



Homegoing

By Yaa Gyasi

An engaging family saga following two half-sisters—one who marries into privilege and one sold into slavery—and their descendants as they navigate the politics of their separate countries and their heritage.

December 2016 WITCC Lifelong Learning Book Club Read

Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff

Haunting novels about slavery:

[*A Mercy* by Toni Morrison](#) (*Fic Mor*)

In the late 17th century of the New World, Florens is offered up by her mother to pay off their slave owner's debt to Jacob Vaark. She then joins a household of women who have each suffered some form of loss and abandonment. Florens struggles to resolve her pain and reunite with her mother while searching for love from those around her.

[*The Known World* by Edward Jones](#) (*Fic Jon*) In the antebellum South, Henry Townsend is a former slave who was bought and freed by his father; however, his close relationship with his former owner results in Townsend eventually owning his own plantation with over thirty slaves. Upon Townsend's death, his plantation falls into disorder under the wavering hand of his wife, Caldonia, for whom slavery is not just a legal institution. Meanwhile, slaves begin to rebel throughout the country, and bounty hunters extend their reach from runaway slaves to free black citizens, Native Americans, and unclaimed white orphans.

[*Wash* by Margaret Wrinkle](#) (*Fic Wri*) Washington "Wash" was the first child in his family born into slavery, and his mother's stories of West Africa instilled in him a strong sense of identity. Richardson, a Revolutionary War veteran and Wash's owner, is debt ridden and forces Wash to become a "stud" and breed with slaves at other plantations. This practice slowly dehumanizes Wash until he meets Pallas, a healer with a strong connection to her heritage. She helps Wash rediscover his identity and strengthen his spirit as he endures a world none of them can escape.

[*Song Yet Sung* by James McBride](#) (*Fic McB*) A runaway slave, Liz Spocott, is wounded and taken captive by slave hunters. When she wakes up, she discovers that her strange dreams of freedom are actually visions of the future. These dreams along with "the Code," through which runaway slaves can communicate and guide each other, embolden Liz and her fellow captive runaways to seek freedom.

[*Philida* by Andre Brink](#) (*Fic Bri*)

On the brink of the abolition of slavery in South Africa, Philida has four children with her owner's son, Frans, who loves her and promised to free and marry her. Yet, Frans' father insists that his son marry a wealthy white woman to save the family from destitution. To save herself and her children, Philida decides to file a complaint against Frans for defaulting on his pledge to free them.

Family sagas told from multiple perspectives:

[*Commonwealth* by Ann Patchett](#) (*New Fic Pat*)

On a hot, Southern California day, a lawyer named Bert Cousins shows up uninvited to a christening party for Beverly and Fix Keating's daughter. Bert becomes infatuated with Beverly, and the two marry and move to Virginia. Between the two families, six stepsiblings are dragged into new relationships and settings. As adults, the siblings are forced to discover their families' stories in ways they couldn't possibly expect.

[*The Children's Crusade* by Ann Packer](#) (*Fic Pac*) Bill Blair, a young doctor in 1954, buys a piece of land in a place that will later be known as Silicon Valley and builds a house that will shape his family for decades. When his fourth child is born, his wife Penny becomes unhappy with her domestic role and yearns to pursue her passion of art. The Blairs' story unfolds through alternating chapters between the past, when the children were young, to the present, where they have a chance to tell their own stories in the first person.

[*The Sea Garden* by Marcia Willett](#) (*Fic Wil*) Just out of university, Jess travels to London to receive an art award. Kate, the widow of the artist for whom the award is named, offers Jess a place to stay. The spitting image of her grandmother, who once captured and broke many hearts in Cornwall, Jess draws closer to Kate's companions and becomes the catalyst for an unnerving and ultimately fatal trip down memory lane.

More great read-alike suggestions on the back



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Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff Continued

[**Fault Lines** by Nancy Huston](#) (*Fic Hus*) Huston's novel traces four generations of a family, beginning in contemporary California and working back to World War II-era Germany. The four sections of the book are each narrated by a precocious six-year-old from a different generation of the same Jewish family, examining how unshared secrets shape each generation.

Character driven stories of racism:

[**The Secret Life of Bees** by Sue Monk Kidd](#) (*Fic Kid*)

After her "stand-in mother," a bold black woman named Rosaleen, insults the three biggest racists in town, Lily Owens joins Rosaleen on a journey to Tiburon, South Carolina, where they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black, bee-keeping sisters.

[**The White Tiger** by Aravind Adiga](#) (*Fic Adi*)

When he relocates to New Delhi to take a new job, Balram Halwai is disillusioned by the city's materialism, technology-spawned violence, and the poverty and corruption of modern India's caste society, forcing him to question his loyalties, ambitions, and past.

[**March** by Geraldine Brooks](#) (*Fic Bro*)

In a story inspired by March, the father character in "Little Women" and drawn from the journals and letters of Louisa May Alcott's father, a man leaves behind his family to serve in the Civil War and finds his beliefs challenged by his experiences.

[**A Gate at the Stairs** by Lorrie Moore](#) (*Fic Moo*)

In the Midwest just after the September 11th attacks, 20-year-old Tassie Keltjin comes of age amid such challenges as racism, the War on Terror, and cruelty in the name of love, as she leaves her family's farm to attend college and takes a part-time job as a nanny.

Issue-oriented stories:

[**Flight Behavior** by Barbara Kingsolver](#) (*Fic Kin*)

Dellarobia Turnbow is a young wife and mother on a failing Tennessee farm who experiences something she cannot explain—an unusual fire in a forested valley behind her house. This curiosity causes a stir in the scientific and local communities, garnering a great deal of media attention and leads to Dellarobia confronting and questioning everything she thought she believed in.

[**Small Great Things** by Jodi Picoult](#) (*New Fic Pic*) Ruth Jefferson is a labor and delivery nurse with more than 20 years' experience. During her shift, Ruth begins a routine checkup on a newborn, only to be told a few minutes later that she's been reassigned to another patient. The parents are white supremacists and don't want Ruth, who is African American, to touch their child. The hospital complies with their request, but the next day, the baby goes into cardiac distress while Ruth is

alone in the nursery. Does she obey orders or does she intervene?

[**Inside the O'Briens** by Lisa Genova](#) (*Fic Gen*) Joe O'Brien is a 43-year-old police officer from the Irish Catholic neighborhood of Charlestown, Massachusetts. A devoted husband, proud father of four, and respected officer, Joe begins experiencing bouts of disorganized thinking, uncharacteristic temper outbursts, and strange, involuntary movements. When his symptoms worsen, he agrees to see a neurologist and is handed a diagnosis that will change his and his family's lives forever.

[**We Need to Talk about Kevin** by Lionel Shriver](#) (*Fic Shr*) The mother of a teenage boy who killed seven fellow students and two adults in a high school shooting writes a series of letters to her estranged husband on their son's upbringing and questions what she fears may be her own part in the tragedy.