



The Harmony of Human Connection by Experience

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Abstract

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*“Old age is a time of great opportunity,
but it is also a time of great challenge.”*

- Cicero, On Old Age

Cicero highlights the dual nature of old age which is often characterized by promise and adversity. He conveys that growing older offers unique opportunities like the chance for reflection, wisdom and a deeper understanding of life. It also speaks about the feeling of isolation or obsolescence and the physical decline which is caused because of loss of loved ones. He also insists that old age could be fulfilled in many ways which requires resilience to navigate the inevitable difficulties. Lifelong learning initiatives enable elders to stay intellectually engaged and adapt to societal changes. Senior Activity Programs (SAP) like organizing fitness classes, hobby groups, and travel opportunities for older adults and intergenerational projects like encouraging interactions between younger and older generations to share knowledge and experiences in the society increases recreation and community engagement. Kent Haruf's final novel *Our Souls at Night*, published posthumously in 2015, is a heart-wrenching exploration of loneliness, companionship, and the human need for connection. The story is set in the fictional town of Holt, Colorado, a familiar backdrop for Haruf's works, the story revolves around seventy-year-old Addie Moore's unconventional proposal to her neighbor, Louis Waters. Addie and Louis must confront the misunderstandings, judgments, and reactions of those around them. Through the thought-provoking narrative, Haruf beautifully explores the complexities of human relationships, the fragility of old age, and the profound importance of connection in our lives.

Keywords: companionship, prejudice, loneliness

Addie is seeking a deep and meaningful connection with another human being, one that would allow her to transcend the crushing loneliness that has become her constant companion. By inviting Louis into her life, she is, in effect, reaching out for a sense of connection and belonging, a sense of being part of something larger than herself. It becomes clear that Addie's proposition is not just a cry for help, but also a testament to the human spirit's capacity for resilience, adaptability, and connection. As Addie and Louis navigate their shared experiences and introspective moments, they undertake a profound journey of self-discovery. This transformative path

ultimately illuminates the profound impact of human connection, highlighting the enduring significance of meaningful relationships in our lives.

The novel, *Our Souls at Night* narrates the complexities of the human experience, shedding light on three profound themes that resonate deeply with readers. The novel masterfully explores the pervasive nature of loneliness and the redemptive power of companionship, the tension between societal expectations and personal fulfilment, and the intricacies of family dynamics. Through the lives of Addie and Louis, two elderly individuals navigating the challenges of older adulthood, Haruf offers a



nuanced and thought-provoking examination of the human condition. One of the most striking aspects of the novel is its portrayal of loneliness as a pervasive and debilitating force in older adulthood

Our Souls at Night offers a powerful exploration of the Person-Environment Fit Theory. Through the character's experiences, Haruf illustrates the intricate relationships between personal characteristics, environmental demands, and individual well-being. The novel demonstrates how individuals can create a better fit between their personal characteristics and their environment, leading to improved well-being and life satisfaction. In the novel Kent Haruf challenges societal norms and ageist stereotypes, shedding light on the often-overlooked experiences of older adults. The novel's portrayal of Addie and Louis's relationship sparks gossip and disapproval, highlighting how society frequently discourages older individuals from pursuing emotional and physical intimacy.

The author says, "And then there was the day when Addie Moore made a call on Louis Waters." (OSN 3). The words "And then," immediately establishes the conversational tone and narrative style, drawing the reader into the story. This deceptively simple phrase also implies that the events of the novel are merely one chapter in the larger narrative of the character's lives, hinting at a rich backstory that exists beyond the confines of the book. By setting the story in the fictional town of Holt, a familiar setting for many of Kent Haruf's works, the author seamlessly weaves the new characters into the existing fabric of the community. This subtle detail creates a sense of continuity and depth, suggesting that the characters' lives are intertwined with those of other Holt residents, and that their stories are part of a larger tapestry. Kent Haruf masterfully challenges societal norms and ageist stereotypes, shedding light on the often-overlooked experiences of older adults. The novel critiques the patronizing attitude towards older adults, as exemplified by Addie's son, who treats her as if she is incapable of making her own decisions.

Addie's words, "I made up my mind I'm not going to pay attention to what people think. I've done that too long-all my life. I'm not going to live that way anymore." (OSN 8) Addie explains to Louis how her attitude to other people's opinions

has changed with time: She has lived much of her life doing things according to what seems proper to others, but now she's decided to live according to her own needs. As the story opens, those needs include having a companion to talk to at night to fight off the pain of loneliness. Her action challenges the conventional view that older people should resign themselves to isolation.

The words of Addie Moore about her inner feelings to find companionship in her later years was, "How strange this is. How new it is to be here. How uncertain I feel, and sort of nervous. I don't know what I'm thinking. A mess of things." (OSN12)

Addie's words show how new it was to be there and how uncertain she felt, and sort of nervous. Addie don't know what she is thinking. A mess of things offer a glimpse into her emotional state. The novel's themes like loneliness, self-discovery, and the courage required to challenge societal norms is identified. Her statement is a reflection of her deeply personal and introspective journey. The fragmented structure of her words mirrors her unsettled emotions, conveying a sense of excitement and apprehension. Her phrase, "How strange this is," immediately conveys her awareness of venturing into unconventional territory. The hesitation in her voice is palpable, as she acknowledges feeling "sort of nervous." This tension between her desire for connection and fear of societal judgment is a powerful portrayal of the human experience.

Addie, Louis begins to let his guard down, slowly revealing his vulnerabilities and deepening their connection. His struggles and vulnerabilities make him a sympathetic and engaging character, and his transformation is a powerful reminder of the human capacity for growth, change, and connection. Louis's relationship with Addie is a transformative experience that enables him to emerge from his emotional isolation and form a profound connection with another person.

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