

## **Best Books to Read When the Snow is Falling (Or the Wind is Howling)**

SJI Library

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The winter wind has been howling, screeching and moaning around my home for the past week. I enjoy its fierceness, but instead of going out to be chilled and buffeted, I sometimes like to snuggle up on the couch with a good book and a hot cup of cocoa while I read about others' adventures in the cold, wild weather.

One of my favorite winter mysteries is *Smilla's Sense of Snow* by Peter Høeg (1993), a suspenseful literary novel where the heroine's expertise in the properties of snow and ice leads her to suspect foul play in the death of a small boy who falls from the roof of her apartment building. She's relentless in her investigation, traveling from Copenhagen to the coast of Greenland, uncovering more and more bizarre details as she fights to unravel the truth.

*Winter Garden* by Kristin Hannah (2010) is a novel that tells two stories, one being that of two sisters in the Pacific Northwest who have grown apart, connected only by an old Russian fairy tale told to them by their cold, distant mother when they were young, and who are now arguing over what to do about her as her mind appears to wander ever further from reality.

The second is that of their mother's life as a child in World War II Leningrad, living in unimaginable circumstances through the cold Russian winters, resulting in a long-held, closely shrouded secret. Will the girls ever get their mother to finally tell the end of the old Russian fairy tale for once in their lives, and what will happen to them if she does? You'll want to put on an extra blanket when reading this one—Leningrad was COLD.

And add a couple of logs to the fire if you plan to reread Laura Ingalls Wilder's *The Long Winter* (1940). You'll relive the winter of 1880-1881 in their winter house in the town of De Smet, South Dakota. An old Indian warns Pa of a coming blizzard that will last seventh months, and it does. Ma teaches them how to "contrive" and survive as she shows them how to make a lamp out of a button and some grease, stretch their meager provisions, and come up with creative ways to pass the time.

As the long freezing winter carries on, Laura eats potatoes and only potatoes for so long she thinks she just can't eat another potato, until they run out and have nothing at all left to eat. When the whole town is on the brink of starvation, Almanzo and Cap set out in the harrowing blizzard to search for a cache of stored wheat that just might help save everyone.

A new winter favorite is *The Snow Child* by Eowyn Ivy (2012), which tells the tale of a grieving couple that moves from the East Coast in 1918 to trying homesteading in the wilds of Alaska. As the woman becomes more and more depressed and lonely, she believes she sees a young blonde-haired girl running through the woods accompanied by a fox.

While she knows a child couldn't actually survive in the Alaskan winter on her own, she sets out to lure the child closer to her home. While describing in detail the harsh realities of living in the Alaskan wilderness, the author also entertains the idea of a miraculous, magical child who might or might not exist, who saves this couple from their grief and gives them something to live for and love.

This winter is a great time to dust off an old classic or add a new treasure to your bookshelf of great books to read by a warm fire. All of these books are available at the Library, but you just might have some competition for checking them out. Check out these and other great books at the Library!