**Reading Materials**

This document provides information about the reading materials for this theme, including a complete list of available titles, as well as book summaries and author information for each.

**Complete Book List**

Included below is the complete list of books which have been vetted and recommended for this theme, and which are available in inventory from the ICfL.

* *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly. Published 2016, 384 pages.
* *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande. Published 2012, 325 pages.
* *Indian Creek Chronicles* by Peter Fromm. Published 2003, 208 pages.
* *Rena’s Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz* by Rena Kornreich and Heather Dune Macadam. Published 1995, 320 pages
* *Lady in Waiting: My Extraordinary Life in the Shadow of the Crown* by Anne Glennconner. Published 2021, 336 pages.
* *Educated* by Tara Westover. Published 2018, 352 pages.
* *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions: The Life of a Sioux Medicine Man* by Lame Deer*.* Published 1972, 277 pages.
* *Hole in the Sky* by William Kittredge. Published 1992, 238 pages.
* *A Mormon Mother A Mormon Mother* by Annie C. Tanner. Published 1983, 382 pages.
* *Billy the Kid: A Short and Violent Life* by Robert M. Utley. Published 1991, 342 pages.
* *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* by Janet Campbel Hale. Published 1998, 220 pages.
* *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* by Elinore Pruitte Steward. Published 1913, 282 pages.
* *Messages from my Father* by Calvin Trillin. Published 1997, 117 pages.
* *My Grandmother Smoked Cigars* by Sabine Ulibarri. Published 1994, 167 pages.

**Book Summaries & Author Information**

Included below are the detailed summaries of each book available for this theme, as well as background information about the author.

**Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race**, Margot Lee Shetterly. Published 2016, 384 pages

Celebrated as one of the most important books of 2016 and made into an acclaimed movie, Hidden Figures presents a joint biography of four “human computers:” highly gifted Black women mathematicians who with pencils and paper, slide rules, and adding machines performed the calculations that enabled NASA to put rockets and astronauts into space in the mid-twentieth century. Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden were brilliant but encountered the barriers of segregation not just during their youth but also in the course of their work at Langley Aeronautical Laboratory in Hampton, Virginia. Nevertheless, as one reviewer has noted, they “forged alliances, and used their intellects to change their own lives—and their country’s future.” One of the many pleasures of this story of quiet heroism is its individualization of these women; the reader is treated to four distinctive profiles. There are many ways that people can negotiate a world stacked against them, as these stories within a story demonstrate, and many kinds of personalities that can succeed.

Author Information

Margot Lee Shetterly’s roots in the subject matter of *Hidden Figures* run deep: her father was a research scientist at Langley Research Center, and many members of the African-American community she grew up in worked for NASA. She was born in 1969 in Hampton, Virginia. Her mother’s position as an English professor at the historically black Hampton University influenced her interest in writing. After graduating from the University of Virginia, Shetterly worked for a time in investment banking and publishing. She began work on *Hidden Figures* in 2010. The book became a New York Times best-seller, won many awards, and is the basis for an Academy Award-nominated film.

**The Distance Between Us: A Memoir**, Reyna Grande. Published 2012, 325 pages

Grande tells the story of her tumultuous childhood as a child of immigrants and an immigrant herself. Driven by economic necessity, her parents illegally crossed the Mexican/US border, leaving their children to live with a harsh grandmother who abuses them. At age ten, Reyna makes the dangerous crossing as an undocumented immigrant, joining her father. Her parents have separated and family drama ensues; Reyna and her siblings face great challenges in acculturating; their father’s abusive behavior and heavy drinking challenges them. Though teenaged Reyna engages in rebellious behavior, her success in school opens doors to a future beyond any expectations possible if she’d remained in the poverty-stricken town of her birth, and she reconciles with her family. Described as “unflinching and honest,” this book provides a nuanced look at immigration and the experiences of those who enter the United States illegally.

