

Of the Farm

John Updike

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Of the Farm

John Updike

Of the Farm John Updike

In this short novel, Joey Robinson, a thirty-five-year-old New Yorker, describes a visit he makes, with his second wife and eleven-year-old stepson, to the Pennsylvania farm where he grew up and where his aging mother now lives alone. For three days, a quartet of voices explores the air, making confessions, seeking alignments, quarreling, pleading, and pardoning. They are not entirely alone: ghosts (fathers, lovers, children) press upon them, as do phantoms from the near future (nurses, lawyers, land developers). *Of the Farm* concerns the places people choose to live their lives, and the strategies they use to stand their ground.

Of the Farm Details


Date : Published March 30th 2004 by Random House Trade Paperbacks (first published 1965)

ISBN : 9780345468222

Author : John Updike

Format : Paperback 144 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Literature, American

 [Download Of the Farm ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Of the Farm ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Of the Farm John Updike

Jonathan Stemberger says

Of the Farm by John Updike. Random House Publishing Group, New York, 1965.

John Updike's novel *Of the Farm* is about a man named Joey that returns to his old home in the country in order to visit his mother. It is not a novel for those who seek constant action; the story spends a lot of time on dialogue and description of past events and life on the farm which gives the piece a slow elderly feel. The descriptions Updike writes provide the reader with a full understanding of what is going on in main character Joey's head. This can be seen very plainly in his sexual thoughts toward his wife like on page 56 "her thighs were enough spread to reveal stray circlets of amber pubic hair" and "Peggy was wearing, the straps a little awry on her shoulders, a loose orange nightie I liked, and as she bent forward to call me through the screen her smile was wonderful". The farm provides a good limited setting in which Joey can reevaluate his pressing life in the city. It also helps the reader to have a set context to learn about the characters.

In the book Joey deals with second doubts about his lifestyle, he feels tension between having to be there for his aging mother, and be the busy city guy to his second wife Peggy and her son. Updike defines the characters not only through their action, but through their body language, explaining their positions and manners. Joey sees Peggy as being annoyed with their visit on the farm by her body language "she flung a downy forearm across her eyes. Her lips parted under the thrust of her skin. I said "I love you."'" The plot of the piece is built up in a slow drawn out momentum, carried by arguments between Joey's wife and mother. Joey mentions these disagreements in many places like on page 98 "My wife and my mother talked, talked from eight-thirty to ten, and though their conversation- in which eddies of disagreement nonsensically dissolved as one or the other left the room and returned with a refilled glass of wine." The ending is not very dramatic, it feels sort of anticlimactic.

Updike's largest strengths are his images and dialogue; he writes whole sections of the novel in such pose that it does not feel like prose, but poetry. The language and diction is indeed very rich, but consequently might disguise the lack of concentrated plot.

Elizabeth Best says

No storyline, but really good description! Beautiful sentences at times.

Scott Foley says

Of The Farm details the complex relationship between a son in his mid-thirties and his elderly mother. The son brings his new wife and her son from a previous marriage to his mother's remote farm, and it's obvious from the beginning that the mother and the wife are not going to get along.

Though a brief novel, Updike delivers an intricate and dramatic story peeling away the complicated layers that make up relationships. Throughout the book, the man is constantly on alert, hoping to defuse any arguments between the women in his life, but he refuses to stand up to his mother nor does he seem totally invested in being committed to his wife.

In fact, the man is an incredibly interesting character because he is so flawed, so monumentally incapable of mediating the warring women in a healthy manner, that he almost leaps off the page. Surely he'll remind you

of someone you know ... perhaps even yourself. The women were also expertly written, something that doesn't always happen with a male author. I found the mother and wife realistic, respectable, and equally as flawed as the main character.

Though lacking any real physical action, Updike's study of mothers and sons and husbands and wives is wickedly enticing and, as always, written very well.

Suz Thackston says

I so disliked this slender little self-conscious bit of egoist twaddle. Yeah, Updike can write, but every line drips with polish and precision and angst over whether it's worthy of appearing in 'one of the greatest writers of the 20th century's stupid book. Not one line comes across as passionate or coming from his heart or as if HE believes it. It's a heavy-handed personal creed being wrapped in storytelling form because Updike thinks he's such a great storyteller. I can see the talent over which everyone raves, but it does not inspire me to want to read one more thing he's written. I'd prefer fewer ridiculous metaphors (you can almost feel him preening over them) and more raw WRITING.

Glenn Sumi says

This is John Updike's fourth novel and, alas, not one of his best.

It was published in 1965, at a time when Updike was being hailed as the next great American writer after works like *Rabbit, Run* (1960) and *Pigeon Feathers* (1962) and dozens of pieces in *The New Yorker*. He and Alfred A. Knopf probably felt they could publish his grocery lists to glowing reviews.

Of The Farm began as a short story and should have remained one. Updike would revisit this setting a few times in more economical tales like 1990's "A Sandstone Farmhouse," collected in *The Afterlife*.

Thirty-five-year-old New Yorker Joey brings his second wife and her precocious young son to visit his cantankerous, ailing mother on her Pennsylvania farm.

Not much happens: Joey plows the field, there's a shopping trip, his mom says nasty things to everyone and breaks some very symbolic plates.

The rural setting gives Updike free rein to write lots about nature: plants, earth, animals. Clouds gather ominously before the inevitable storm.

The setting also allows Updike to show the uprooting of old grievances: about Joey's first wife, the recent death of his unhappy father, his abandoned literary goals.

The novel is brief - about 175 pages – but impenetrable, densely poetic and overwritten.
