



The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel

By Yoko Ogawa

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The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel By Yoko Ogawa

He is a brilliant math Professor with a peculiar problem—ever since a traumatic head injury, he has lived with only eighty minutes of short-term memory. She is an astute young Housekeeper—with a ten-year-old son—who is hired to care for the Professor.

And every morning, as the Professor and the Housekeeper are introduced to each other anew, a strange and beautiful relationship blossoms between them. Though he cannot hold memories for long (his brain is like a tape that begins to erase itself every eighty minutes), the Professor's mind is still alive with elegant equations from the past. And the numbers, in all of their articulate order, reveal a sheltering and poetic world to both the Housekeeper and her young son. The Professor is capable of discovering connections between the simplest of quantities—like the Housekeeper's shoe size—and the universe at large, drawing their lives ever closer and more profoundly together, even as his memory slips away. Yoko Ogawa's *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is an enchanting story about what it means to live in the present, and about the curious equations that can create a family.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Ogawa (*The Diving Pool*) weaves a poignant tale of beauty, heart and sorrow in her exquisite new novel. Narrated by the Housekeeper, the characters are known only as the Professor and Root, the Housekeeper's 10-year-old son, nicknamed by the Professor because the shape of his hair and head remind the Professor of the square root symbol. A brilliant mathematician, the Professor was seriously injured in a car accident and his short-term memory only lasts for 80 minutes. He can remember his theorems and favorite baseball players, but the Housekeeper must reintroduce herself every morning, sometimes several times a day. The Professor, who adores Root, is able to connect with the child through baseball, and the Housekeeper learns how to work with him through the memory lapses until they can come together on common ground, at least for 80 minutes. In this gorgeous tale, Ogawa lifts the window shade to allow readers to observe the characters for a short while, then closes the shade. Snyder—who also translated *Pool*—brings a delicate and precise hand to the translation. (*Feb.*)

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From School Library Journal

First published in Japanese in 2003, this gem won the prestigious 2004 Yomiuri Prize and in 2006 was adapted for film (*The Professor's Beloved Equation*). The story evolves around a young housekeeper and her ten-year-old son, who have an esoteric link to a retired university professor through "amicable numbers."

Ogawa (*The Diving Pool*) deliberately avoids any hint of romance between the two adult protagonists. Instead, she delves into the educational process between the housekeeper, a high school dropout, and the professor, a mathematical genius. With a prose style justly acclaimed as gentle yet penetrating, Ogawa gives mathematical theories from Eratosthenes to Einstein a titanic wink; under her pen, they no longer are solely a topic of conversation among academics but a tool that facilitates conflict resolution, communication between commoner and intellectual, and appreciation for the nobility and individuality of everyday objects; they also help us establish our worth in a chaotic world. This novel evokes the joy of learning, and, with its somewhat eccentric yet lovable protagonists, is a pleasure to read. Highly recommended for both public and academic libraries.—Victor Or, Surrey P.L. & North Vancouver City Lib., BC

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

The success of Ogawa's "deceptively elegant novel" (*New York Times Book Review*) was a surprise, considering its lack of action, romance, melodrama, and even character names (none of which are ever mentioned). However, there is enough suspense and sly humor to keep readers enchanted by this slow-paced, delicate novel -- even for those with bad memories of high school math class. Ogawa makes a crucial choice not to minimize the impact of the professor's brain injuries; she portrays his limitations and daily difficulties realistically, but also with warmth and affection. Critics praised Stephen Snyder's seamless translation and compared Ogawa's graceful prose to that of Japanese writers Kenzaburo Ōe and Haruki Murakami. This touching story of a devoted friendship may captivate Western readers as well. Copyright 2009 Bookmarks Publishing LLC

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Andrew Sessions:

The particular book *The Housekeeper and the Professor: A Novel* has a lot details on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was written by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research ahead of write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can get the point easily after reading this article book.

Heather Bencomo:

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