



# **Ingathering: The Complete People Stories of Zenna Henderson**

*Zenna Henderson , Priscilla Olson (Introduction)*

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A collection of all of Henderson's stories of the People (interstellar refugees), including one "Michal Without," which is published here for the first time. Cover art by Elizabeth Finney.

## Ingathering: The Complete People Stories of Zenna Henderson Details

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# From Reader Review Ingathering: The Complete People Stories of Zenna Henderson for online ebook

**Michael Battaglia says**

One thing nice about volumes like these is they do us a bit of a service by highlighting authors and stories that have fallen by the wayside over the decades. While a good chunk of the pulp SF churned out during the 40s, 50s and 60s probably deserves to stay there and could be charmingly called "of its time" there are plenty of worthy side paths of authors who kind of diverged from the main historical narrative of SF and produced quite a bit of memorable work that just simply isn't widely remembered today, especially when the author is of middling popularity and dies before they were able to see a resurgence in their work.

Zenna Henderson, despite having a fantastically science-fictional first name, is unfortunately one of those people. One of the few women SF writer during the 50s and 60s that wrote under her own name and not as "Bob Manlyman" or something that would fool people into not assuming that the story was about cooking or cleaning or shopping or whatever it is that women were probably perceived as normally writing about, she had a pretty decent career producing both the "People" stories (which are all collected here) and a fair number of other tales that are probably work collecting in full some day. Judging by the number of stories both in this volume and the other collection, she got fairly steady work (and apparently also was a teacher, which probably explains why every other story features a teacher of some kind) and was around to see an adaptation of some of those "People" stories made into a TV movie starring William Shatner (and produced by Francis Ford Coppola!). But she sadly passed away in 1983 and while she was probably never a household name to begin with, not being around for thirty years tends to make your name fall into obscurity.

That's why books like these are important. Collecting every "People" story she ever wrote, it makes a case for her as one of SF's most distinctive voices, telling stories that are weird at the edges despite taking place mostly in the Southwest, that are gentle without being mawkishly sentimental and stringing together a generational saga of sorts without forcing us to create a chart to follow it. Like life, you sort of dip in and out to see what the old gang is up to.

The basic setup for the People stories is fairly simple and variations of it were rampant in probably dozens of DC Comics' "imaginary" Superman stories where Krypton explodes but entire cities manage to get off the planet and land on earth, where they have powers beyond that of mortal men. However, instead of wearing ridiculous costumes and fighting crime, if you imagine they settled down in a canyon somewhere and eked out a peaceful existence, you have pretty much the basis for every People story. Which sounds like it could be as much fun as listening to someone drawl out an audio documentary of farming that focuses on a minute by minute discussion of wheat growing, but she's actually got quite a bit going on here, depicting a humanoid species fleeing the destruction of their home and landing on various parts of Earth. Most of them seem to have various powers, either floating or telepathy or more involved abilities but they're never seen using them to lord over other people, generally either being helpful or simply finding ways to make their own lives easier.

Most of the original stories were published in two volumes and Henderson wrote a linking story for each volume that places the tales more in context. The linking story for the first set, called "Lea" is actually quite effective as both a story and a device . . . so despondent that she attempts suicide, Lea is rescued by one of the People and brought to their homestead where she meets the whole crew and hears stories about them. Sometimes Lea's "woe is me" can get grating but overall its a way to show how the gentleness of the People helps her find her way back to herself and its sincerity is actually quite moving.

