

Field Notes on Love

Jennifer E. Smith

Reviewed by: Chi Mai, 16

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Jennifer E. Smith's *Field Notes on Love* tells the story of Hugo Wilkinson (the youngest of a set of sextuplets from Surrey, England who loves his family but yearns to be recognized as his own self) and Margaret "Mae" Campbell (a budding filmmaker from New York who is scared of revealing her true self in her craft) as the two 18-year-olds grow from strangers to more during the course of a train trip. When Hugo's girlfriend breaks up with him before their planned trip across the United States, she gives him the tickets and reservations, which unfortunately, are all in her name and cannot be transferred to him. Determined to not waste them, Hugo sends out a message and asks anyone with the same name as his girlfriend if they'd like to join him. Mae responds, sending him a film as her application. Hugo initially chooses another Margaret Campbell, but when she is unable to go, Hugo contacts Mae. The two then begin their journey from New York. As their trip progresses, Hugo and Mae develop a connection as they get to know each other. Their time together is cut short when Mae receives tragic news; however, the relationship that they had established and nurtured up until that point continues to impact them individually and helps both attain a level of self-fulfillment.

This heartwarming novel will definitely get a reread from me. I loved the chemistry between Hugo and Mae, and their respective characterization was wonderful. Oftentimes with young-adult romance, the protagonists will embody certain archetypes: the Mary Sue, the Bad Boy, the Jock, etc. However, none of that appeared in this book, and it was extremely refreshing to read about characters who have flaws and complexities. I think it's a feat that Smith was able to develop such enjoyable protagonists within a fairly short book. While it's not exactly realistic for two people to fall in love within a one-week trip, I found Hugo and Mae's relationship believable. They complement one another, and all the little moments they'd spent together culminate in a beautiful, young love.

I don't have any complaints about *Field Notes on Love*. It's simple, it's sweet, and it will cheer you up when you're feeling down. It's a little bit predictable, but that won't take away from your enjoyment. I would recommend this book to readers ages 13 and older. I think this is a great book to borrow from a library, or even to buy and keep it on your shelf so you can revisit it once in a while when you need a little pick-me-up.

Recommended Titles:

The Geography of You and Me by Jennifer E. Smith

The Truth About Forever by Sarah Dessen

The Fill-In Boyfriend by Kasie West

My Life Next Door by Huntley Fitzpatrick