

Homeland Short Guide

Homeland by John Jakes

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Characters

First Immigrant: "I have a relative in America."

Second Immigrant: "Everybody has a relative in America."

In *Homeland* (1993), once again John Jakes's meticulous research and his dedication to making history come alive is apparent. He manages to control a staggering amount of material and keeps it "lively and interesting." In addition to reaching new heights of "famous-name dropping," Jakes infuses his novel with hope and optimism as he sets the stage for another entry in the *Crown Family Chronicles*.

Jakes is interested in the turn-of-the-century assimilation of Europeans into American society and culture because it is a part of his own family history.

He has dedicated *Homeland* to his maternal grandfather, William Carl Retz (1849-1936), who emigrated from Germany in 1870 and lived in Ohio and Indiana in German settlements. Jakes attributes his writing skill to this grandfather who loved to tell stories.

Some of the episodes involving fictional characters in *Homeland* read as though they might really have happened, especially those stories relating to Pauli Kroner's voyage to America on the *Rheinland*.

Homeland is the first volume of Jakes's projected series about the lives and fortunes of the Kroner family, whose roots sprouted in Germany but who are transplanted to Chicago, "a rowdy prairie melting pot," where 160,000 German immigrants live. The novel covers events between 1890 and 1900, "the decade in which a naive young giant [America] flexed its muscles and began to understand and use its enormous strength."

In 1848, following a failed revolution in Germany against the land-owning aristocracy, the family has scattered.

Thomas Kroner's hotel and brewery is sold for debts, and he is executed for his role in the uprising. Son Albert and his wife die; Gerhard becomes a baker and remains in Aalen; teenaged Josef immigrates to America; and Lotte moves to Berlin to escape an abusive husband.

In 1891, orphaned thirteen-year-old Pauli Kroner lives with his Aunt Lotte in a slum apartment in Berlin. Aunt Lotte works as a prostitute, and Pauli washes dishes in a hotel. Lotte supports herself and Pauli until she realizes that her death is imminent from tuberculosis, so she sends Pauli to America to find his Uncle Josef and then commits suicide. Josef has changed the spelling of his name and established the *Crown Brewery* in Chicago. He is a prosperous civic leader. After a difficult voyage in steerage on the *Rheinland*, Pauli literally walks to Chicago, joins the family, and changes his name to Paul Crown.



The main character in *Homeland* is Pauli Kroner, aka Paul Crown and Dutch Crown. In America he finds that people are as predictable as they were in Berlin. Some are friendly and compassionate; others are cruel and exploitative. With a grateful heart, he becomes like a fourth child in the comfortable twenty-four-room Crown mansion with Uncle Joe and Aunt Lisa, Joe Junior, Fritz, and Carl.

Paul's attempt at public school is a failure because his teacher hates Germans. Eventually he works in the brewery. He meets the love of his life Julie Vanderhoff at an ice skating rink, but she is the daughter of wealthy Chicago parents, who disapprove of Paul and the Crowns.

Paul helps Joe Junior flee after Benno Strauss blows up the brewery. When he tries to elope with Julie, Uncle Joe tells him he is a disgrace to the Crown name and asks him to leave. Paul then earns his way on the streets of Chicago.

Never lazy, he drives a wagon for a laundry and picks up dirty linen from whore houses, the only available job.

Through his friendship with a still photographer, Wexford Rooney, Paul meets R. S. Shadow, a pioneer inventor of moving pictures. Paul becomes a skilled photographer, whom Jakes models after the real Billy Bitzer of *American Biograph*. Paul takes Shadow's lightweight camera to Cuba and photographs battle scenes of the Spanish American War. Wounded in the thick of battle, Paul continues to photograph Theodore Roosevelt leading the charge up San Juan Hill.

The second most important character in *Homeland* is Joe Crown, who demands his family's respect and obedience. Steady, moral, and traditional, he conceals his business worries and anxiety over Joe Junior's rebelliousness with formal, cold politeness. He disapproves of Lisa's new feminist interests, and when she takes Joe Junior's side, the rift widens. Joe's prosperity is the result of hard work and self-denial. A compassionate and respected employer, he cannot understand why Benno Strauss disrupts production at Crown Brewery and tries to organize a union.

Jakes's fictional Joe Crown serves on the committee with many real life Chicagoans who plan the World's Columbia Exposition. A Civil War veteran, Joe Crown reenlists during the Spanish American War and reconciles his quarrel with Paul in Cuba.

