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# Somewhere To Belong: Daughters Of Amana, Book 1



## Synopsis

Critically acclaimed author Judith Miller enthralls millions with her CBA best-selling historical novels. It's 1877, and Johanna Ilg has lived her entire life in Main Amana, Iowa—one of seven villages inhabited by devout Christians who believe in a simple, cooperative life of service to God. But when she discovers a troubling secret, the world she thought she knew is shattered.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Living in Iowa, and having visited the Amana Colonies several times, I was easily drawn to this book. I felt a connection to each character and the challenges they presented. Often the people at Amana are confused with the Amish. They are not the same. This book helps understand this. I found the book difficult to put down, as I was not always able to predict what the characters would do. I found myself wondering what I would have chosen, had I been the different characters in the book. I found this an enjoyable and thought-provoking read for a break from the routines of life.

I love books that surprise me. :o) This book managed to encompass so many elements at once. It is a coming-of-age story. One of the girls is a young woman, the other a teenager and both grow more into their "skin" as the story progresses. Thrown together because Berta needed someone responsible to train her, neither girl could foresee how much they would need each other for the trials ahead of them or how close they would become. It is also a story of family ~ what that means and why it is important. It examines how those bonds hold us together, what can break them apart,

and if they can be mended again. I can't think of a more important topic. And it's a story of romance (gotta have that) and what makes that a real love or not and how to tell. And of course the love God has for all of us. The author pulls all of this off because she invests so much in the characters of Johanna and Berta. Although on the surface the girls may seem near opposites, neither girl is one dimensional and both are easy to love. Johanna is the obedient, responsible daughter. However she sneaks fashion magazines from her brother (who lives in Chicago) in from the outside and hides them in her room and she longs to visit the world outside her village borders. Berta rarely thinks beyond her next opportunity for fun and despises anything resembling work. When told she can't wear her pink skirt to work in the kitchen, she puts it on underneath the plain skirt so she can still wear it without anyone knowing (or so she plans). She does try to make others happy and cares about people's feelings far more than even she's willing to admit. She has a natural gift for cheering people up as well. Both face adversity, mystery, and being lied to by people they have trusted. Both really want to know where they fit in. How they come through the journey is something to behold. Judith Miller has done an excellent job with this book.[...]

Books about the Amish seem to be the current trend in the Christian market. Although not strictly about the Amish, *Somewhere to Belong* fits right in. The setting is a strict religious community in Iowa in the nineteenth century. The twist is that it is communal and the legalism overshadows the love. Two girls struggle with their place in this community. Johanna has been raised in the Amana communities, and loves it. But she is curious about the outside world where her brother has fled, and wants to visit Chicago, just once. Berta was raised in Chicago by her rich parents who have decided to simplify their lives by moving to the Amana communities. She hates it. The two girls are thrown together because Johanna is expected to teach Berta how to behave. As they get to know each other, they begin to share their inner lives. They also discover that each set of parents is hiding something from their daughters. Although the book is written well, and Miller brings the Amana communities to life, I found that I didn't care a lot about the girls and what happened to them. The pace is slow, Berta is not only predictable, her rebellion is extreme, and the people they both encounter are harsh and unloving. Even the mystery of the parents' secrets wasn't enough to hold my interest. Perhaps an adolescent reader would find it more compelling. Pros: Good depiction of an alternative lifestyle, with a little mystery to keep the plot moving. Cons: Slow start with characters that are hard to care about. The original review was posted on Pix-n-Pens [...]

**MY OPINION** Miller has yet again woven a story that once you pick up her book, you're hooked. Her

history is impeccably researched, her story extremely well-written, and her descriptions make you feel as if the book is literally unfolding before your very eyes and you're there. Even if historical fiction is not the first shelf you seek out at the bookstore, you will enjoy this book. Don't think for a moment that a story about a place and time of a plain people with a simple lifestyle, routine ways, cooperative living, and faithful service to God will be less than exciting or predictable. Au contraire! Get ready for some wonderful "I did NOT see that coming" moments. Somewhere to Belong is the first in Judy's Daughters of Amana series and I can't wait to read the second. In the meantime, get your hands on this book and be prepared to sit a spell because you will be enthralled.

**ABOUT THE BOOK** Despite living her entire twenty-one years in Main Amana, Johanna Ilg has always been intrigued by and wanted to see the outside world. However, she has continued to stay in Amana believing that Amana is where she must belong. That is, until a secret is revealed that changes everything about the world she thought she knew. Where does she truly belong? She must confront her family and find out the answers to her questions. Will she break her mother's heart to seek these answers? Intertwined, is a story of the newest member of Main Amana, Berta Schumacher, a worldly girl with parents who desire a simpler life in Amana, for reasons she can't fathom. Berta does not share this desire to live such a life as her family and she makes that clear as she openly rebels against the ways of Amana and its people. Will her heart ever soften to the ways of these plain people or will she continue to live a life of rebellion and discontent?

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