The same could be said for the stories themselves. Acting mostly as introductory tales, each one basically highlights one of the main characters, most often depicting how they found the main group and is good primer for both the characters and the setting, especially as they tend to make multiple appearances over the course of the stories, often as cameos. She's quite good at characterization and has a definite feel for what it's like to be different, with her prose sometimes the only thing saving the tale from turning into an Afterschool Special about being nice to others. Most of the stories follow a very similar set of templates, where a character has to either discover the main group or is confused about how their abilities make them different and must survive until the main group finds them. Don't get me wrong, it's not all holding hands, "Pottage" in particular has some starkly harsh scenes as a teacher has to mold her students in a town that has taken "Footloose" one step too far and outlawed abnormality as well as fun, with the repressed memories of the students coming across as people who have been honestly traumatized and are unable to express how deeply they've been affected. Or "Wilderness" where a sheriff has to be talked down from shooting a child whose only crime is unable to cope with being different. Or Bethie's scenes in "Gilead" where she picks up the pain of everyone around her like a radio receiver gone completely out of control. Yes, a lot of these stories have happy endings and a deep spiritual component (there's a lot of the talk from the People about the Presence and while their religion is never really detailed, acknowledgement of it is clearly a large part of their lives . . . Henderson herself seems to have been a Mormon for a while and later a Methodist) but they don't have any qualms depicting how uncomfortable it can be to live in a world where you aren't understood and that you can't figure out how to interface with. Even when you know that the People are going to swoop in and save the day it still feels like an earned triumph, that someone has suffered long enough to deserve a break and a respite.

The second set tends to deal more with the People that existed before the main group that we meet (in that group's case a lot of the original crew members who came from their homeworld are either very old or dead) and while the linking story is pretty pointless, not having the hook of bringing a depressed person out of her shell like "Lea" did, the stories themselves maintain the same level of quality and actually vary the template slightly. We get one story that actually takes place during the days before they all bail ("Deluge", interesting in how un-SF it feels despite everyone trying to learn how to build spaceships to get the heck out of Dodge before their world becomes a world-shaped collection of pulverized dust) and a few others from the time period just after they landed on Earth in the late 1800s. A number of the stories have to deal with people living in harsh frontier times and having a rough time of it before learning to trust their weird floating neighbors ("Tell Us a Story", with a surprisingly brutal out of left field death of a child) or coming into actual conflict with our friendly group of aliens ("That Boy" featuring a group of religion settlers that might need to learn to vary the playbook slightly) due to humanity's evergreen ability to misunderstand everything it comes into contact with. She makes their abilities weirder, or uses them in unusual ways (the previously unpublished "Michal Without" which takes place in a hospital where people are recovering and at times struck me as a gentler version of Dennis Potter's "Singing Detective" serial, at least all the medical ward scenes). In stories like "The Indelible Kind" she's even able to pull off a balancing act of going with her usual teacher angle but adding honest to goodness scenes of SF with a space rescue although stuff like "Katie-Mary's Trip" strikes me as Henderson's attempt to deal with hippies and the counterculture contrasted against her friendly aliens and it . . . seems a bit muddled.

But despite a lot of the stories having the same essential format, the quality is surprisingly consistent. Henderson makes like the best jazz musicians and strives to find as many variations as she can in what could be a limited setting, taking stories that could come across as cookie cutter and sledgehammer subtle and instead giving us a series that is honestly gentle and optimistic in a way that stories have a lot of trouble conveying these days (to me it seems a combination between utter sincerity and a pretty strong handle on her vision for the People). They could have existed as some weird artifact from this period of SF history and honestly when I pulled this book out of the stack I wondered (as I so often do) what the heck I had gotten

myself. But there are some fine stories here that shouldn't be readily forgotten and while the lack of outright masterpieces means that Henderson's name will probably never carry the weight of the heavy hitters from that era (as good and consistent as this collection is, she's no Sturgeon or even Cordwainer Smith . . . but then she's not trying to be) it's clear that they shouldn't be abandoned to the "for diehards only" section of the library. You can debate how groundbreaking this all is, but working within her range allowed her to produce a variety of stories that should sound like a lot of other people's and yet only sound like her, which is hard enough for anyone to do and even harder to make it seem easy.

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## **Matthew Gatheringwater says**

Considering that in Mormon theology, worthy patriarchs are rewarded with their own planet to populate, it is not surprising that Zenna Henderson, a former Mormon, would come to write a story cycle about deeply religious people from another planet after she left the Mormon faith. And it is perhaps also not surprising, that after leaving her religious home, her stories should be suffused with longing, loss, and a deep desire to find community. Her characters are often people with special abilities who feel alienated from or threatened by the people around them or are quite literally lost in this world, and seeking a home they can only incompletely recall.