Perhaps because they reflect the times in which they live, Jakes's female characters lack spirit, except for Rose, who chooses her own destiny, and Aunt Willis, a minor character. Plump and maternal, Lisa skillfully manages the twenty-four-room Crown mansion, five servants, and three children. She adores Joe Crown, and allows him to dominate her life. Lisa never transcends the stereotypical role of a Hausfrau, even though she has interests in temperance and feminist causes.

Young Julie Vanderhoff is beautiful and has many admirers. During her love affair with Paul, her personality is vibrant. After Paul and Julie's attempted elopement, "Pork" Vanderhoff threatens to charge Paul with kidnapping unless Julie marries wealthy William Elstree. After Elstree brutally rapes her on the wedding night, Julie threatens



divorce, but a husband with money has the power to commit his wife to a mental institution, so Julie becomes as dull as her neurasthenic mother Nell and lives a lonely life in a mansion peopled with servants.

Rose uses her beauty and sexual attraction to escape her miserable life in Pullman. When she realizes that Joe Junior will never marry her, she goes to New York and has a series of lovers.

A pregnancy by William Elstree brings Rose's life to a tragic climax. He refuses to acknowledge the baby and beats her. A vengeful Rose kills Elstree, miscarries, and dies.

Joe Junior is the only Crown child whose character Jakes develops. He resents his father's control and refuses to show any filial respect. He is an idealistic youth who wants to do something to change the poverty and hopelessness of workers in Chicago. Inexplicably, he blames his father for being rich, perhaps because he feels guilty about his own privileged status. Unwilling to examine Joe Crown's history of hard work and heroic service during the Civil War, Joe Junior aligns himself with Benno Strauss, who has all of the dictatorial qualities that Joe Junior professes to hate. He condemns ownership of private property and tells Paul that he and Benno are on "the front line of the class war." Joe helps Benno commit an act of sabotage in the brewery that results in the deaths of two employees. He visits his lover Rose in Pullman, a company town for workers, but he will not marry a girl out of his social class.

Joe Senior exhibits extraordinary patience with a son who drops out of school and rebels when he must work in the brewery. After Joe Junior betrays his father's trust with Benno, he wanders from Chicago to California as an itinerant laborer and observes how people with immigrant backgrounds struggle to carve out a better life in America. He stays for a time with a Mennonite family in Kansas, where the Populist Party is strong. Eventually he returns home minus a foot, a broken but changed man.

If readers are familiar with the story of the prodigal son, they may better understand Joe Junior's character and the Crown family's welcome when he comes home. Even so, in contrast to Paul "Dutch" Crown's achievements, Joe Junior's life is wasted.

Jakes characterizes the villains as despicable men. Benno Strauss is a muscle-flexing bully who incites disgruntled workers to hatred and violence against their employers. His motive is self-aggrandizement and power, rather than a genuine interest in improving workers' conditions. He encourages Joe Junior to rebel against his father and to steal the key to a door of the brewery, which allows Benno to blow it up, killing Schildkraut, the biermeister, and a night watchman.

Envious Jimmy Daws works as a delivery boy and steals a valuable plate from the Crown home. Later in the story he works in the Levee district as a pimp and murders a girl who refuses to become a prostitute. At Shadow's studio, he becomes Paul's photography assistant. He meets a wealthy girl and has the opportunity to reform his life, but instead, he steals jewelry in Florida and murders a pawnbroker. In Cuba, Jimmy



kills a wounded soldier for his gold teeth and leaves him in a swamp to be eaten by land crabs. He dies on the beach, trying to escape capture and punishment.

William Elstree, the lecherous millionaire, allows his first wife to die without medical attention. Because he is rich and socially prominent, Julie's parents force her to marry Elstree. On the wedding night, Julie confesses that she is not a virgin, which enrages Elstree. He rapes her, but after that violence, Julie avoids physical contact with him. Rose becomes his mistress until she becomes pregnant and demands \$10,000 to support herself and her unborn baby. After Elstree beats her with his cane, she kills him and dies from a miscarriage.

A character whose role is ambiguous is a chain-smoking Russian, Mikhail Rhukov, whom Pauli meets in Berlin.

As Rhukov and Pauli watch Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show unload from the train, Pauli picks up a broken Kodak, which some American tourists have dropped. Rhukov suggests the possibility of photojournalism to the impressionable Paul. Inexplicably, Rhukov shows up several more times in the novel.



Social Concerns

A social barrier that European immigrants must overcome is language.

