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Cold Comfort Farm by Stella Gibbons

Discussion questions used at SPL June -- 2009

1. This book was published in 1930, in England. Was it easy to read? Did the style and the dialects make it more challenging?
2. Did you get a sense of time from the book? How well did it hold up from the last 80 years?
3. This was a spoof on other “comedy of manners” novels, like Jane Austen. If you are a fan of Austen, could you see the similarities? If you haven’t read her, do you think you would have enjoyed it more if you had?
4. This was, for me, pretty typical British humor – did you find it funny? Did it remind you of anything?
5. Did you notice the little anachronisms that the author threw in, like the Anglo-Nicaraguan War of '46 and the telephone/television gadget? Why do you think she put them in the book?
6. What did you think of the author starring the best passages in her own book?
7. Did you get a sense of place in this book? Did she create Cold Comfort Farm in your head?
8. What did you think of all the names of the characters? Even of the animals? What did they do to set the tone of the book?
9. When you first met Flora, what was your first impression of her? Did it change over the course of the book?
10. Did you ever figure out why the folks at Cold Comfort Farm called her Robert Poste’s daughter? And what was the wrong that was done to her father? A trick question - it was never revealed! Why do you think the author chose not to tell you? What do you think the wrong was? And what happened to the goat??
11. Who was the strangest character in the book for you?

12. Why was Flora able to make the changes in the family that she did? Did she do them for herself or for her relatives? What did she think each of their problems were? Did she have any fixing that she herself needed?
 13. Who changed the most in the book?
 14. Did you see the romance between Flora and Charles coming?
 15. What was the funniest thing in the book for you?
 16. What sort of commentary was this book on the various classes in England at the time? What did she think of the rich? What about the farm community?
 17. What was she trying to tell us when she described the different wedding meals she had for the County folks and for the Village folks?
 18. Did one group of people seem “better” to you than the other? Who would you rather hang out with?
 19. Would you recommend this book to someone?
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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author's writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author's use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Cold Comfort Farm

Cast of Characters

Judith Starkadder: Flora's cousin, wife of Amos.

Seth Starkadder: younger son of Amos and Judith.

Ada Doom: Judith's mother, a reclusive, miserly widow, owner of the farm.

Adam Lambsbreath: extremely ancient farm hand.

Mark Dolour: farm hand.

Amos Starkadder: Judith's husband, and hellfire preacher at the Church of the Quivering Brethren. ("Ye're all damned!")

Amos's half-cousins:

... **Micah**, married to Susan

... **Urk**, a bachelor

... **Ezra**, married to Jane

... **Caraway**, married to Lettie

... **Harkaway**

Amos's half-brothers:

... **Luke**, married to Prue

... **Mark**, divorced from Susan and married to Phoebe

Reuben Starkadder: Amos's heir.

Meriam Beetle: hired girl, and mother of Seth's four children.

Elfine: an intellectual, outdoor-loving girl of the Starkadder family.

Mrs Beetle: cleaning lady, rather more sensible than the Starkadders.

Mrs Murther: landlady of The Condemn'd Man public house.

Mr Meyerburg (whom Flora thinks of as "**Mr Mybug**"): a writer who pursues Flora and insists that she only refuses him because she is sexually repressed. He is working on a thesis that the works of the Brontë sisters were written by their brother Branwell Brontë.

Rennet: unwanted daughter of Susan and Mark

And also:

Graceless, Aimless, Feckless and Pointless: the farm's cows, and Adam Lambsbreath's chief charge. Occasionally given to losing extremities.

Viper: the horse, pulls the trap which is the farm's main transportation.

Big Business: the bull, spends most of his time inside the barn.

And we met these in London:

Flora Poste: the heroine, a nineteen-year old from London whose parents are deceased.

Mary Smiling: a widow, Flora's friend in London.

Charles Fairford: Flora's cousin in London, studying to become a parson.

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History of television in Great Britain

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Logie_Baird

John Logie Baird (August 13, 1888 - June 14, 1946) was a Scottish engineer and inventor of the world's first working television system in Hastings, England in 1923. An official blue plaque marks the house where this took place. Hastings Museum hold various pieces of related correspondence. A further demonstration subsequently took place in a department store, Selfridges, in London England, by Mr Baird himself. This took place in 1925. The system was successful enough to become commercialised, and the BBC began the world's first regular television broadcasts, using the Baird system, In 1927, Baird transmitted a long-distance television signal over 438 miles (705 km) of telephone line between London and Glasgow; Baird transmitted the world's first long-distance television pictures to the Central Hotel at Glasgow Central Station. He then set up the Baird Television Development Company Ltd, which in 1928 made the first transatlantic television transmission, from London to Hartsdale, New York.

By 1939, there were over 20,000 TV sets in use in and around London. A year later, in 1940, Baird demonstrated a set which was capable of receiving colour pictures and stereo sound!