# Our Souls at Night by Kent Haruf

## Synopsis

In the familiar setting of Holt, Colorado, home to all of Kent Haruf's inimitable fiction, Addie Moore pays an unexpected visit to a neighbor, Louis Waters.

Her husband died years ago, as did his wife, and in such a small town they naturally have known of each other for decades; in fact, Addie was quite fond of Louis's wife. His daughter lives hours away in Colorado Springs, her son even farther away in Grand Junction, and Addie and Louis have long been living alone in houses now empty of family, the nights so terribly lonely, especially with no one to talk with.

Discussion questions

1. The novel begins with the word "and": "And then there was the day when Addie Moore made a call on Louis Waters." What do you imagine came before it?
2. Kent Haruf was known for using simple, spare language to create stories of great depth. How does the modest action in Our Souls at Night open onto larger insights about getting older?
3. When Louis comes over for the first time, he knocks on her back door in the name of discretion. Addie says, "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. The alley makes it seem we’re doing something wrong or something disgraceful, to be ashamed of" (8). How does her attitude influence Louis’s?
4. Addie and Louis both had troubled marriages, but stayed married until their partners died. How does that sense of propriety, of loyalty, influence their relationship with each other?
5. Why did Addie refuse to move after Connie’s death? How did this decision color Gene’s reaction to his mother’s late-in-life love affair?
6. On page 52, Louis describes his relationship with Addie to his daughter, "It’s some kind of decision to be free. Even at our ages." Why does he feel freer with Addie than he does alone? How does his behavior become more uninhibited as the novel progresses?
7. When Louis confesses that he wanted to be a poet, what effect does it have on Addie’s opinion of him? And on your opinion?
8. Why did Addie buy new clothes for her trips to Denver that she never wears in Holt? What signal does it send to the reader?
9. Several times during the novel, Addie is described as being brave, but she gives in to Gene’s demands. Is this a brave act? What is she protecting?
10. How would you describe the ending—as heartbreaking, hopeful, or something else?

*Discussion questions from https://www.bookcompanion.com/discussion\_questions\_our\_souls\_at\_night.html*