Pauli's ordeal with immigration officials on Ellis Island is an example.

Inability to communicate in fluent English also contributes to immigrants' joblessness and exploitation. Members of the Crown family speak English, but they retain their fluency in German.

Because Paul is intelligent, he soon communicates well enough, but his accent labels him as a foreigner. Immigrants cling to their cultural traditions of food preferences, Christmas celebrations, and suspicion of other ethnic groups. Some change the spelling of their names, as do the Crowns, and time and experience assimilates them into American society.

Another social concern throughout the book is that of the status of women, who must submit to the authority of their fathers, their brothers, or their husbands, or pay the price of rejection, deprivation, or social ostracism. In Germany, Lotte escapes her abusive husband but has no way to support herself, other than as a prostitute. In America, Aunt Ilsa becomes estranged from Uncle Joe because of her interest in women's suffrage and the temperance movement. Rose escapes poverty by becoming an actress-singer and the mistress of several men until a pregnancy ends in tragedy. Young Julie, whose parents arrange her wedding to an aging millionaire, must endure a loveless marriage.

In Chicago, alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, and crime are rampant. Joe Crown and Ilsa argue over whether his brewery contributes to the problem. Joe considers beer to be a nutritious food, but Ilsa blames alcohol for her father's ruined life. Bastardy, venereal diseases, prostitution, and moral degradation taint the lives of Jimmy and Rose.

Wexford Rooney succumbs to gambling fever and leaves Chicago. Pimps, racketeers, and political bosses run the "underside" of Chicago, while wealthy men with state and national political influence attempt to control commerce, banking, labor, and international affairs. Social conflicts simmer until riots boil over at home and war erupts in Cuba.

Medicines and skillful doctors are scarce, and nothing can be done about birth defects, degenerative illnesses, and injuries. Treatments are inadequate, and isolation not only prevents spread of infection but also serves to exclude the disabled from the rest of society. One of Paul's childhood friends in Germany has a degenerative muscle disease, so he is institutionalized. Aunt Lotte suffers from tuberculosis, which was epidemic in Europe and America. Paul barely escapes a cholera epidemic in Europe. Jewish friends he meets on the boat are returned to Poland because of trachoma, an eye disease. Paul survives an influenza epidemic. Julie's mother Nell suffers from



neurasthenia, a female complaint, which the doctor alleviates with heavy doses of laudanum. War wounds and yellow fever afflict the soldiers who fight in Cuba.

Another social concern in *Homeland* is the contrast between the "haves" and the "have nots." In the early 1900s, Chicago capitalists amass immense fortunes in meatpacking, breweries, railroads, and mercantile enterprises.

Fictional characters such as "Pork" Vanderhoff, William Elstree, and Joe Crown associate with real personalities such as Gus Swift, Adolphus Busch, Marshall Field, and George Pullman.

Although none of these men inherited aristocratic titles, they live in mansions on Prairie Avenue and maintain exclusive social ties, while other impoverished and envious Chicagoans live in slums like the Levee.

Scandals rock America: vote fraud, stock manipulation, land speculation, child labor, and economic instability caused by bi-metallism. Monopolistic companies pay starvation wages and offer no workers' compensation for injuries or retirement. Votes of Chicago aldermen, known as the "gray wolves" are up for sale. As a result, many workers and their families move west for free land, or they protest with riots and strikes. Agitators like Benno Strauss organize labor unions, and political bosses exert their power. Such a milieu is ripe for socialism, anarchy, the Rebellion, and the Pullman Strike.

In contrast, Joe Crown's entrepreneurial success and humane treatment of his employees at Crown Brewery show capitalism at its best. Joe competes by producing excellent beer. He does not fix or juggle prices to compete with other brewers; he does not allow his employees to drink on the job; he does not sell beer to taverns that allow prostitutes to solicit on the premises; and he does not hire children.

Throughout the novel, the American dream of opportunity for all grows dimmer and seems unattainable, but later it flares brightly again for Paul and other Americans who see technology and free enterprise as the wave of the future.



Techniques

Jakes's description of settings and characters and his realistic dialogue pull a reader into the story, establish characterization, and move the plot forward. His most effective scenes are from Paul's point of view because Paul, the photographer, sees people and events as if he is filming them with a camera.

Scenes aboard the Rheinland, as young Pauli sees them, contribute to the immigrant experience, a central theme of the novel. Many European ethnic groups are represented on the ship with different customs and religions, their clothes, the unpalatable food, the storm, seasickness, the smells of vomit, sweat, and feces, and always a few who prey upon the naive and weak.