I know that these stories have been attacked as mawkishly sentimental, but I'm not sure that is fair. "Sentimental" in this sense suggests affected emotion. If you have never felt the longing for one place in this world where you feel you belong, if you have always been sure of who you were, if you know where your people come from and what it means to be one of them, then maybe it is hard to believe the feelings of Henderson's characters. I've had some of the same experiences as Henderson's characters (and Henderson herself) and felt some of the same sense of displacement and longing--enough, at least, to recognize the reality of the sentiments she describes.

Sentimentality is also an unfair criticism because of the other kind of character that populates these stories: the observer or witness. Often a teacher (like Henderson) or an invalid, these characters are anything but sentimental, and are often rather hard-bitten. They are convinced only by empirical proof and even then are skeptical. They are aware of their need to believe and how misleading that need can be. These observer characters are what made the stories so much fun for me. Their skepticism gave me a kind of reader's permission to enjoy the miracles they witness in a way a straight-forward fantasy would not.

The religion of the aliens in these stories is of the variety William James would have called "once-born": they consider morality to be self-evident and they aren't asking a lot of difficult questions to challenge their faith, such as why God would allow their home planet to be destroyed or why, if their God is the same one worshiped by human Christians, it is these same Christians who are so often responsible for their persecution? They have little ritual besides a vague hand-gesture and although they do pray, they seem to get more practical use and comfort from telepathy. It is hard to see what God (or as they say, The Presence) does for them, except serve as a placeholder for numinous feelings.

Henderson spends a lot of time thinking about the interactions between humans and aliens. In this, she reminds me of Octavia Butler. The Outsiders in Henderson's stories (people born of Earth to the rest of us) cannot be saved from themselves by the aliens, although they can be helped. On the other hand, we Earthlings have abilities unknown to the aliens, and can assist them. The aliens in Henderson's stories who choose to live apart from humans seem to lose their humanity, so to speak, and the trend in her stories suggests that humans and aliens will have to save each other if either race is to fulfill its potential.

The most important thing I got out of reading these stories, is the conviction that I don't have merely to suffer a longing for community, that longing can also spur action to create or contribute to community. The observer characters in Henderson's stories witness wonders they cannot always share. Rather than letting the comparison lead them to envy or inertia, they use it as inspiration to find their own way to make a bit of something wonderful. In my own life, I am sometimes sad that it is unlikely that I will ever have children of my own, for example, but that doesn't mean I can't be a good friend to the children of other people I know. I may not have any relatives of my own, but that does not mean I have to live alone. I've decided that when I someday leave my current situation, I'm going to join or create some effort toward intentional community among people with whom I am not biologically related. Perhaps my own path to belonging will involve making other people feel welcome.

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### **Werner says**

A genre classic, Henderson's corpus of People stories were mostly written in the 1950s and 60s; they're all collected here, along with the bridging material she wrote for the two partial collections published in her lifetime. Resembling humans physically, and able to intermarry with humans, the People are an alien race who fled their planet around 1890 (the anthology editors' guess, in their appended chronology, is 1900) when their sun went nova; some of them crash-landed in the wilds of Henderson's native Arizona. Scattered when they landed, and persecuted by cultists who believed them to be witches, they made lives for themselves and their children, either as individuals hiding among the Outsiders, or in small communal groups in out-of-the-way mountain settlements, using their formidable array of psychic and telekinetic powers to help those in need.

In a low-key way, the author, a lifelong Methodist, reflects her strong Christian faith in these stories. Though not an unfallen race, the People as a whole live life in joyful trust and obedience to "the Presence, the Name, and the Power" (known to earthlings as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Because of this, life has purpose even in the face of suffering, death is a solemn but glorious calling to the Presence, and help is to be given to others wherever "there's Need." These stories are a powerful and welcome counterweight to the existential pessimism and moral nihilism that permeates so much of modern literature.

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### **Matthew Green says**

I read most or all of these stories many years ago, and I really enjoyed re-reading them. They are "theistic" sci-fi, without being too much in-your-face about it (at least not by my standards). They are written with a lot of imagination, and really made an impression on me when I first read them as a child. As I found when I re-read the Chronicles of Narnia and other books I last read decades ago, I still remember my mental images of key scenes sometimes very vividly, even though I may have forgotten the rest of the story. Reading them now as an adult, I realize that they are often a bit melodramatic, but not so much as to make them unpalatable for me.