Author Information

American Book Award winner and National Book Critics Circle Award nominee Reyna Grande grew up in poverty in Iguala, Mexico in 1975 and came to the United States at ten as an undocumented child immigrant to join her father, who was working in America. Overcoming considerable hardship, she attended Pasadena City College and the University of California, Santa Cruz, earning a B.A. in creative writing, then an MFA from Antioch University. A member of the prestigious Macondo Writers Workshop and a frequent presenter and teacher, she is the author of two novels and two memoirs.

**Indian Creek Chronicles: A Winter Alone in the Wilderness**, Pete Fromm. Published 2003, 208 pages

This engaging memoir chronicles the seven winter months Fromm spent alone as a young man, living in a tent in the Idaho mountains guarding salmon eggs for a research project. Full of vivid details of the beauty and harshness of high-country winter, the book chronicles the challenges of personal isolation and of learning to cope with adverse circumstances both dramatic and comic. Termed “a gripping story of adventure and a modern-day Walden,” the book is also a funny coming-of-age story. Fromm’s romantic notions of being a contemporary mountain man are challenged; he’s humbled, but also discovers his own inner strength and capacity. “Fromm is an honest, objective, and impeccably focused observer of the natural world, and a superb writer to boot,” one critic has written; another has termed this prize-winning book “a modern classic.”

Author Information

A five-time winner of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Literary Award Pete Fromm is the author of five novels, five short story collections, and two memoirs. Born in 1958 in Wisconsin, he attended the University of Montana and graduated with honors in wildlife biology; an elective class taken with the well-known western author-teacher William Kittredge, who recognized Fromm’s talent and inspired him to pursue writing. At first Fromm worked as a seasonal ranger in Grand Teton National Park and wrote in winters; after his first publication he devoted himself to writing. He still lives in Montana, serving also on the faculty of Pacific University’s MFA program. His work has been praised as “lovely” and honest, full of “clear-eyed seeing, and clear-eyed feeling” (Rick Bass).

**Rena’s Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz**, Rena Kornreich Gelissen and Heather Dune Macadam. Published 1995, 320 pages

A collaboration between a concentration camp survivor and a writer, this Holocaust memoir recounts in vivid, deeply moving (and sometimes disturbing) detail the story of an upper-middle-class teenager sent to Auschwitz as a slave laborer. When her family is forced to split up, Rena promises her mother that she’ll take care of her sister Danka, and this account of three years in the camp chronicles their profound bond. It also memorializes other bonds among mothers and daughters, prisoner/friends, and even prisoners and a few compassionate camp staff members, creating an unforgettable look at the varied ways humans respond to adversity. Though unsparing in its picture of camp inhumanity, Rena’s Promise ultimately has much to say about love, hope, and resilience.

Author Information

Rena Kornreich Gelissen was born in 1930 Poland and escaped with her sister to Slovakia after the Nazi invasion. To protect the people hiding her, she turned herself in and was sent to Auschwitz on the first transport of young Jewish women in 1942, destined for slave labor in building the camp. Her sister joined her, and they endured more than three years of crushing work, hunger, and abuse. Gelissen was liberated after a brutal forced march to the Ravensbruck concentration camp and worked in the Netherlands for the American Red Cross, then immigrated with her husband to the United States. They settled in Connecticut and raised four children. In cooperation with writer Heather Dune Macadam, Gelissen published her critically praised memoir of survival, *Rena’s Promise*, in 1995; it provides a rare specific focus on women’s experience in Holocaust camps. She died in 2006, sixty years after her liberation.

Writer and NPR commentator Heather Dune Macadam collaborated with Rena Kornreich Gelissen, drawing on conversations, interviews, written records, and secondary research to produce *Rena’s Promise*. Her 2020 book, *999: The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Transport to Auschwitz*, places that story in the context of other young women’s parallel experiences in that concentration camp. She has also published a novel, and her shorter work has appeared in publications including *National Geographic, Marie Claire, Newsweek, and The Guardian.* She is president of the Rena’s Promise Foundation and directed Rena’s Promise International Creative Writing Camp 4 Teens.