Paul's confrontation with Mrs. Petigru, his school teacher, who "smells like mothballs," demonstrates with film-like realism the prejudice of some Americans toward German immigrants, even though fifteen percent of Chicago's population is German. "She was a plain, drab woman with a heavy bosom, graying hair in a severe bun, a slit for a mouth. And a tongue like a whip . . . "I'll be frank with you, Paul," the teacher said. "I did not want you brought into my class. I protested, and I was overruled . . . First, you are too old. Second, your uncle is a brewer, and he's German. I consider that a Satanic combination. I am a religious God-fearing woman. My husband Samuel is a lay preacher. We don't like godless Germans who profane the Sabbath with revelry and strong drink." After she whips the palms of his hands with a stick until they are bruised and bleeding, Uncle Joe allows Paul to drop out of school.

Jakes uses the same technique to describe scenes in Florida and battle scenes in Cuba. With his cameralike eye, "Dutch" Crown observes the Moorish architecture of the Tampa Bay Hotel where officers and journalists stay, prior to embarking for Cuba: Inside, a great long hallway stretched toward the rotunda, where tiny figures could be seen.

The hall was decorated with tall carved chairs, Chinese jars, small statues, miniature potted palms.

Doors to several parlors stood open. In one ladies were playing cards; in another, officers and a civilian were using writing desks.

The doors of these public rooms were rich mahogany, with inlaid satin panels.

Paul was so impressed by the rotunda, he snatched off his straw hat as if he'd entered a cathedral.

The rotunda was perhaps seventy feet across; finely carpeted, brilliantly lit with electrics. The walls were hung with tapestries, large paintings, mirrors of rose-tinted glass. Granite columns supported an open gallery on the second floor.



Jakes uses many German words and phrases to add flavor to the narration; he indicates meaning through context.

Until Paul begins to speak fluent English, his sentences are choppy and his vocabulary limited. In the Crown home, Ilsa prepares traditional German foods for Abendessen: "thick slices of Schwarzbrot . . . Huhnersuppe . . . Kompott . . . und Torten."

Realistic dialogue moves the plot swiftly and contrasts the conflict between tyranny and freedom in American society and paternalism and freedom within the family. In a previous scene, Joe has angrily struck his insolent son: Joe Junior appeared at Frustuck, so changed that Paul didn't recognize him for a second.

Uncle Joe was in shirtsleeves, finishing a cup of hot tea.

"Happy New Year, son, I — " He stopped. He stared.

Joe Junior had shaved off his beard. And his mustache.

"Why did you do that?"

"Because I woke up and decided I was tired of it."

"Is that the reason? Or is it because I complimented you? Get some food, sit down, we are going to have a talk about this."

"No, I don't think so, Papa, I don't have an appetite. I've got to catch a car."

As he started out, Uncle Joe called, "Where are you going?"

"To Pullman, to see Rosie."

"When will you be back?"

"I don't know."

... A moment later Paul heard the front door slam.

Uncle Joe looked at Paul suddenly. He was a different person.

Livid. His hand was shaking noticeably. When he picked up his teacup he rattled it against the saucer, spilling a little.

Paul cast his eyes down. A family fight, just as he'd feared. A crack appearing in the smooth shining surface of life in the Crown house.

The paperback version of *Homeland* has 1182 pages of small print. It is divided into ten parts with 120 chapters and an afterword. Jakes narrates the story from a third-person omniscient point of view. Chapter titles indicate which one of the fourteen significant characters is telling the story. In addition to these characters, Jakes mentions hundreds



of others, both fictional and real. His "namedropping" technique keeps readers aware of the historical period in which his fictional characters live.

Names of the two main characters change as the story progresses. Pauli Kroner becomes Paul Crown and then Dutch. Josef Kroner becomes Joe Crown and then the General. Although Paul has lived in a slum in Berlin, his point of view projects an innocence and optimistic trust in the future of America. However, his faith wavers somewhat after he is banished from the Crown home, and he thinks he will never see Julie again. Paul's point of view is like that of the camera that fascinates him. He unjudgmentally observes people and events and trusts them until their actions prove him wrong.

