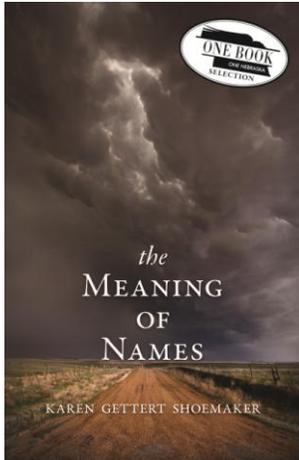




News from

Red Hen Press

P.O. Box 40820 Pasadena, CA 91114 (626) 356-4760 fax: (626) 356-9974 redhen.org



*The Meaning of Names*

A Novel by

Karen Gettert Shoemaker

ISBN 978-1-59709-959-2

Binding: Tradepaper

Size: 5.5 x 8.5; Pages: 232

Price: US \$15.95

Pub Date: March 1, 2014



Karen Gettert Shoemaker

 **REDHEN PRESS**

For more information contact:

Alisa Trager

Marketing Associate

marketing@redhen.org

Distributed to the book trade by:

Chicago Distribution Center

(800) 621-2736

orders@press.uchicago.edu

chicagodistributioncenter.org

# *The Meaning of Names*

A NOVEL BY

Karen Gettert Shoemaker

Winner: One Book One Nebraska 2016 Selection

Winner: Omaha Reads 2014 Selection

---

A consuming tale of one family's confrontation with the violence and hatred that swept across America during the First Great War for Peace.

---

Stuart, Nebraska is a long way from the battlefields of Western Europe, but it is not immune to the horrors of the First Great War for Peace. Like all communities, it has lost sons and daughters to the fighting, with many more giving themselves over to the hatred only war can engender.

Set in 1918 in the farm country at the heart of America, *The Meaning of Names* is the story of an ordinary woman trying to raise a family during extraordinary times. Estranged from her parents because she married against their will, confronted with violence and prejudice against her people, and caught up in the midst of the worst plague the world has ever seen, Gerda Vogel, an American of German descent, must find the strength to keep her family safe from the effects of a war that threatens to consume the whole world.

## **Praise for *The Meaning of Names***

"Shoemaker writes with even, rhythmic, beautifully colored prose... a book of big themes, true history and serious art."

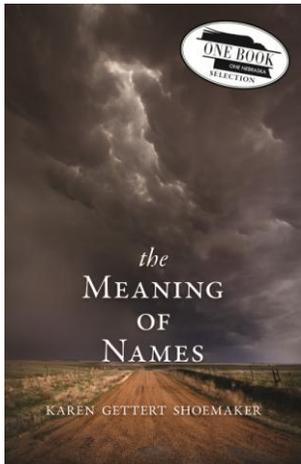
—*Lincoln Journal Star*

"*The Meaning of Names* is a hauntingly tender story set in Nebraska during World War I, a time when nationalism led to prejudice against German-Americans, a time when the influenza pandemic of 1918 killed millions. Against this grim backdrop, Karen Gettert Shoemaker weaves an enduring story of faith, family, and love. This is a wonderful debut novel, and Gerda Vogel is a character I'll remember always."

—Lee Martin, author of *The Bright Forever: A Novel*

## **Biographical Note**

Karen Gettert Shoemaker is the author of *Night Sounds and Other Stories* (Dufour, 2002) and a novel, *The Meaning of Names*. Awards for her writing include a Nebraska Press Association Award for Feature Writing, two Independent Artist Fellowship Awards from the Nebraska Arts Council, and a Nebraska Book Award for Short Fiction. Her work has been published in a variety of newspapers and journals, including *The London Independent*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Kalliope*, and *The South Dakota Review*, and anthologized in *A Different Plain: Contemporary Nebraska Fiction Writers*, *Times of Sorrow/Times of Grace*, *An Untidy Season*, and *Nebraska Presence: An Anthology of Poetry*. She is a faculty mentor with the University of Nebraska's MFA in Writing Program. She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she and her husband own and operate Shoemaker's Truck Stop and Travel Center.



*The Meaning of Names*

A Novel by

Karen Gettert Shoemaker

ISBN 978-1-59709-959-2

Binding: Tradepaper

Size: 5.5 x 8.5; Pages: 232

Price: US \$15.95

Pub Date: March 1, 2014



Karen Gettert Shoemaker



For more information contact:

Alisa Trager

Marketing Associate

marketing@redhen.org

Distributed to the book trade by:

Chicago Distribution Center

(800) 621-2736

orders@press.uchicago.edu

chicagodistributioncenter.org

### More Praise for *The Meaning of Names*

“Suddenly, ‘liberty cabbage’ replaces ‘sauerkraut’ on food menus, job advertisements warn ‘no krauts need apply,’ and neighbors demand the nearby university stop teaching courses in ‘that vile language....’ Shoemaker (*Night Sounds and Other Stories*) crafts eminently realistic characters; her descriptions of unreasonable fear and hatred are particularly effective.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Complicated American history mixes with the promise of life and the fear of human coping in Karen Gettert Shoemaker’s delightfully rich novel.... Both a historical fiction of the plains and a tapestry of human emotion, *The Meaning of Names* comes forth with purpose, showing promise to readers native to Nebraska and, plainly, to anyone interested in a good read.”

—*L Magazine*

“*The Meaning of Names*... explores exactly that – what message does a simple name convey? How is that meaning twisted during times of trial? Shoemaker presents readers with a simple, realistic cast of characters, a heart-rending story of endurance, and reminds us that both prejudice and forgiveness take many forms.”

—*Historical Novel Society*

“*The Meaning of Names* is a major addition to the literary canon of the Great Plains, contributing deeply to our understanding of the immigrant experience during the years of WWI when the 100% American campaign pitted Americans against one another. In the midst of this fraught political moment, a small cast of characters in Stuart, Nebraska quietly plays out their communal and familial roles until they’re brought together in a dramatic struggle for life. *The Meaning of Names* is a breathtaking story that illuminates the bonds that hold us together and the fears that tear us apart, while spotlighting the endurance and love of one woman and her family.”

—Ladette Randolph, editor of *Ploughshares*, author of *Haven’s Wake*, *A Sandhills Ballad*, and *This Is Not the Tropics*

“Karen Gettert Shoemaker’s rich historical novel is reminiscent of the fiction of Willa Cather and every bit as memorable. Shoemaker captures the hearts and souls of her characters in intricate, poetic detail even as she tells a story of the lives rent by suspicion and wartime prejudice. Against the dramatic skies of the Great Plains, and the beauty of the landscape, unfolds a tale of faith and science, love and death.”

—Timothy Schaffert, author of *The Swan Gondola*

“In *The Meaning of Names*, we find the Vogels struggling to get by on their Nebraska farm in the midst of the First World War, rising anti-German sentiment in town, and a fierce and virulent flu epidemic. Gerda and Fritz, their children, Dr. Gannoway and his wife Miranda, their friends the Baums, and Father Jungels—these characters and their little town of Stuart, Nebraska, are so real, so pulsing with passion and care, that I hated to have to leave them behind. Reminiscent of Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*, Shoemaker’s novel is an essential read for anyone who cares about the Midwest, about its demanding landscape, its rich and tragic history, and its remarkable, breathtaking beauty.”

—Amy Hassinger, author of *The Priest’s Madonna* and *Nina: Adolescence*