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## Cindy says

I love this series - re-read it regularly! Most of the stories [but not the thread connecting them] have appeared independently in various science fiction and fantasy magazines and some short story collections. The two books have been collected in the omnibus edition *Ingathering: The Complete People Stories of Zenna Henderson* but are also available singly as *Pilgrimage* and *No Different Flesh*.

Although she was not as well known [or as prolific] as Heinlein and Asimov and Norton, Zenna Henderson is truly one of the Golden Age masters. Like most great authors she uses her stories to ask - and answer - important questions. In the case of the People stories that question might be - what if alien people crash land on earth, and what if they are different - perhaps even better than us?

The People are a race from another planet who become marooned on earth, many injured and killed, most of them separated from each other and not knowing if they are the only survivors. The People have the very best of human qualities: love, gentleness, spirituality; and also special powers of healing, levitation and other frequently miraculous abilities.

### *Pilgrimage*

Before talking about the story I want to give credit to her skills as a writer. Her setting simply glows with the color and heat of the American Southwest. Her people are fully visualized, their emotions vividly portrayed. The plots of the different stories are intense and page turning.

There is a thread which binds the short stories together - the story of Lea who is suicidal but is dragged back from the brink [literally] by a chance-met member of the people. The stories she listens to about their past, their Home, and the landing which scattered and shattered them slowly bring her back to feeling hope...

### *No Different Flesh*

This book tells the story of a couple, Mark and Meris, who, one stormy night, find a young girl who has fallen in a capsule from the sky, and who has special abilities. Maris and Mark, still grieving the loss of their own baby, must come to terms with the emotional issues that caring for the young girl, Lala, creates in both of them. What follows is a plot that will involve the reader in the magic, compassion and sense of rightness that the People evoke.

In *Pilgrimage*, as in *The People: No Different Flesh*, the plot shifts between the present day story, and stories about the People from their past, which comprise the People's race memory. Included as one of these memories told to Mark and Meris is a short story, "Deluge", which has appeared in some short story collections. "Deluge" gives the reader a taste of the magical and deeply fulfilling way of life on the People's home planet and tells how the People came to leave it. Other memories tell us what happened to various individuals of the People as they arrived on earth. These add texture and interest to the present-day story, and include events of terrible persecution of the People as well as stories of personal tragedy and joy. One of the continuing themes in these stories are teachers and teaching and just how much difference they can make in others lives. As a teacher myself, I reread these books to remind me why I was teaching and to refill the well of compassion which sometimes gets drained pretty dry in all of us.

If you're looking for Lara Croft or Indiana Jones - these books are not for you. They will never be made into summer blockbuster movies. These stories frequently require access to the kleenex box but still manage to

provide an overall feeling of uplift and hope. And that's something we could all use a lot more of.

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## **Zach Danielson says**

This is some of the best science fiction I've ever read. Eschewing the conventional sci-fi obsession with technology, the focus is on community and faith, with Biblical references both subtle and overt. Instead of a futuristic city or bleak dystopian landscape, the setting is rural, pastoral. The emotions of the characters are fully realized and the stories are almost sentimental with themes of loss, alienation, compassion, wonder, and hope.

Zenna Henderson wrote and published the People Stories over several decades, beginning in the 1950s, but this collection of short stories still jumps off the page today. This article aptly summarizes some her groundbreaking contributions as a writer:

Henderson became a pioneer in many areas of science fiction literature. She was one of the first female science fiction writers, and was one of an even smaller number who wrote openly as a woman, without using male-sounding pseudonyms or initials...

In a time during which science fiction was often marked by unquestioned rationalism and pragmatism in which spiritual elements were often a taboo, unprintable subject, Henderson was also a pioneer in spiritual/religious science fiction. The People were a deeply spiritual and openly religious culture... Some of today's top science fiction writers who are known for the realistic positive portrayals of religious people in their literature, such as Kathy Tyers and Orson Scott Card, specifically cite Zenna Henderson as an important early influence on their careers.

