

'Salt to the Sea' author to visit Fox Cities Reads

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FULL TEXT

The Fox Cities Book Festival launched the 12th annual Fox Cities Reads last month, featuring "Salt to the Sea" by Ruta Sepetys.

Since 2007, the public libraries of the Fox Cities —Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, Kimberly-Little Chute, and Kaukauna —have selected a title with the goal of building a greater sense of community and promoting literacy.

"Salt to the Sea" takes place in 1945 during World War II as the war is drawing to a close in East Prussia and refugees are desperate to make it out. The story is told in alternating points of view, among them Joana, Emilia, Florian and Alfred, whose paths are forced together on their route to the ship that they hope will provide them with the freedom they deserve.

Readers follow the characters as they struggle to their goal, the ocean carrier called Wilhelm Gustloff, which is not the salvation that they had hoped it to be. School Library Journal gave the title a starred review, stating, "Sepetys's exploration of this little-known piece of history will leave readers weeping."

Participating in the community read is as easy as 1-2-3. First, find a copy of the book and start reading! There are many ways to read "Salt to the Sea" —copies of the book are available at public libraries throughout the Fox Cities in regular and large print, as a book on CD, and as a downloadable ebook and audiobook. Visit your local library to get a copy. Or support your local book store.

Second, ahead of the author's appearances find an opportunity to discuss this book with others. Reading is a tremendous way to broaden our perspective and deepen our sense of empathy for others.

You can take that to the next level by discussing what you've read with people whose experiences and biases are different than your own. "Salt to the Sea" is a "crossover" title, meaning that it's classified as suitable for both young adults and adults, making this a great opportunity to share the experience with the high school students in your life. Create your own informal group with friends, neighbors, family or coworkers, or participate in one of the scheduled discussions, a full schedule of which is available online.

Third, attend one of the free author appearances. Ruta Sepetys will publicly present at three locations around the Fox Valley. The public is encouraged to attend one of her presentations: 6:30 p.m. April 12 at Appleton North High School; 10 a.m. April 13 at Appleton Public Library; or 12:45 p.m. April 12 at Kaukauna High School, where she will address students and the public.

Thomas A. Lyons Fine Books and The Reader's Loft will sell Sepetys's books, and she will sign copies following her presentations.

Join us for the annual community read and let's read, think, talk, listen, and grow together. More information about the Fox Cities Reads and the Fox Cities Book Festival are available at www.foxcitiesbookfestival.org and by following the event on Facebook at [foxcitiesbookfestival](https://www.facebook.com/foxcitiesbookfestival).

Joe Bongers is a supervisor at the Elisha D. Smith Public Library in Menasha. Librarians from Fox Cities libraries write a monthly column about goings-on at the libraries.

Joe Bongers

Guest columnist

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Courtesy of Menasha Public Library

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