Jakes can better characterize by his omniscient perspective. Flashbacks allow Aunt Lotte, Uncle Joe, and Aunt Ilsa to relate the history of the Kroner and Schlottendorf families. His narration from the point of view of Paul and Joe Crown give insight into their motives and personalities. During the course of the novel, Paul changes from being a cautious German teenager to becoming a self-confident American male. Joe changes from being a benevolent patriarch, restricted by tradition, to becoming a tolerant husband and father who allows his family freedom to choose their own paths.

Themes

A major theme in *Homeland* is the immigrant experience. Paul Crown must endure and overcome many of the social ills produced by a nation in conflict. He experiences physical and emotional deprivation and self-doubt before he finally discovers that America is a land of opportunity for those with courage, intelligence, and access to innovative technology, like the new moving picture equipment. Paul photographs scenes of the Spanish American War with a movie camera and provides Americans access to history in the making. The final step to adopting America as his homeland is his eventual marriage to Julie.

Another theme in the book is the conflict between tyranny and individual freedom. The Crowns have left Germany to escape an aristocracy of wealthy landowners who control economic and social development. Although Uncle Joe Crown controls with benevolent paternalism his business and family, he stifles the lives of Ilsa, Joe Junior, Fritz, and eventually Paul.

Joe Crown has immigrated to America from Germany as a teenager; he works hard, fights in the Civil War to abolish slavery, establishes his own successful business, marries a woman he loves who gives him handsome children and maintains a comfortable home. His philosophy includes typical German traits of *Ordnung*, having organization and a plan; accuracy, producing a consistent product and accounting for cost and profit; and modernity, always trying new ideas and methods such as refrigeration and advertising.

In his office hangs the motto *Ohne Fleiss, Kein Preis*, without effort, no reward. Joe Crown believes that free enterprise is the key to economic success. He pays good wages and provides excellent working conditions for his employees but ignores the plight of less-fortunate employees of other men.

Unfortunately, Joe Crown is not willing to give to his wife and children the same freedom that brought his own success.

Whereas Joe Crown's paternalism is benevolent, other politicians and businessmen portrayed in *Homeland* tyrannize the laborers who work for them.

Political corruption and monopolies that involve ownership of developing industries such as oil, banking, railroads, and steel manufacture, threaten democracy in the United States.

Socialist Eugene Debs organizes the American Railway Union in an attempt to support workers. However, the movement is not successful because many unemployed men are willing to take the places of the union members.

Debs is arrested and jailed.



Jakes uses the Haymarket Riot and the Pullman Strike to illustrate the desperation of workers. Several episodes in *Homeland* involve George Pullman, who pays employees low wages, requires them to sign a loyalty oath, requires them to live in Pullman, a company town, and to buy from the company store.

But tyranny exists among labor leaders, too. Benno Strauss, a union agitator, advocates anarchy and sabotage and forces his will upon workers with threats of physical violence and blackmail. He encourages Joe Junior to rebel against his father and causes the deaths of innocent people.



Key Questions

Jakes's novel will serve as a catalyst for further research. In the first place, he mentions enough famous people and events to pique the curiosity of any reader. Then, Jakes shows that power without checks and balances limit individual freedom. Most of the conflicts prevalent at the turn of the Century have not been resolved today, for instance, the immigrant experience, economic conflicts between capitalism and socialism, social issues that concern the rights of women, children, and employees, family relationships, the role of government in business, aggression of foreign powers, and regulation of developing technology. Discussion of the issues in *Homeland* will certainly be relevant to issues today.

1. Is Jakes's habit of dropping the names of real persons, places, and events without developing much explanation a distraction or an asset to a reader? Give positive or negative examples.
2. Socialism began with Eugene V. Debs and the labor movement in the United States. Today many Americans say that they oppose paternalistic government, yet elected officials have adopted many socialistic programs to alleviate the social problems that Jakes portrays in *Homeland*. To what extent have programs such as Social Security, Aid to Dependent Children, Medicare, and Worker's Compensation laws benefitted society? To what extent do they encroach upon the freedom and rights of the individual?
3. In 1900, Frances Willard's temperance movement opposed manufacture of beer and whiskey. How does this issue relate to the lives of Joe Crown, Ilsa, and Rose? Is the manufacture and consumption of alcohol still a problem in the United States? Why? Why not?
4. How has the double standard of sexual behavior for men and women changed since 1900?
5. Psychologists say that conflict between parents and a child is necessary in order for a child to become an individual, rather than an extension of a parent. Why do Joe Crown and Joe Junior engage in such intense conflict?

Does Joe Junior attain autonomy? Explain.

