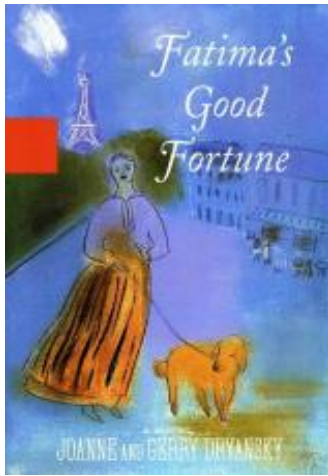


Fatima's Good Fortune

by Joanne and Gerry Dryansky



About the Book

Fatima Monsour, a Tunisian spinster, is entering a new phase in her life. While mending a broken heart after her husband Mahmoud divorced her, Fatima receives the tragic news that her sister Rachida has been killed in a freak accident. The Countess Poulais du Roc, who employed Rachida as her maid, summons Fatima to Paris in order to replace her deceased sister.

At first Fatima feels like a fish out of water in Paris, away from her lovely native island of Djerba. Even the most mundane tasks --- such as walking the Countess's dog, buying groceries, taking the metro, and reading to the Countess --- prove to be challenging. The Countess has her own doubts about Fatima and her ability to succeed in the City of Lights.

However, Fatima soon meets a number of charming and good-hearted people who help her adjust to this strange new life. They include Victorine, a boisterous and affable Sengalese housemaid; Hadley Hadley III, an aspiring young writer who assumes the role of Fatima's personal reading tutor; and Hippolyte Suget, a shy ballet dancer turned burglar. Fatima gradually begins to feel that she has found a new home, especially when she earns the affection and trust of the Countess, who has issues of her own to deal with, namely the loss of her husband and the estrangement of her rebel daughter.

Husband and wife team Joanne and Gerry Dryansky has written a heartwarming first novel. This endearing and witty story of love, loneliness and determination to survive emphasizes the qualities shared by people of different backgrounds and the enduring power of kindness in an unpredictable world.

Discussion Guide

1. Upon her arrival in Paris, Fatima feels like a fish out of water and is overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle of the city. What specific obstacles does Fatima need to overcome, and who helps the most in her transition?
2. The relationship between Fatima and the Countess is truly heartwarming. The Countess seriously doubts that Fatima can survive in Paris and succeed as her maid. Gradually though the Countess is able to trust Fatima and treat her as a friend and confidante rather than merely a household servant. Discuss their unique friendship and why you think they grow close to one another, despite the differences in age and social class.
3. Fatima and Hippolyte Suget also appear to be polar opposites. For example, Suget's legal troubles and criminal background are in stark contrast to Fatima's innocence and gentle nature, while reading is an activity that Fatima unlike Suget can never take for granted. Still, there seems to be an instant attraction between the two. Discuss their relationship and why they are able to get along so well together.
4. Throughout the book the authors provide readers with a number of details about the city of Paris and what life is like in this bustling metropolis. Is the Paris described here what you have always envisioned it? Regardless of whether or not you've ever been to Paris, do you have a desire to visit the city after reading this book?
5. Populating **Fatima's Good Fortune** is a rich cast of charming people, many of whom are complex and multidimensional. Which characters from the book are your personal favorites and could you see yourself befriending?
6. Fatima has resolved to earn enough money so that she can travel to Wisconsin and confront her estranged husband, as she is hoping for a possible reconciliation. However, when she wins the Lottery and is finally presented with a perfect opportunity to follow through on these plans, she doesn't go. Why do you think Fatima never makes the trip to Sheboygan? What would you have done if you were in Fatima's shoes?
7. Discuss Fatima's return to Djerba and how she feels about revisiting her homeland. Why do you think she ultimately decides to abandon Djerba and go back to Paris?
8. Describe Fatima's reaction to the Countess's unfortunate passing and upon hearing the details of the Countess's will. What impact does the Countess's final words have on Fatima and how she perceives her own life?
9. Despite her many struggles and hardships, Fatima is undoubtedly blessed with "good fortune." She seems to possess a magical charm that brings good luck to people who cross her path. However, there are a number of instances in which her own luck changes and she is able to experience happiness, if only for a few short hours. As a result, the title of the book is open to multiple interpretations. What do you consider Fatima's "good fortune" to be?
10. What does the future hold for Fatima, both in terms of her role in Paris and her relationship with Suget? Do you think she will ever return to her homeland permanently, or possibly confront her ex-husband so that he can see firsthand the extent to which her life has turned around?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"Charming...A superbly informed insider's tale."

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