



## ***The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend***

Katarina Bivald, 2013 (2016, U.S.)

Sourcebooks

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### **Summary**

*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. *(From the publisher.)*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. One of the themes in *The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend* is how a single individual can strengthen a community or repair fragile lives. First, why does Sara Lundqvist decide that the people of Broken Wheel need a bookstore? Next, how does she become a catalyst for change—what is it about Sara that gives her such influence?

2. Discuss the nature and contents of Sara and Amy Harris's two-year correspondence. What do the letters reveal about each of them. Amy, for instance, writes the following:

*John says I think about historic injustices too much. Maybe he's right, but it's just that it doesn't feel historic to me. We never seem to be able to accept responsibility for them. First, we say that's just how things are, then we shrug our shoulders and say that's just how things were, that things are different now. No thanks to us, I want to reply, but no one ever seems to want to hear that.*

*Cont'd*

2—cont'd

—What do you make of Amy's view of human indifference to injustice. Is she cynical, overly idealistic, or realistic?

—What about Sara? What do the letters reveal about her character?

3. Have you ever had a long-lasting correspondence with someone you didn't know...or even with someone you did know? Can letter writing form as deep a relationship as personal contact?

4. What do you think of Sara's emotional engagement with books:

*Sara couldn't help but wonder what life might be like if you couldn't daydream about Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy...because you yourself had created him.*

—Is your attachment to books as strong as Sara's? Do you sometimes wonder if your involvement with them takes precedence over your real life?

5. Another theme in *Broken Wheel* is the power of books to change lives. What gives them such power—what's their secret? What is the town of Broken Wheel like when Sara arrives, and how does it change by the book's end.

6. *Follow-up to Question 5:* Now talk about specific characters in the novel and how individual lives are changed through reading. Which character's story engaged you most?

7. What book has changed your life...or the life of someone close to you?

8. What other works does *The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommends* bring to mind? Have you read, for instance, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, *84 Charing Cross Road*, or *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*? If so, how does this book compare to any of those?

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