



# The Old Wives' Tale

*Arnold Bennett*

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## **The Old Wives' Tale** Arnold Bennett

The Old Wives' Tale is a novel by Arnold Bennett, first published in 1908. It deals with the lives of two very different sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines, following their stories from their youth, working in their mother's draper's shop, into old age.

It is generally regarded as one of Bennett's finest works. It covers a period of about 70 years from roughly 1840 to 1905, and is set in Burslem and Paris. Bennett was initially inspired to write the book by a chance encounter in a Parisian restaurant.

H. G. Wells described The Old Wives' Tale as "by far the finest long novel written in English and in the English fashion". He was, of course, speaking for his own generation, and a hundred years later there is no doubt that The Old Wives' Tale is a superbly novel of its kind, and it is still as readable and enjoyable as ever. In 1998, the Modern Library ranked The Old Wives' Tale #87 on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century.

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