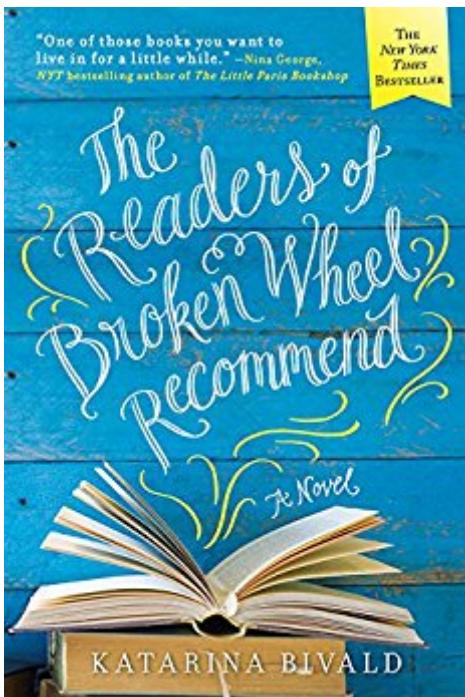


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The Readers Of Broken Wheel Recommend



Synopsis

The New York Times and USA Today Bestseller An Best Book of the Month!Once you let a book into your life, the most unexpected things can happen...Broken Wheel, Iowa, has never seen anyone like Sara, who traveled all the way from Sweden just to meet her book-loving pen pal, Amy. When she arrives, however, she finds Amy's funeral guests just leaving. The residents of Broken Wheel are happy to look after their bewildered visitor-there's not much else to do in a dying small town that's almost beyond repair. You certainly wouldn't open a bookstore. And definitely not with the tourist in charge. You'd need a vacant storefront (Main Street is full of them), books (Amy's house is full of them), and...customers. The bookstore might be a little quirky. Then again, so is Sara. But Broken Wheel's own story might be more eccentric and surprising than she thought. A heartwarming reminder of why we are booklovers, this is a sweet, smart story about how books find us, change us, and connect us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Somewhat to my surprise, I loved this book. I was persuaded to try it by good reviews, but approached it with caution because it could well have been dreadful. Young foreign woman arrives

in a dying small town, opens a bookshop, brings new life to both the town and herself and forms attraction to young man which Keeps Going Wrong — it has the sound of a worn-out, sentimental load of clichéd nonsense. In fact it is funny, rather insightful and absolutely charming without being in any way twee. Katerina Bivald paints excellent pictures of her characters. I found them wholly believable, recognisable in many cases and drawn with insight and compassion. Even some of those who would be hard to like in real life are generally pictured with understanding and often with wit. She also draws an evocative picture of a small farming town dying as a result of economic hardship and the rise of conglomerates driving family farms out of business and people away from the area — and of hope that it can be saved. These aspects gave the book a real base of thought on which to build what is essentially a feel-good Romantic Comedy. Bivald is also excellent on the pleasures and effects of books on the people who read them. There are elements of 84 Charing Cross Road, The Guernsey Literary And Potato Peel Pie Society and others here — and Bivald neatly makes reference to them with a lovely light touch to let you know that she knows what she's doing. She does this very cleverly and subtly with other books, too; some time after finishing the book I suddenly realised that her early references to Pride and Prejudice and Jane Eyre weren't coincidental, for example. It's beautifully done.

A book about reading . . . a book about a reading obsession . . . a book about a woman who would rather read than do just about anything else, who almost requires books just to survive? Sounds like my kind of book. In fact, it almost sounds like it might be about me (although my horses, my dogs, music and hiking give the books a run for their money on most days too). Swedish author Katarina Bivald brings us The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend, her first novel to be published in the United States, and it starts with promise. Sara, a mousy former bookstore employee from Sweden, arrives in the tiny, hard-luck town of Broken Wheel, Iowa to meet and visit with her pen pal, Amy, an elderly resident of this little burg. Amy and Sara have bonded over books during their two-year correspondence, but Sara hits town only to learn that Amy's funeral has just ended. She wonders if she should just return home, having unknowingly walked into a disaster after all, but the occupants of Broken Wheel convince her to stay for a bit. As Sara herself thinks, "As long as she had books and money, nothing could be a catastrophe." • I agree with this philosophy wholeheartedly, if I do say so myself. In an effort to ingratiate herself with the townspeople and to get these folks to read (it seems that none of them do), she decides to open a bookshop with Amy's books as inventory. Slowly, Sara develops friendships with several of Broken Wheel's oddball citizens: George, the reticent but well-meaning alcoholic; Jen, a busybody housewife and

determined matchmaker; Grace, the opinionated proprietor of the local greasy spoon; Caroline, a younger, steelier version of the Church Lady; and Tom, the strong, silent-type subject of Jenâ™s matchmaking attempts.

I would love to know whether Katarina Bivald is a bookworm, because this book seems as if it were written by a bookworm for other bookworms. The love of books, stories and literature flows through the pages like veins through a body. Even the chapter with the book smelling. Yes, you read that correctly. Sara talks about the way books smell. Old books smell differently than a new book, even text books, paperbacks and hardbacks have their own individual smell. Might seem odd for a non-bookworm, but hardcore b-worms will know exactly what she is talking about. The same love of all things book is what manages to connect the inhabitants of the small town of Broken Wheel together, well it does after Sara works a little of her special magic and dreamy charm. It seems as if the old saying is correct in this instance 'people who don't read just haven't found the right book yet' One of the funniest scenes in the book was Caroline and the book of sin. Her moving it around the house in an attempt to hide its existence from herself and others. It was really a very clever way of confronting the issue of how religion regards the topic of homosexuality. The book becomes a symbol for her thoughts and inner dialogue on the matter. Is she wrong to judge without reading the book? If that is the case is it also wrong to judge without embracing or trying to understand? It really does throw quite a sharp stone at the glass house of Christianity. A house that preaches love and hatred in equal measures, whilst being completely blind to the hypocrisy of it all. In the end it is a story of love and belonging. About one person, who needs this town just as much as the town needs her. They bring her out of her books and she brings them out of their ritualistic slump.

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