only Ben's young brother visiting her in her remote cottage in the countryside. She neither cares for herself, nor what others think of her as she embarks on her private journey through grief, with its many twists and turns. The novel is written with a deep insight into the many facets of grief, so one immediately understands that the author is writing from personal experience. A lyrical, loving, raw and personal depiction of bereavement shines through Susan Hill's novel. She describes how the central character, Ruth, comes to an understanding of not only her own suffering but the suffering of other characters in the book, and how Ben's loss affects them. She writes about the universal aspects of grief, describing the rector's questioning of his faith and his wife's descent into madness at the loss of their child and, "that they had to make the journey through their own grief, and there was no medicine which could ever help them" p 223. Ruth's emotions are mirrored in the changing of the seasons and in the very essence of Nature, and Susan Hill's descriptions of Nature, in all its guises, and the analogies she draws with the emotions stirred by bereavement are breathtaking, both in their beauty and savagery. Overall, the novel is incredibly uplifting. As a reader I took away the important message that love is stronger than death and that heaven lies at the tips of our own fingers.

Andrew McClarnon says

Having enjoyed 'Howards End is on the Landing', I'm looking to read more from Susan Hill. I picked this up at the library, not sure whether the subject matter would be engrossing. I can see that it is difficult to write a story around grief (its hard enough to say anything), so this was a nicely paced, well drawn portrait. I was distracted by some aspects of the scenario - why was it necessary to have Ben's family so extreme (given that he wasn't). When was it set (as it is so insular). Only two stars? I suppose it was too slight a read for me to give it more.

Kirsty says

I find Hill's novels a little hit and miss; this particular tome falls somewhere close to the latter. It wasn't awful, but I did find it a touch lacklustre. Whilst it is written well, there are rather a lot of repetitions with regard to the protagonist Ruth's thoughts and feelings, and I felt little sympathy for her with regard to her sudden thrust into widowhood because she just didn't feel realistic. It didn't quite live up to its interesting premise, and a lot of the secondary characters were incredibly shadowy. I think I might just stick to Hill's non-fiction in future.

Sue says

Why did I read this? In fact I skimmed it, page after page of the same thing, over and over again. I am now about to cut my throat!!

Emma says

I love Susan Hill and her book. She is one of my favourite authors but this book, which is under 200 ages took me over a month to read! I don't know whether I was just not focused when reading it or it was boring so I'm going to give it a "it's ok" rating x

Lynn says

Probably one of Susan Hill's finest books.

Lynda says

This was the first Susan Hill novel I ever read. When I was a teenager and knew little of grief or loss. I read it again in the late summer of my years and appreciated what a marvellous sensitive depiction it was of the painful nature of the human condition which appears to be all about loss and change

Amalia Gavea says

“There was no sound tonight from the owls in the copse, over to the left of the cottage, no stirring in the trees themselves.”

This was a very difficult review to write. Even if the words were dictated via a miraculous media, they would still feel shallow and inadequate to describe my feelings for a novel that made me numb and sad and you know that I am not a sentimental person at all. And how can I relate to the dark moment of losing the one person with whom you decided to share your life? When death tears down the construction that two people built with joy, hope, love and trust? My purpose with this review is to pay a small homage to one of the most quietly powerful novels I've ever read.

Ruth is a young woman living in a quaint English town. Her husband, Ben, dies in a horrible accident and her world crumbles to pieces. She experiences the feeling of absolute emptiness and numbness in her own way and her only comfort is her assurance that Ben is always with her. However, her grief doesn't meet the standards of Ben's family or the residents of the village. She's not loud enough or sad enough or devastated enough. The only person who stands on her side is Jo, Ben's younger brother, a sensitive and wise teenager.

Hill succeeds in creating a moving story without resorting to melodrama or cheap sentimentality. She narrates the numbness of loss, the despair of staying behind, the strange feeling that there is nothing ahead in evocative, poetic, haunting prose. In this novel, the reader will find a number of immensely beautiful descriptions of the natural environment, the cottage, the picturesque rural England. I could feel as if I were there from the very first pages. Susan Hill creates so many vivid scenes. The Good Friday evening with the decoration of the graves, the Easter Sunday, the spring nights, the autumn days are written in a language full of quiet beauty. For me, the most intense moment was the most poetic, tragically beautiful description of a death premonition, of the foreboding of sudden loss I've ever read. How can I not be moved by such powerful writing? On a side note here, I never, ever comment on other reviewers' opinions but I read a single sentence "review" by a user who wrote that she/he wanted to cut her/his neck after reading this novel. Well, I say that there's an idiot in every corner these days, eh? You will allow me the remark because not liking something is one thing and absolutely respectable. Calling names and being disrespectful as f--- is an issue I can't be silent about.

I loved Ruth's character. Even though I've not been through a similar experience, I could relate to and understand her pain. A young couple living in a beautiful corner of the country suddenly torn apart by death. What could be more tragic and unjust? Ruth has a deep inner strength apparent even in the moments when despair takes over. Her dignity and quiet pain lend a haunting beauty to her character. However, I feel that the real jewel of the novel is Jo. A sensitive boy, wise beyond his years, trying to cope with a highly dysfunctional family. A horrible, egoistic mother, a coward father, a selfish sister. Ruth and nature are his sole shelters and he has to turn from a child to a man after Ben's death.

This isn't a book that needs many words of praise. Give it a chance and experience a quiet, beautiful study of the most humane of feelings, the feeling of despair and the dawning of hope. Forget melodramatic writers who write novels as if they're Hallmark screenplays and let yourselves enjoy the power of Susan Hill's writing.

“They used to say that the birds all stopped singing, for those three hours. That everything went quiet,

except for the wind.’’

My reviews can also be found on: [https://theopinionatedreaderblog.word...](https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com/)