One interesting aspect about the People stories is the strong degree to which very different groups of people identify with it: Christians (including such different camps as Evangelicals, Catholics and Latter-day Saints), GLBT, Wiccans, and Jews have all recommended Henderson's People stories. The stories, with their exclusivity and isolation from the broader culture combined with extreme inclusivity and compassion for one's own tribe, have struck a chord with many people who feel pulled by two different worlds...

Finally, Henderson was one of the first in science fiction to truly take young people seriously and write expressive, mature stories from their point of view. She drew on her experience as a teacher of young people, and was able to bring a rare level of insight to her use of young characters. Henderson's youthful protagonists are neither adults forced into young bodies, nor are they frivolous caricatures. They are very human, complete souls, yet marked by authentic signs of youth and innocence.

Honestly, the People Stories caught me off guard with their poignancy. They evoke the type of inconsolable longing that C.S. Lewis describes. I am proudly rational and often cynical, but in the pages of this book, I was ~~shown~~ reminded that I, too, miss the Home.



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## Sheila says

An uncommon book for the time when it was written, Christian science fiction from a female perspective. Enlightened refugees from a doomed planet try to start over on Earth where encounters with humans are often disastrous for them. Over the years I read all three of the novels which partly make up this six hundred page book. I loved the original stories, simplistic as they are and would have given them an extra star, even for sticking in my mind since the 1970's. But this compilation has some problems in my opinion. The character used at the first of the book to tie things together was not mentioned again after a certain point. As a writer, it worries me to see a character just "stop" in the midst of the book. I also wish the publishers had not included the last story which uses "hippie" slang that from our perspective in 2016 sounds a bit silly. Still, I like the premise and admire the sense of community amongst the People and the way it offers a message of how we could live if we made loving choices. Upon finishing, I looked up the movie based on Henderson's work, and oh dear! B-movie with a lot of poor acting, dreadful background music, and very dated technical effects which look almost laughable in our time. They just don't "fly" . . . and neither do the actors who are supposed to(said tongue in cheek). But wouldn't it be great to see a modern film maker tackle this as a series for TV?

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## Donni Hakanson says

It's been quite some time since I read an un-put-down-able book, and this one certainly fits the bill as one I will read again! I purchased it for \$1.50 at an op shop in the mall. As engrossing as Sheri Tepper and "The Time Traveller's Wife", this collection of stories written about The People almost sixty years ago has not dated. In fact, it could have been written in contemporary times, and the themes of both the storyline and subject slot perfectly in the current popular genres of supernatural themes and mystery.

A collector of ephemera, Zenna Henderson (born 1917, died 1983 aged 65) appears as a dichotomy to her writing - a homely looking lady with incongruous pig tails; also in many ways an archetypal teacher of the 1950's. The world she has superimposed on our own is one where supernatural powers are a natural part of one's makeup. Being able to read minds, or move objects, detect metal deposits or shares market returns, the gifts are varied. The original (Star) People are scattered over earth and many manage to reunite. The whole concept is fascinating and like good sci fi, utterly convincingly believable as being possible - which this series is.

Zenna Henderson writes in a lilting style, she plays with words in a way that is offbeat and expressive. Her turns of phrase and deep soul searching hook the reader into the plot almost instantly as you see the reality of the challenges the characters face. And these aren't the usual challenges in life, but ones of high drama, morals and virtues as much as death and separation.

I really enjoyed reading how the various characters met the challenges they faced in blending into the world of the outsiders. Their special gifts can cause a different reaction depending on whom they meet. They sometimes alienate, frighten, bewilder and draw others, and as their children have less control than adults in

spontaneously revealing their differentness, they tend to live together in isolated areas. There's several themes in the book which address archetypal emotions from a sense of isolation to deep belonging, of community yet also individual drives and goals. which all come together under the lives of The People.

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### **Nicole says**

I wanted to like these stories. They were mentioned and lauded in *Among Others*, and I got really excited because, hey, a whole collection of science fiction short stories by an author I've never heard of? Neat!

But these are really one-note and they just don't do it for me. They are well-written; I really like some of the dialogue and descriptions she uses, and I like the basic premise, but the stories make me roll my eyes like crazy, and I'm only a little way in. It's the same story over and over again: special people feel alone until they find other people who are special just like them. Which is fine once or twice, it's just the same damn story over and over and over, and I'm way too annoyed to make it all the way through this hulking collection.

