



***The All-American*
by Susie Finkbeiner**

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***Batter Up for a Summer of Baseball and
Life-Changing Adventures***

“Finkbeiner showcases beautifully told stories both real and imagined. She creates a magical blend of whimsy and reality that underscores the devotion of a marriage, family loyalty, and connection to one’s community.”

—***Booklist*** on *Stories That Bind Us*

Ada, Mich.—Michigan Notable Book Award–winning author Susie Finkbeiner takes readers back to the complex decade of the 1950s in the American Midwest. It was a time of baseball and apple pie—and also a time of questioning the status quo. Join Finkbeiner for a summer of chasing down dreams, seeking out the good, and discovering the place you truly belong in *The All-American*.

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Sixteen-year-old Bertha Harding is not like other girls. She isn’t interested in getting married, having babies, and being a homemaker. She is far more interested in joining the neighborhood boys in a fast-paced game of baseball.

Her eleven-year-old sister, Flossie, on the other hand, wants nothing more than to fit in with the girls in her class. But, try as she might, she can’t seem to make a single friend other than those she finds in her books. It’s in those books that she finds hope for her own happily-ever-after.

But every life has a few strikes against it. When their father is accused of being part of the Communist party, life comes crashing down around them. It is clear they can no longer stay in their hometown, where rumors about the Harding family run rampant, so they escape to the small town of Bear Run, Michigan.

It’s there where Bertha grows even more determined to play for the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, even trying out for the Workington Sweet Peas. And it’s in Bear Run where Flossie learns to be a friend and to find the good in everything.

Join Finkbeiner on an exciting journey you will never forget in *The All-American*.

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About the Author

Susie Finkbeiner is the CBA bestselling author of *All Manner of Things*, which was selected as a 2020 Michigan Notable Book, as well as *Stories That Bind Us*, *The Nature of Small Birds*, and other novels. Susie and her husband have three children and live in West Michigan. Learn more at www.susiefinkbeiner.com.

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PRAISE for Susie Finkbeiner's Novels

"Finkbeiner has deftly written this narrative of ordinary people finding their way. Readers looking for realist family stories with a subtle thread of faith will want to read Finkbeiner's latest."

—**Library Journal**, starred review of *The Nature of Small Birds*

"Finkbeiner examines loss and the solidarity of family in this stirring tale. Readers of historical inspirations will enjoy this gratifying story."

—**Publishers Weekly** on *Stories That Bind Us*

"*Stories That Bind Us* will keep you turning the pages to watch Susie Finkbeiner weave her magic and show us life is full of highs and lows but it is always worth it. A really beautiful story."

—**Fresh Fiction** on *Stories That Bind Us*

"*Stories That Bind Us* is a comforting, beautiful work of art that invites us to consider our own narratives as something worth telling as well."

—**Life Is Story** on *Stories That Bind Us*

"Finkbeiner creates a work that is beautifully poetic and unapologetically frank."

—**Booklist**, starred review of *All Manner of Things*

"This is a must-have for historical fiction fans and book clubs. Finkbeiner joins authors Valerie Fraser Luesse and Lauren K. Denton in tackling tough topics with realistic characters and a gentle touch."

—**Library Journal**, starred review of *All Manner of Things*

"An inherently riveting read, *All Manner of Things* clearly showcases author Susie Finkbeiner's natural gift as a novelist for narrative-driven storytelling and who is able to make her characters come alive in the mind's eye of her readers."

—**Midwest Book Reviews** on *All Manner of Things*



Sample Interview Questions for Susie Finkbeiner *The All-American*

Can you please provide a brief summary of your new novel, *The All-American*?

The All-American is a coming of age story featuring sisters Bertha and Flossie as they navigate the complexity of what it means to be American in 1950s Michigan.

Why did you choose to write a book about baseball?

While I didn't set out to write a book about baseball, I did want to write a story about a girl who plays the game. I've long been a fan of women's sports—I was a student athlete from third grade through most of high school—and always had a special place in my heart for the ladies of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. Had it not been for their years blazing the trail in professional sports, I may not have had the opportunities to compete.

Can you please tell readers about when the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was formed and why it was formed? How long did this league last?

The AAGPBL's first season was 1943 and was formed to fill the gap left when many male professional baseball players enlisted in the military during the American involvement in World War II. The league folded in 1954 after several years of waning interest.

Can you please describe Bertha Harding? How is she different from other girls her age?

Bertha is sixteen and not interested in a life of domestic bliss, unlike many of the girls in her home economics class. She isn't opposed to married life. She just wants to live a little first. She plays ball with the neighborhood boys and holds her own—if not outperforming them.

Can you describe Flossie Harding?

Flossie is a firecracker! She's maybe a little smarter than she needs to be (and knows it), she's read *Anne of Green Gables* until she has most of the story memorized, and she dreams of meeting her own Gilbert Blythe someday. But most of all she wants to fit in, to look and act and be just like all the other girls. She just can't seem to do it.

Can you give readers a hint of what takes place that dramatically affects Bertha and Flossie's futures?

In 1952 the House Un-American Activities Committee held trials in Detroit to try and sniff out, prosecute, and end Communism in Michigan. During these hearings, those accused of being tied to the Communist Party were encouraged to "name names," essentially accusing others of the same in order to receive a reduced sentence in prison. William Harding—Bertha and Flossie's father and well-known American author—was one of those accused.

***The All-American* is much more than a novel about baseball. It not only captures the idea of chasing your dreams but it also looks at discovering the place you truly belong. Can you provide some insight on how this plays out in Bertha's and Flossie's lives?**

Something that all of my novels work to discover is what it means to belong. In past books I've written about what it means to be family, the meaning of home, and the like. In this book I wanted to ponder what it means to be an American, who gets to claim that title, and what it looks like when others try to dislodge that identity from another person.

With Bertha's portion of the story, it's looking at the 1950s ideal of the All-American housewife as opposed to a girl who tosses around baseballs with the boy next door. In Flossie's bit we see the way in which the American Dream is harder to reach for some than others—impossible, even, for some—and what happens when a story doesn't have a happy ending.

It's really a story about finding one's place even in the midst of disappointment and realizing the good that's waiting there.

Most of your books are set in Michigan. What do you love most about writing books set in your home state?

I have always lived in Michigan. I have no plans to move from here. There's just too much to love. Michigan is equal parts wild and civilized, modern and historic. There are lakes EVERYWHERE. We have a unique way of communicating and behaving toward others. We have Yoopers (for those not in Michigan, those are the folks who dwell in the Upper Peninsula, aka God's Country). The weather provides all the drama, all the plot that any novelist could ever dream of.

But, mostly, it's the people who call themselves Michiganders that are a joy to write. There's just something a little extra special about the people who live in this state.

Many of your novels draw readers back to the 1950s and 1960s. Why do you love this time period so much?

I guess I'm intrigued by mid-twentieth century history. There was so much change socially, economically, artistically. So much happened. It's a happening era, and I love learning as much about it as I can.

What do you hope readers will gain from reading *The All-American*?

I would love for readers to come away with a sense of hope that, no matter the ways life gets difficult or painful, there is good to be found and that God is faithful even when our hearts are broken.

How can readers connect with you?

I'm happy to connect with readers on my Facebook author page, Instagram, or TikTok. They can also head over to www.susiefinkbeiner.com to sign up for my email newsletter.