

Recommendations for Contemporary Mysteries Kris Wiley for The News Review

I love mysteries with compelling characters and a strong sense of place, and these contemporary new releases fit the bill.

I virtually traveled to my home state of Iowa with "Original Sins," the second book in the Riley Fisher series. Author Erin Young captures the Midwestern sensibility, which is amazing because she is from England.

We were introduced to Fisher in "The Fields," in which she solved a string of murders while working as the sergeant in a county sheriff's department.

In "Original Sins," Fisher has moved to Des Moines to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She quickly picks up two cases, one involving threats against the Governor and one in which women are targeted by a killer who has become known as the Sin Eater.

Readers of the first book will be pleased that Fisher continues to deal with family issues and stay connected with the potential love interest she left at her former job.

If you like intense procedurals featuring imperfect, good-hearted protagonists – think Jane Harper's Aaron Falk series or Samantha Jayne Allen's Annie McIntyre series – follow Fisher as she solves crimes in the heartland.

Debut novelist Amy Pease's "Northwoods" introduces the complicated Eli North, a veteran whose experiences in Afghanistan have contributed to his alcoholism and the breakdown of his marriage.

North is a deputy in the local sheriff's department, a job he keeps primarily because his mother is the Sheriff.

The Northwoods refers to northern Wisconsin, where locals and wealthy vacationers enjoy the natural beauty. But when a teenager dies, North exposes the corruption underlying the idyllic setting, corruption that is tied to the pharmaceutical industry and the opioid epidemic.

I found North's personal struggles the most absorbing part of the narrative, and I hope Pease pursues his story in future books.

Finally, I crossed the pond for a bit of Celtic noir with "Kala" by Colin Walsh.

Set on the west coast of Ireland, "Kala" follows a group of people who became friends as teenagers but lost their way after Kala went missing.

It's 15 years later, and Kala's body has been found just as three of the estranged friends have reunited. Not all of them are keen to solve her murder, but events force them to confront the ring of enforcers that has controlled their community for decades.

Even though I didn't necessary like all of the main characters, I became invested in them because they were deeply affected in different ways by Kala's loss. The story didn't shy away from graphic violence, but it didn't feel gratuitous.

Fans of Irish heavyweights Tana French and Benjamin Black who are looking for their next gritty mystery may want to check out this debut novel.

Have you read any good books lately? Consider submitting a patron pick by emailing me at kwiley@cityofroseburg.org or filling out a form located on the library's website at www.roseburgpubliclibrary.org.

This Week's Library Events

Tuesday, February 20, 10 a.m. – Grab-and-go craft kits

Wednesday, February 21, 10:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Wednesday, February 21, 3 p.m. – STEAM program for elementary students

Thursday, February 22, 11:15 a.m. – Storytime with Aurora

Thursday, February 22, 4-5 p.m. – Seasonal kids crafts