



## The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper

By Phaedra Patrick

Finding a mysterious charm bracelet among his late wife's possessions, sixty-nine-year-old Arthur Pepper breaks from his routine life for the first time since her death and embarks on a quest to learn about his wife's life before their marriage, a journey that leads to unexpected self-discoveries. **October 2016 WITCC Lifelong Learning Book Club Read**

## Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff

### Engaging novels about widowers:

[\*The Beginner's Goodbye\* by Anne Tyler](#) (*Fic Tyl*) Devastated when his wife dies in a freak accident at their home, 36-year-old Aaron moves in with his sister and begins seeing his wife's ghost. An uplifting tale of love and forgiveness where mourning is both a rite of passage and a process of discovery.

[\*The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry\* by Gabrielle Zevin](#) (*Fic Zev*) A.J. Fikry, a young widower, owns a struggling independent bookstore on a summer destination island off Massachusetts. One day, A.J. discovers an abandoned child in his store and his life takes a surprising turn.

[\*An Available Man\* by Hilma Wolitzer](#) (*Fic Wol*) Edward Schuyler finds himself ambushed by female attention after his beloved wife, Bee, dies of pancreatic cancer. A modest sixty-two-year-old science teacher, Edward prefers solitude and familiar routines. His stepchildren surprise him by placing a personal ad in *The New York Review of Books* on his behalf and Edward reluctantly re-enters the dating world.

[\*Major Pettigrew's Last Stand\* by Helen Simonson](#) (*Fic Sim*) 68-year-old Maj. Ernest Pettigrew, a set-in-his-ways widower has settled into a quiet retirement in the village of Edgecombe St. Mary. Lonely since his wife died, he forms a bond with a charming Pakistani widow and local shopkeeper, Mrs. Ali, over a shared interest in literature and tentatively begins to court her.

### If you enjoy tales of traveling seniors, try:

[\*The English Major\* by Jim Harrison](#) (*Fic Har*) When his wife divorces him and robs him of his farmland, sixty-year-old Cliff road trips across America, intent on eliminating blandness by renaming the fifty states and their state birds.

[\*Etta and Otto and Russell and James\* by Emma Hooper](#) (*Fic Hoo*)

82-year-old Etta has never seen the ocean. Early one morning she takes a rifle, some chocolate, and her best boots, and begins walking from rural Saskatchewan to Halifax. Her husband wakes to a note left on the kitchen table; his brother, who has loved Etta from afar for 60 years, insists on finding her, wherever she's gone.

[\*Avenue of Mysteries\* by John Irving](#) (*New Fic Irv*) Embarking on a trip to the Philippines, aging novelist Juan Diego reflects on dreams and memories of his childhood in Mexico before his past and present intersect in unexpected ways.

[\*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry\* by Rachel Joyce](#) (*Fic Joy*)

Recently retired Harold Fry receives a letter from Queenie Hennessy, an old friend who he hasn't heard from in 20 years. She has written to say she is in hospice and wants to say goodbye. Harold intends a quick walk to the corner mailbox to post his reply but instead, he becomes convinced he must deliver his message in person to Queenie—who is 600 miles away.

### Heartwarming stories of self-fulfillment:

[\*Britt-Marie Was Here\* by Fredrik Backman](#) (*New Fic Bac*) Britt-Marie is a woman who is used to her life being organized. But when she leaves her cheating spouse and takes a temporary job as caretaker of the recreation center in the tiny town of Borg, her life changes in unpredictable ways.

[\*The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend\* by Katarina Bivald](#) (*New Fic Biv*)

In what is clearly a case of the world's worst timing, Sara Lindqvist arrives in the ramshackle town of Broken Wheel, Iowa, on the day of her pen-pal Amy Harris' funeral. Unwilling to return to her ho-hum life in Sweden, she decides to stay and open a bookstore using Amy's eclectic trove of books.

**More great read-alike suggestions on the back**



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## Read-alikes compiled by Sioux City Public Library Staff Continued

[\*The Patron Saint of Lost Dogs\* by Nick Trout](#) (*Fic Tro*) Returning home to Vermont to revive his late father's failing veterinary practice—and then quickly sell it, Dr. Cyrus Mills finds his plans changing when he begins feeling invested in the community and the life he has started to build there.

[\*The Little Paris Bookshop\* by Nina George](#) (*New Fic Geo*) Jean Perdu, owner of the Literary Apothecary, a floating bookstore, finds himself forced to re-evaluate his past when a new tenant moves into his apartment building, leading him to float off down the rivers of France in search of lost love, new love, and friends he didn't know he needed.

**If you like relatable stories about life-changing events, try:**

[\*My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry\* by Fredrik Backman](#) (*New Fic Bac*)

Elsa is a lonely, bullied little girl whose best and only friend is her crazy 77-year-old grandmother. At night Elsa takes refuge in her grandmother's fantastical stories about the Land of Almost-Awake. But when her grandmother dies, Elsa discovers she has been entrusted with an important quest—deliver a series of letters apologizing to people her grandmother had wronged.

[\*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close\* by Jonathan Safran Foer](#) (*Fic Foer*)

A year after nine-year-old Oskar lost his father in the attack on the World Trade Center, he embarks on a quest to discover the secret of a key labeled "Black" that belonged to his father. He sets about contacting everyone in the phone book with the surname Black. This quest leads him to learn about his family, himself, and life.

[\*Lily and the Octopus\* by Steven Rowley](#) (*New Fic Row*) Ted is single and lives with his best friend Lily, a 12-year-old dachshund. He spends his days chatting with Lily and battling with the "octopus" that is attached to her head. This octopus is, in fact, a tumor that is causing Lily's life-threatening seizures. As they spend their last days together, Ted is forced to come to terms with the truth of the octopus and say goodbye to the one he loves most.

[\*In the Unlikely Event\* by Judy Blume](#) (*Fic Blu*)

During the winter of 1951-'52, the community of Elizabeth, New Jersey, experienced three fatal plane crashes. Miri, a fifteen-year-old high school student, observes the changes in her friends and family in reaction to these disasters. The aftermath also changes Miri herself as lives around her are ruined, heroes are made, and secrets come to light.