

Wife in the North
Judith O'Reilly
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“*Cold Comfort Farm* with booster seats. Funny, honest and moving.”—Stephanie Calman author of *Confessions of a Bad Mother*

“Genuinely funny and genuinely moving”—Jane Fallon author of *Getting Rid of Matthew*

Perhaps it was because she was pregnant and hormones had eaten her brain that Judith O'Reilly was persuaded by her husband to leave London for the northern wilds. But pregnancy hadn't addled her enough not to have a back-up plan: if life in the country didn't measure up, the family would return to the city.

Far from home, Judith, a journalist and mother of three young children, discovers just how tough an assignment making a new life is. In the heart of the country, with no decent coffee in sight, Judith swaps high heels for rubber boots and media-darlings for evangelical strangers and farmers' wives, in an effort to do that simple thing that women do—make hers a happy family.

O'Reilly's headlong foray into the country invites adventure at every turn, and offers a hilarious, heartfelt reflection on how to navigate the challenges and rewards of motherhood, marriage, and family, while searching for one's own true north in an alien landscape.

Discussion Questions:

1. Judith concedes to move out of London to accommodate her husband's desire to live in the country, yet he continues to commute to the city to work while she remains at home. At the end of the day, do you consider this a fair trade? Why or why not?
2. “Wifey” is a classic city-mouse in the country. How does her experience in the country change her relationship to the city? How well does she adapt to her new surroundings?
3. As the mother of three young children, and the daughter of aging parents, Judith admits to not knowing whether to run for her four-year-old or to remain with her hesitant mother for fear that she may trip. How does this “damned if you do, damned if you don't” experience motivate Judith? How accurately do you think it represents the experiences of women who have children at a later age?
4. What do you see as Judith O'Reilly's primary concern in life? How do her priorities reflect, or differ, from your own?
5. Does the country make Judith become more of an adult? Why or why not?
6. Late in the book, we learn that Judith's first child was stillborn. How do you think this experience has shaped her relationship to her three children? To her idea of family? Does Judith consider her friends more akin to family than most people?

7. After Judith writes in her blog about her son's experience of being bullied in school, she's ostracized by some members of the school community. What's your understanding of their reaction? Was she out of line to write publicly about the events? Why or why not?

8. Judith sees blogging as a sort of online diary accessible to any and all. Do you agree? How well do you feel you know the author by the end of the book?

9. What are the potential ramifications of blogging about family life?