6. In literature, the term epiphany refers to a gradual change in a character which proceeds from ignorance and innocence to knowledge and experience. How innocent is Pauli Kroner in the ways of the world at the beginning of the story? In which areas does he increase his knowledge and experience during the rising action of the novel?

Trace the steps which lead to Paul's epiphany.

7. Which characters in the novel do you identify with? Why?
8. Discuss which episode in the book is an example of Jakes's best writing.



Use the following criteria for discussion: a. description of setting, b. characterization (explication, description, dialogue, behavior), c. degree of tension in conflict, d. special techniques.

9. If you were writing a continuation of the Crown Family saga, which major characters would you develop during a time span between 1900 and 1920?

Which historical figures, places, and events would you include as a backdrop for the fictional plot? Since the immigrant experience will no longer be a major theme, what will be the theme of your projected novel? What social concerns will you include?

10. Discuss the suitability of Homeland for a movie or television series.

Which episodes are essential? Which episodes would be difficult to film and probably would be omitted? Suggest actors and actresses who might portray Paul, Joe Crown, Ilsa, Joe Junior, Julie, and others.

Literary Precedents

Jakes's novels involve prodigious research. In writing *Homeland*, he worked with historians, librarians, and genealogists, and with museum directors at Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, the University of South Carolina, Grinnell College, the Buffalo Bill Museum, the George Eastman Museum, the Military Museum at West Point, Katz Beer Institute, and Chicago Historical Bookworks. Sometimes his "name-dropping" of important people, places, and events takes on the aspect of not wanting to omit a single piece of research data, rather than contributing to the plot of the novel.

Precedents for portraying the immigrant experience and their assimilation into the "melting pot" of a American culture are numerous.

In 1782 French immigrant Michel Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur wrote a collection of essays entitled *Letters from an American Farmer*. These essays praised the quality of rural life in colonial America. In one essay entitled "What Is an American?" he wrote, "Here, individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men." European immigrants left oppression, hunger, ignorance, and poverty behind to pursue "life, liberty, and happiness" in North America. From Crevecoeur's perspective, they blended their cultures into a new identity, dedicated to the goals of freedom and equality.

Today, the metaphor of an American "melting pot" has been replaced by a "tossed salad" in which races and cultures, including those not of European ancestry, retain their individuality under the protection of the United States Constitution.

In 1909, Israel Zangwill named his Broadway play *The Melting Pot*, which dramatized the conflict of Jewish separatism and Russian anti-Semitism. The star of the play spoke the lines, "America is God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races are melting and reforming. . . ." Eight years later, Zangwill refuted his idealistic theme and became an ardent Zionist.

Willa Gather's novels about Scandinavian, German, and French immigrants in Nebraska indicate the strength and courage it took to leave Europe in order to claim land on the vast American prairie. *My Antonia* (1918) and *O Pioneers!* (1913) are stories of women and their immigrant families who overcome great obstacles and become the forbears of generations of Americans. One of the major themes in Cather's books is that people who work to survive in isolated environments are deprived of soul-satisfying creativity.

They have no time for music, art, even love, as they carve out their place on the American landscape.

In 1948, Carl Sandburg published *Remembrance Rock* (1948), a saga of an American family from 1607 to 1948.

Forbears of the Windom family emigrate from England to North America on the *Mayflower*. Future generations survive social conflicts and wars for 350 years. At



Remembrance Rock the family looks at their deceased grandfather's mementoes and grasps the meaning of their historical struggle for democracy and freedom. Their grandmother offers a toast, "To the storms to come and the stars coming after the storm."

More recently in 1986, Louise Erdrich's *The Beet Queen* is a novel about descendants of German immigrants.

Mary and Karl are the second family of wealthy Minnesota businessman Herr Ober and their mother Adelaide, his mistress. When he dies unexpectedly, his legal wife inherits his property and leaves Adelaide, Mary, Karl, and the new baby penniless. Adelaide puts the children on a train for Aunt Fritze's in Argus, North Dakota, and runs off with a barnstorming airplane pilot. The novel portrays the lives of these abandoned children and their assimilation into the prairie society, where the agricultural economy runs on raising livestock and cultivation of sugar beets. In the novel, Erdrich blends the GermanAmerican culture with the Native American culture.

Related Titles

Homeland begins where The Kent Family Chronicles ends in 1891. A new set of characters, the Crown family, sets the tone of a projected twentiethcentury history saga. Jakes's goal is "to tell what really happened," rather than to slant history to fit a certain interpretation.



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