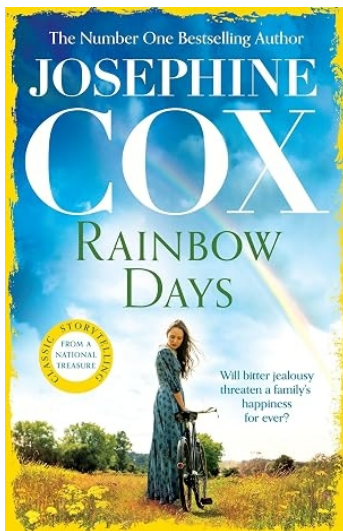


Review of Josephine Cox's *Rainbow Days*

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Rainbow Days is a fantastic book by British author Josephine Cox. She is also known as Jo Cox. She was born on 15 July 1938 and died on 17 July 2020. *Rainbow Days* was published in the year 2000. She married Kenneth Cox in 1956. When her two sons began their schooling, she started her university education at Cambridge. Her family commitments did not allow this, but she became a teacher. After that, she began writing, and writing helped her overcome difficult times. She sometimes writes under her mother's name, Jane Brindel. She is well known for her bestselling books in the U.K. This particular book is also one of her bestsellers, and I'm glad to review it. *Rainbow Days* comes under the genre of Domestic Fiction, which focuses on the lives of family members and their relationships with one another. It also fits into the Coming-of-Age and Romance genres.

The novel is divided into four parts and has twenty-five chapters. The protagonist is Silas. He and Cathleen have been best friends since childhood. Slowly, their friendship grows into love as they grow up and enjoy each other's company. Deep down, Cathleen feels they are not meant to be together because their social classes are incompatible. Silas is rich because his father is a businessman. Cathleen is a very beautiful young woman, but she is just the daughter of an ordinary man, Tom, who runs a bakery. Helen Turner is portrayed as jealous and selfish. She wants Silas to be her husband and to have the same status as him.

Silas loves Cathleen, and he doesn't like Helen and her attitude. Silas and Cathleen made love on the island, and when they are about to share their feelings with their parents and build their future together, things begin to change. Silas's father, Edward Fenshaw, and Helen's father, Jack Turner, end their business partnership. Their long friendship turns to enmity. Helen overhears the conversation between her father and Edward and uses the opportunity. The threat is that either he must give his son Silas to her daughter Helen in marriage, or Jack Turner must give up all of Edward's properties. Edward feels helpless, and because of his actions, his son Silas will face the consequences for the rest of his life. This thought makes him worry constantly, and his emotions reach a peak.

Silas is trapped in a sentimental situation. He loves Cathleen and does not want to lose her, and at the same time, he doesn't want to take away the life of his ailing mother, Lucy, who has been suffering from arthritis and staying in a wheelchair. His mother's happiness lies in the Fenshaw's house, full of beautiful objects, with a nearby island with a summerhouse. More than all of that, she needs money for her medical treatment. Silas tries every possible way to get rid of Helen and to marry Cathleen, whom he loves with all his heart. For that, he even travels from his place to London in a cart. Cathleen's father hated the idea of his daughter falling in love with "her betters". This shows the societal expectation and pressure to marry someone of equal status, without considering true mutual love.

Silas goes to his father's friends and asks for a favour in a time of need, but nobody helps him. There's a favourite line I liked personally while reading the novel: everybody will be your friend until it comes to putting their hands in their pockets.

The story goes on with interesting twists and turns at every turn. You'll be eager to find out who Silas will marry and whether his married life goes well with or without Cathleen. Josephine never gets her readers bored. She keeps the story alive through each character and the plots in every new chapter. I wondered if even when things turn around, the love Silas and Cathleen had for each other remains the same throughout the novel. Instead of complaining and hating, they understood each other.

With no way out, Silas has to marry Helen Turner as a dutiful son. He cannot forget Cathleen; at the same time, he has no feelings for Helen, even though they are married. Throughout the story, Josephine shows a vivid image of England and its beauty through the landscape of the island that she mentions, where Silas and Cathleen have spent time together since their childhood. When Silas visits London to get some help with his father's debt, he admires some men who seem more gentlemanly than his father. Some months later, when Cathleen goes to London, she sees the busiest streets and people roaming here and there like there is no tomorrow.

Silas is living an unhappy life without Cathleen, and at the same time, Cathleen is thrown out of her house for a serious reason. She is also not happy without her lover, Silas. She keeps herself busy to forget the bitter past, but nostalgia hits her, and she feels homesick. She wants to be with her family, especially Silas. Josephine uses a regional English dialect, with words like "yer" for "you or your" and "mek" for "make." This helps readers connect with the characters as they read the novel. Readers become one with the characters and start antagonising the bad characters while the story moves on, which I felt while reading. In the end, to the readers' satisfaction, she delivers a perfect conclusion that is never expected in the middle of the chapters. *Rainbow Days* is a wonderful novel that teaches readers how one wrong decision can lead to a lifelong struggle. Especially as a family leader, one must be wise enough to make decisions that keep the family financially secure, even when well settled.

There is a lesson for everyone to be learned through the characters of the novel, about how to be and how not to be as a young man, a young woman, a married family man or woman, and in old age. Josephine's novels entertain and, at the same time, offer life-survival skills. We can connect the novel's four parts to England's weather. The first part, named 'CATHLEEN', tells the story of Cathleen, her widowed father Tom, her brother Robert, and her grandmother Jessie. It also follows her lover, Silas; his father, Edward Fenshaw; his mother, Lucy Fenshaw; his father's business partner, Jack Turner; and his daughter, Helen. The second part, 'MAKING A NEW LIFE', is all about the separated life of Silas and Cathleen. In January, England is cold. Through the weather as a symbol, the author shows readers what is happening. Silas has a cold heart towards Helen in his marriage, like the cold weather. There is neither love nor understanding.

The third part is named 'HOPE'. The transition from coldness to spring starts in their lives in March. There seems to be a little hope that Cathleen can be reunited with her family. In the end, the fourth part, 'SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN', shows how the tragedies, heartaches, and longings of the past year, from 1900 to 1900, come to an end. The people of England love to see the sun, as the majority of their climate is cold. April brings sunshine, happiness, and peace to both Silas and Cathleen's family, as well as the readers.

As the title suggests, there are rainbow-like days that are vibrant, colourful, and attractive to see and live. There are also days in life when there is no rainbow. Maybe a scorching sun or numbing cold arrives in no time, without any invitation. Cathleen is a great example. She had no one to ask for help, yet she stayed strong and believed in herself. One thing I learned from the novel is what matters most in life. When we are not in the rainbow season of our lives, in the middle of adversity, we have to think back to our old rainbow (happy) days. In today's fast-moving world, most people sometimes go through despair, loneliness, and stress. I want to end with a quote from the novel, from Silas's reminiscence during his anxious moments.

Suddenly the rain stopped, and the largest, most beautiful rainbow he had ever seen streaked across the sky. Cathleen called out in excitement, 'Look, Silas! Look at the rainbow!' She pointed up...it seemed as if she was part of the incredible rainbow. (Cox 187)

I found the novel *Rainbow Days* very interesting, and the book has given me all the mixed emotions of happiness, sadness, laughter, and so on. It will surely entertain you, no matter your age. I suggest that younger people, adults, older readers, and especially those who love literature read the novel, enjoy the story, and discover the rest of the story's mysteries!

Reference

Cox, Josephine. *Rainbow Days*. Headline Publishing Group, 2000.