**Lady in Waiting: My Extraordinary Life in the Shadow of the Crown**, Anne Glenconner. Published 2021, 336 pages

Glenconner’s memoir takes readers inside a world of social and economic privilege. While it offers the pleasures of insider knowledge of the rich and famous, it also demonstrates that every station in life is subject to difficulties, and that all grapple with making sense of their lives. Firstborn child of an English peer, Glenconner was thought “the greatest disappointment” for being a girl and had no fortune of her own; her husband was unfaithful and left his money to a servant; two of her children died. Her occupation as lady in waiting (and close friend) to the volatile Princess Margaret required her to negotiate thirty years of repeated controversies that threatened not just Margaret and herself, but potentially the British crown. Glenconner has said that she wrote this best-selling book because she “was fed up with people writing such horrible things about Princess Margaret,” but it also offers an inspirational picture, as one reviewer has written, of the capacity “to survive court life with [a] sense of humor intact.”

Author Information

Anne Glenconner was born in 1932 and is a member of the British peerage (her title is Baroness Glenconner). As a child she was playmate to Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret; her wedding in 1956 to a peer was attended by them as well as the Queen Mother. In 1971 she became Lady in Waiting to Princess Margaret, a position she held until the latter’s death in 2002 (she is portrayed in the third and fourth seasons on the Netflix series *The Crown*). She lives in Norfolk, England and has written a mystery novel in addition to her memoir *Lady in Waiting*.

**Educated: A Memoir**, Tara Westover. Published 2018, 352 pages

Westover’s critically acclaimed (and controversial) memoir describes her life as a child of survivalist parents in a remote corner of southeastern Idaho. Raised in a family apprehensive about outsiders and modern culture, one where children were expected to work and obey, not go to school and learn to think for themselves (especially girls), Westover tells a sometimes shocking story of exploitation. Yearning for personal growth and education, she buys her own textbooks and incurs her parents’ displeasure by reaching toward the outside world and achieving freedom through a scholarship to BYU (despite not having a high school diploma). The book’s publication has sparked lively debate about truth-telling in memoir: her family publicly disputes both the allegations of abuse by a brother and the accuracy of her parents’ portraits.

Author Information

Tara Westover is the youngest of seven children, born in 1986 to survivalist Latter-Day Saint parents. Living an isolated life in Clifton, Idaho, she was not registered for a birth certificate until she was nine years old, never saw doctors as a child, and did not attend elementary or secondary school. Thanks to independent study, she received a scholarship to BYU and graduated with honors; she then earned MA and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Cambridge and was a visiting fellow at Harvard. Her memoir, *Educated*, details the trails and trauma of her childhood and her efforts to build a new life; it spent two years on the *New York Times* best-seller list and has been translated into 45 languages.

**Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions: The Life of a Sioux Medicine Man** by Lame Deer. Published 1972, 277 pages.

Colonialism in North America did not stop with the Revolution of 1776. It had new names: "Westward expansion" and "Manifest Destiny," but those who were called pioneers still did the same things based on the same values that caused colonialism in the first place. The text, *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* was originally published in 1972 and is the story of both Lame Deer and the Lakota nation as they were affected by our expansion. It gives us the history and brings us up to date on the continued oppression of America's native population. The story Lame Deer tells is one of harsh youth and reckless manhood, shotgun marriage and divorce, history, and folklore as rich today as ever—and of his fierce struggle to keep pride alive, though living as a stranger in his own ancestral land.

Author Information:

John (Fire) Lame Deer was born around the turn of the last century on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. He is a full-blooded Sioux and has been many things in his life including a rodeo clown, a painter, a sheep herder, and a thief. Above all, though, he was a Lakota holy man.

