



Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Barn Again! | A Museum on Main Street Exhibition

Suggested Readings for Adults and Children

Source: michiganhumanities.org

Recommended Adult Books on Barns and Family Life

Willa Cather, *O'Pioneers!* (1913)

Heroine Alexandra Bergson considers giving up her Nebraska farm during a drought. But when she decides to hold onto the farm and continue the struggle, she feels a new, powerful connection with the prairie landscape.

Ronald Jager, *Eighty Acres: Elegy for a Family Farm* (1990)

A tribute to a small, poor Michigan farm forty years after the author has been separated from its landscape and culture.

Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome* (1911)

The harsh realities of life in a small New England farm town affect people's capacity for love and joy.

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Janie tries to get away from a loveless life on a Florida farm, but escape for an African-American woman in the rural South is especially difficult.

David Kline, *Great Possessions: An Amish Farmer's Journal* (1990)

Naturalist David Kline celebrates the Amish farm life he and his family experience in Holmes County, Ohio and the many forms of wildlife that thrive on a well-run farm-but he's not above criticizing modern agribusiness.

Teresa Jordan, *Riding the White Horse Home: A Western Family Album* (1993)

Fourth-generation Wyoming rancher Teresa Jordan explores the paradox of a Western individualism that relies heavily on neighborliness for survival.

Ernest Gaines, *A Gathering of Old Men* (1983)

The legacy of slavery is still very much alive on a Louisiana sugarcane plantation in the 1970s, and the possibility of lynching is in the air. But the community comes together in a way that salvages their dignity in the face of violence.

Carol Bly, *Letters from the Country* (1981)

Embedded in a deep affection for the landscape and rural culture in western Minnesota, the author finds values in her own small town that seem worth preserving.

Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* (1991)

In 1979, a fourth-generation farming family in Zebulon County, Iowa struggle against inflated land values, complex tax laws, expensive technologies and other forces that shape modern agribusiness. Individual family members, especially three sisters, seek to understand what is happening to their way of life and to affirm older rural values in the face of great change.

Milton Murayam, *All I'm Asking for is My Body* (1975)

Set on a plantation in Hawaii in the years before and during WWII, this short novel reveals the dark side of farm labor. For the Oyama family, rural life is something to escape. Cultural conflicts and poverty give their rural community surprising similarity with slave communities of America's antebellum south.

David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1995)

As with the previous title, this novel is also set during WWII and reveals something about the power of land ownership in rural life. Japanese farmers on San Pedro Island in Puget Sound are able to own small plots of land, a circumstance that brings a kind of dignity and stability to their lives.

David Mas Masumoto, *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm* (1995)

A spirited and hopeful account of a young California farmer's efforts to grow and market a product that has fallen out of fashion. He is trying to preserve the land, a fruit variety, a way of farming, and a way of life.

Scott Russell Sanders, *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World* (1993)

Sanders considers whether or not the primary value of the rural myth: the importance of rooting oneself in landscape, family, and community, that he had while growing up in rural Ohio, is applicable and can be transported to the more urban setting of Bloomington, Indiana.

Stella Gibbons, *Cold Comfort Farm* (1996)

A wickedly funny portrait of British rural life in the 1930s. Flora, a recently orphaned socialite, moves in with her country relatives, the gloomy Starkadders of Cold Comfort Farm. Readers will delight in Flora's attempts to bring a sense of order to the Starkadder family's chaotic world.

Tim Pears, *In the Place of Fallen Leaves* (1995)

During the summer of 1984, the year of a terrible drought in a rural English village, a farm family's 13-year-old daughter, weaves a strange and gripping tale about the lives of past, present, and future members of her family and village.

Jane Hamilton, *A Map of the World* (1994)

A spectacularly haunting drama about a rural American family and a disastrous event that forever changes their lives.

Recommended Kids Books on Barns and Family Life

All of these books should be available at your local library or community book store.

AGES 4-8

David L. Harrison, *When the Cows Come Home*

Alice Schertle, *How Now Brown Cow?*

Tres Seymour, *Hunting the White Cow*

Ellen Johnson, *Brown Cow, Green Cow, Yellow Mellow Sun*

Jan Romero, *Stevens Carlos and the Squash Plant*

Maryann Weidt, *Daddy Played Music for the Cows*

Margaret Wise Brown, *Big Red Barn*

Martin Waldell, *Farmer Duck*

Verda Cross, *Great Grandma Tells of Threshing Days*

Faye Gibbons, *Night in the Barn*

Debbie Atwell, *Barn*

Suzanne Tanner Chitwood, *Wake Up, Big Barn!*

Lynn Downey, *The Flea's Sneeze*

Anne Shelby, *Homeplace*

Linda Oatman High, *Barn Savers*

Tony Johnston, *The barn owls*

Bill Martin, *Barn Dance!*

Robert Munsch, *Playhouse*

Lynn Plourde, *Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud*

Carol P. Saul, *Barn Cat: A counting book*

Karen B. Winnick, *Barn Sneeze*

Jane Yolen, *Raising Yoder's Barn*

AGES 9-12

Lindee Climo, *Chester's Barn*
Victoria Sherrow, *Huskings, Quiltings, and Barn Raisings*
Avi, *The Barn*
Virginia Hamilton, *Drylongos*
Laura Ingalls Wilder, Any title!!
Joan W. Blos, *A Gathering of Days*
Andrea Wyman, *Red Sky at Morning*
Gary Paulsen, *The Winter Room*
Dick King-Smith, *Martin's Mice*

YOUNG ADULT

Clara Gillow Clark, *Annie's Choice*
Steve Schnur, *Beyond Providence*
M.E. Kerr, *Deliver Us from Evie*
Will Weaver, *Farm Team*
Maude Casey, *Over the Water*
Marjorie Kinnon Rawlings, *The Yearling*
Bernice Rabe, *Pave the Way*
Oliver Laforge, *The Mother Ditch*
Pearl S. Buck, *Christmas Day in the Morning*
Robert Newton Peck, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*
Joan Bauer, *Squashed*
Walter D. Edmonds, *Bert Breen's Barn*
Dianne E. Gray, *Holding Up the Earth*
Sharon Creech, *Chasing Redbird*

Thanks to David Sidwell at the Utah State University Department of Theatre Arts and Terry Schaffer at the Michigan State University Museum for help in compiling this list.