



Bottomland

By Michelle Hoover

A German family in the Iowa plains tries to fight the rising tide of Anti-German sentiment in the years following World War I while searching for their two youngest daughters who vanished suddenly in the middle of the night.

May 2017 WITCC Lifelong Learning Book Club Read

Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff

Haunting Historical Fiction:

[*The Kept*](#) by James Scott (Fic Sco)

In the winter of 1897, a trio of killers descends upon an isolated farm in upstate New York. Midwife Elspeth Howell returns home to the carnage: her husband, and four of her children, murdered. Before she can discover her remaining son Caleb, alive and well in the kitchen pantry, another shot rings out over the snow-covered valley.

[*To Capture What We Cannot Keep*](#)

by Beatrice Colin (New Fic Col)

Set against the backdrop of the construction of the Eiffel Tower, this novel charts the relationship between a young Scottish widow and a French engineer who, despite constraints of class and wealth, fall in love.

[*The Incarnations*](#) by Susan Barker (Fic Bar)

In modern-day Beijing, taxi driver Wang receives anonymous letters from a source who claims to have known him in five previous lifetimes—during the Tang Dynasty, Jin Dynasty, Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty, and the People's Republic of China—over the past 1,000 years. Driving the novel is the suspense over the identity of Wang's stalker and the question of whether or not the stories are indeed true.

[*The Bones of Paradise*](#) by Jonis Agee (New Fic Age)

A multi-generational family saga that explores a tragedy with deep historical roots, set in the Nebraska Sandhills in the years following the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.

Award-Winning Stories Set in Iowa:

[*Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm during the Great Depression*](#)

by Mildred Armstrong Kalish (977.761 Kal)

A memoir about growing up in the heart of the Midwest during the Great Depression. A schoolteacher describes life on an Iowa farm during an era of endless work: where

resourcefulness was necessary, family and kinship were valued, and the community had little tolerance for idleness or waste.

[*A Thousand Acres*](#) by Jane Smiley (Fic Smi)

Larry Cook, an Iowa farmer who has worked a thousand acre plot owned by his family for generations, abruptly decides to retire in 1979 and leave his farm to his three daughters. In a series of astonishing events, the Cook sisters each reveal their true natures that threaten to destroy the family and their farm.

[*The Year We Left Home*](#) by Jean Thompson (Fic Tho)

The Ericksons, a family from small-town Grenada, Iowa, have struggled for the past thirty years. Marital problems, alcoholism, post-traumatic stress syndrome and a horrific car accident all leave their mark on this Norwegian family. For all the setbacks they endure, the Ericksons are lifted above circumstance by their strong ties to each other, enduring values, and their geographical roots.

[*The Bridges of Madison County*](#)

by Robert James Waller (Fic Wal)

Robert Kincaid, a roving photographer for National Geographic, happens upon lonely Iowa housewife Francesca Johnson while doing a shoot on the covered bridges of Madison County in 1965. *The Bridges of Madison County* gives a voice to the longings of men and women everywhere and shows us what it is to love and be loved so intensely that life is never the same again.

[*Postville: A Clash of Cultures in Heartland America*](#)

by Stephen Bloom (977.733 Blo)

In 1987, a group of Hasidic Jews, known as Lubavitchers, opened a kosher slaughterhouse just outside the small, financially struggling town of Postville, Iowa. Their arrival brought financial benefits to the town, but also cultural conflict with the townspeople, as the Lubavitchers, who traditionally live and work within their own closely knit communities, were not interested in fitting into Postville.

More great read-alike suggestions on the back 



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Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff Continued

Lyrical First-Person Narratives:

[Gilead](#) by Marilynne Robinson (Fic Rob)

Reverend John Ames of Gilead, Iowa, now in his seventies and failing in health, is afraid he hasn't much time left to tell his young son about his heritage. And so he takes up his pen and writes to his son in the form of a letter that he imagines him reading when he is grown. In the letter, the Reverend chronicles three previous generations of his family, a story that stretches back to the Civil War and reveals uncomfortable family secrets.

[Arrowood](#) by Laura McHugh (New Fic McH)

In 1994, Arden Arrowood's two-year-old twin sisters were kidnapped from their front yard in the small town of Keokuk, Iowa. Arden had been in charge of watching the girls, when she stepped away for only a minute; all that she remembers is chasing a gold car speeding away. The case was never solved. 20 years later, new light is shed on the mystery when Arden inherits Arrowood and returns to her quiet hometown, determined to discover what really happened that summer.

[Cold Mountain](#) by Charles Frazier (Fic Fra)

A wounded Confederate soldier escapes from a war hospital in 1864 and starts walking to Cold Mountain, seeking Ada, his pre-war sweetheart who is struggling to save her southern mountain farm after her own father's death with the help of Ruby, an illiterate, no-nonsense, hard-working young woman.

[To Kill a Mockingbird](#) by Harper Lee (Fic Lee)

Scout, daughter of town lawyer Atticus Finch, spends her summers in carefree innocence until Tom, a black man, is wrongly accused of raping a white woman. Atticus proves the likelihood of Tom's innocence, and must endure scorn and anger from many people in his small southern town while Scout learns lessons about tolerance through her developing friendship with shut-in neighbor, Boo Radley.

Tales of Postwar Life:

[Among the Living](#) by Jonathan Rabb (New Fic Rab)

In late summer 1947, 31-year-old Holocaust survivor Yitzhak Goldah arrives in Savannah, Georgia to live with his only remaining relatives. Grappling with questions of identity and belonging, this moving novel chronicles Yitzhak's unconventional journey back to a new normal.

[Redeployment](#) by Phil Klay (Fic Kla)

A collection of short stories by a former Marine captain and Iraq veteran focuses on the complexities of life for soldiers on the front lines and after, exploring themes ranging from brutality and faith to guilt and survival.

[Baker Towers](#) by Jennifer Haigh (Fic Hai)

The decade following World War II becomes one of tragedy, excitement, and unexpected change for the five Novak children and the residents of their western Pennsylvania community of company houses, church festivals, union squabbles, and firemen's parades.

[Fall of Giants](#) by Ken Follett (Fic Fol)

Follows the fates of five interrelated families—American, German, Russian, English, and Welsh—as they move through the dramas of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the struggle for women's suffrage.

[The Great Fire](#) by Shirley Hazzard (Fic Haz)

Set in the immediate aftermath of World War II, men and women, still young but veterans of harsh experience, must reinvent their lives and expectations, and learn, from their past, to dream again. At the story's center, a brave and brilliant soldier finds that survival and worldly achievement are not enough. His counterpart, a young girl living in occupied Japan and tending her dying brother, falls in love, and in the process discovers herself. Winner of the 2003 National Book Award for Fiction.