Richard Erdoes was born in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. He would read books that, though not historically accurate, cast American Indians in the role of hero. After he grew up, he moved to the United States to escape Nazi rule. He met Lame Deer during Martin Luther King Jr.'s peace march in New York City in 1967. This was the beginning of the collaboration that would last the next four years. Richard has since written several more books.

**Hole in the Sky**by William Kittredge. Published 1992, 238 pages.

Hole in the Sky traces the life of William Kittredge. As a child, Kittredge grew up on his family’s Warner Valley ranch in the southeastern Oregon desert country, and he felt dep connections to the land and to the cowboys who worked it. As he aged, life became more complicated, as the tensions and dissolutions within his family, new ideas about land use, and his own struggles to come to terms with himself.

Author Information

William Kittredge was born in Portland, Oregon, on August 14, 1932. His family ranched in the Warner Valley in Southeastern Oregon on the ranch his grandfather built and his father gave up law school to work on. He earned a degree in general agriculture from Oregon State University in 1954 and a M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers Workshop in 1969. He held a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University, has been awarded National Endowment for the Arts grants, and the Fiction International Award for two collections of short stories. He is also the recipient of the Montana Governor’s Award for Literature, and the Pacific Northwest Bookseller’s Award for Excellence, and the Neil Simon Award for his work on the film Heartland.

**A Mormon Mother** by Annie C. Tanner. Published 1983, 382 pages.

Annie Clark Tanner’s book partakes of the developing autobiographical tradition, but with a difference born of her tenaciously earned individuality. Neither a defense of polygamy and the LDS who fostered it, nor an angry denunciation of the practice and its perpetrators, *A Mormon Mother* is one participant’s attempt to see life, the whole of it, in perspective. Polygamy was an overwhelming aspect of that life, and so it is not remarkable that the book begins with an explanation of the Principle, as polygamy was termed by its practitioners, carefully couched in an impersonal passive voice. Through the first chapter the scales are weighed, for and against the practice, with such honesty that what seems at first a dark glass, emerges as a mirror to life. There we may see more clearly Annie Clark Tanner’s life and, on reflection, our own lives. In Annie Tanner’s struggles to balance the prophetic voice with her internal witness we see one adaptation to the human condition.

Author Information

Annie Clark was born on September 24, 1864, in Farmington, Utah. Baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1873, Annie Clark was rebaptized a year later during a reformation movement. At sixteen in 1880, Annie took classes at the fledgling University of Utah and served as a counselor to legendary Farmington Primary President Aurelia Rogers. From 1882 to 1883 Annie Clark attended the Brigham Young Academy high school, where Karl G. Maeser acclaimed her as the most brilliant student in her class. One of her teachers was Professor Joseph Marion Tanner, and she was attracted to him. Annie became the plural wife of Joseph Marion Tanner in 1883. He became president of Utah State University and superintendent of Church schools. Annie Clark Tanner was the only female child of Mormon pioneer Ezra T. Clark to build a home in Farmington. She was the oldest daughter and second child of 10 in the family of Ezra T. Clark's second wife in polygamy, Susan Leggett.

**Billy the Kid: A Short and Violent Life**by Robert M. Utley. Published 1991, 342 pages.

*Billy the Kid* is both a simple narrative of the life of Henry McCarty Antrim (alias William Bonney aka Billy the Kid) and an analysis of his place and times, and the context of his life. It provides a means for considering his real importance to American history and, particularly, American myth. In fact, Robert Utley says that his purpose is to comment on violence in American society. Utley is known primarily as a historian of the Idaho Wars. As a National Park Service historian, he produced guides for such complex sites as Custer (now Little Bighorn) Battlefield. Billy the Kid grew out of Utley’s highly regarded analysis of New Mexico’s Lincoln County War, High Noon in Lincoln: Violence on the Western Frontier, and is aimed, he says, at “stripping away the veneers of legendry.” By the time of Billy’s death in 1881, newspapers and the sensational press (such as Police Gazette) had already made of the Kid a larger-than-life outlaw chieftain. So the legend of Billy the Kid had been building for at least three years, and the manner of his death did nothing to discourage it. Within a year, Pat Garrett, in association with writer Marshall Upson, had published his own account, *The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid*. Fact and fiction about the Kid would evermore be inextricably intertwined.

Author Information

Robert Utley was born on October 31, 1929 in Bauxite, Arkansas. During his childhood, his parents, Don Williams Utley and Valeria Haney, moved him to northwestern Indiana, where he attended high school. Later, he attended nearby Purdue University, receiving a Bachelor of Sciences in history. He then attended Indiana University for graduate school, receiving a Master of Arts in history in 1952. Following his graduation, Utley served in the U.S. Army, and later worked for the National Park Service. Utley has written sixteen books on the history of the American West. He was a former chief historian of the National Park Service. Fellow historians commend Utley as the finest historian of the American frontier in the 19th century. The Western History Association annually gives out the Robert M. Utley Book Award for the best book published on the military history of the frontier and western North America (including Mexico and Canada) from prehistory through the 20th century. Utley lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his wife Dr. Melody Webb, also a historian.

**Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter**by Janet Campbel Hale. Published 1998, 220 pages.

Janet Campbell Hale’s collection of autobiographical essays reflects on her youth as a member of a poor, troubled Indian family and on connections between her own identity and Indian culture and history. Lyrical, angry, caught up in the process of writing and self-creation, Hale explores what it means to her to be an Indian in contemporary America.

Although an occasional concern appeared regarding matters of historical accuracy, reviews of Bloodlines were almost unanimously enthusiastic. “A remarkable tale of fortitude,” wrote Donna Seaman of what she described as “eight brooding but brave essays.” Sherry L. Smith, writing in Journal of American History, called it “a depressing book,” but also “an important book,” and while she pointed out a historical error, she stressed that Bloodlines is not primarily history, but “a forceful, intensely personal statement of an Indian woman’s attempt to reconcile a difficult past with an ambiguous future.” Bloodlines won an American Book Award in 1994.

Author Information

Janet Campbell Hale, born in 1947, is a member of the Coeur d’Alene tribe. She dropped out of high school at fifteen, her efforts at finishing school having been disrupted by her transient family. She married at age 18, had a son, and was divorced within year. As a struggling single mother, she attended City College of San Francisco and earned her B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1970 she married Stephen Dinsmore Hale and gave birth to their daughter. She received her M.A. in English from UC Davis in 1984 and the following year published her highly acclaimed novel, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*. She has taught at colleges and universities as a writer-in-residence and visiting professor, including appointments as the Richard Thompson Lecturer at Iowa State University in Ames in 1986, the Claremont Lecturer at College of Illinois in Springfield in 1995, and the Visiting Professor of Native America Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1998. She has published several books of poems, short fiction, several works for children, and two novels. She currently lives in the reservation town of De Smet, Idaho.

**Letters of a Woman Homesteader** by Elinore Pruitte Steward. Published 1913, 282 pages.

Elinore Pruitt Stewart’s letters were written over a five-year period to her former employer. She gives us, in her letters, the life of an “ordinary” woman. While her descriptions of nature and friends and work and food are sensory and ebullient, her prose might best be termed reticent when she is discussing marriage and childbirth. This reticence is common in frontier journals of women. For example, it is a full 3 ½ years after the beginning of her correspondence with Mrs. Coney when Stewart finally confides in her that she has been married for most of that time. The reader senses this reticence, a form of modesty, on Stewart’s part, and it gives suspense and piquancy to the reading experience. The weaving together in Stewart’s letters of ebullience and reticence, joy and sorrow, optimism and perseverance, makes modern life seem bland indeed.

Author Information

Stewart was born in 1876 in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and raised in Oklahoma. She taught herself to read and write, never being the beneficiary of formal schooling. An orphan at a young age, she raised eight younger siblings. Her marriage to a civil engineer brought her to Kansas; she was widowed four years later, when Jerrine, her daughter, was a month old. The two embarked on an impoverished and nomadic existence, which ultimately yielded this rich and poignant volume of letters. Stewart died in 1933, after a long and happy second marriage and a successful career as rancher

**Messages from my Father**by Calvin Trillin. Published 1997, 117 pages.

Calvin Trillin, the celebrated New Yorker writer, offers a rich and engaging biography of his father, as well as a literate and entertaining fanfare for the common (and decent, and hard-working) man. Abe Trillin had the western Missouri accent of someone who had grown up in St. Joseph and the dreams of America of someone who had been born is Russia. In Kansas City, he was a grocer, at least until he swore off the grocery business. He was given to swearing off things―coffee, tobacco, alcohol, all neckties that were not yellow in color. Presumably he had also sworn off swearing, although he was a collector of curses, such as "May you have an injury that is not covered by workman's compensation." Although he had a strong vision of the sort of person he wanted his son to be, his explicit advice about how to behave didn't go beyond an almost lackadaisical "You might as well be a mensch." Somehow, though, Abe Trillin's messages got through clearly. The author's unerring sense of the American character is everywhere apparent in this quietly powerful memoir.

Author Information

Calvin (Bud) Marshall Trillin is an American journalist, humorist, and novelist. He is best known for his humorous writings about food and eating, but he has also written much serious journalism, comic verse, and several books of fiction.

Trillin attended public schools in Kansas City and went on to Yale University, where he served as chairman of the Yale Daily News and became a member of Scroll and Key before graduating in 1957; he later served as a trustee of the university. After a stint in the U.S. Army, he worked as a reporter for Time magazine before joining the staff of The New Yorker in 1963. His reporting for The New Yorker on the racial integration of the University of Georgia was published in his first book, An Education in Georgia. He wrote the magazine's "U.S. Journal" series from 1967 to 1982, covering local events both serious and quirky throughout the United States.

In 1965, he married the educator and writer Alice Stewart Trillin with whom he had two daughters. Alice died in 2001, and Trillin’s book “About Alice” is a humorous and touching memoir/eulogy to their life together. In 2013, he was inducted into the New York Writers Hall of Fame. Trillin lives in the Greenwich Village area of New York City.

**My Grandmother Smoked Cigars**by Sabine Ulibarri. Published 1994, 167 pages

These stories present a series of carefully drawn human sketches of individuals--family members, like the grandmother and uncle Cirilo; friends and acquaintances, like the all-around cowboy Negro Aguilar; and Elacio Sandoval, the boyhood friend of the narrator whose fear of marriage and “love them or leave them” approach to the opposite sex makes exciting and humorous reading; and Roberto, who after going to town for nails, reappears after a three-year absence to continue as if nothing has happened. Ulibarri establishes a careful balance between childhood memories and an adult perspective while carefully analyzing the proud, independent, and sturdy atmosphere of rural New Mexico. Classic, legendary heroes of the Hispanic past reappear in these pages and, in the words of the author, “…sweetened and enriched my life then and, now, I remember it tenderly” (Chicano Literature: A Reference…393).

Author Information

Sabine R. Ulibarri was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, September 21, 1919, and raised in Tierra Amarilla where he attended local schools through the twelfth grade. He taught school in Rio Arriba County and subsequently in El Rito, New Mexico. He married in 1942 and spent the following three years serving in the U.S. Air Force. He finished his Bachelor’s degree at the University of New Mexico in 1947 and his M.A. degree in Spanish in 1949. He continued his graduate studies at the University of California at Los Angeles, where he taught and studied for nine years. After serving in the private sector as a consultant, he also served as chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of New Mexico.