"Mawkish" is a word that is used in the introduction to this collection, and it's unfortunately really apt. One thing I like about alien stories is the way they stretch my brain and make me feel compassion for characters who are really fundamentally different from me. The characters in these books are just like me, except they're telekinetic and telepathic and also really extra-nice and friendly and moral - so, way better than me. Bleah.

Another thing that bothers me: I'm not explicitly against Christian content/allegory (I have read and loved *The Chronicles of Narnia* after all), but the fact that theses aliens are not only exactly like me (but better) and also, surprise!, Caucasian and CHRISTIAN (they don't use the usual Trinity words, but it's unmistakeable), makes me want to hurl. Science fiction should be about discovery, I think, and challenging yourself to accept new realities. I'm annoyed that these are stories about being alien and finding your kin, but that they simultaneously enforce religious and cultural norms.

All of that said: the writing really IS very good, and I can't say these are bad stories. They are just not good stories for me. At first I thought maybe I was just too old for them, and that maybe I would've liked them as a teenager...but I don't think so. However, I CAN imagine recommending them to certain library patrons, and I don't object to their existence. I just don't want to spend anymore of my valuable time reading them.

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### **Sara Poole says**

I'd love to tell you why this series of inter-connected stories about a band of alien refugees (the People) settled in the American southwest at the beginning of the 20th century captured my imagination when I was growing up, but aside from the obvious appeal to any kid who felt alienated and alone (didn't we all?), I can't quite explain it. Arizonan elementary school teacher Henderson wrote a spare, sometimes merciless prose. She tackled tough issues—mental illness, the challenge of being an individual in a conformist society, the very real danger that can come with being considered an “outsider”. And she pulled no punches when it came to depicting the harshness and beauty of the world she knew so well. For years, I kept the paperback copies of her books held together by rubber bands. In 1995, NESFA Press finally re-issued her stories of the People in a single volume. Books come and books go but this one stays forever.

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## Gayle says

Zenna Henderson began writing science fiction in the early 1950s and continued for decades. Her best-known work (though she was never a household name) is comprised of the stories of The People, who fled their dying planet in search of a home. Those who came to Earth had to bail out of their spacecraft at the last minute, and the survivors, alone in their lifeboats, were separated. The stories reflect their (and their descendants) efforts to survive and adapt, to find each other and to preserve their own startling abilities without inspiring fear and hatred in the locals.

There are two collections of stories about The People: Pilgrimage: The Book of the People and The People: No Different Flesh. Ingathering is the combination of both these books, plus at least one other addition.

I have been a fan of The People since, oh, junior high. Henderson's people are warm, loving, and resoundingly people of faith. Her style is pleasant, certainly not au courant. It's sci-fi for the warm and fuzzy of heart. Enjoy.

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## Mary JL says

Zenna Henderson's stories of the People have been favorites for mine since I was a teen. They have a lot of good themes--loneliness; feeling "different", accpeting strangers and many others.

These stories are technically science fiction, but fantasy readers would enjoy them as well. Actually anyone who likes a good story sshould try them, even if they usually do not read science fiction or fantasy.

If you cannot find this book, most of the stories were printed as two seperate volumes---Pilgrimage: The Book of the People and The People: No Different Flesh.

Warning: The paperback cover art for Pilgrimage really gives no hint to the theme and I wish it would be re-issued with a different cover. Ignore the cover, and enjoy the book.

I cannot recommend this book higly enough.

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## Mary says

Lucid, thoughtful, and deeply Christian in an understated way, these stories are both lovely and unsettling. I was introduced to them by a fine little film called "The People", which is based on two of Henderson's stories, and which stars Kim Darby and William Shatner. I wish they would clean it up and release it as a DVD; it's worth seeing.

And these stories are still more worth reading. The people are survivors from a destroyed planet they call merely "the home". They have various gifts and persuasions; they can lift inanimate objects (and animate ones!) with their minds; they can "read" physical illness; they can sense the presence of minerals or of water under the earth, and so on. "Ingathering" is almost a novel in the form of connected stories. The narrator, like

the people themselves, is often an observer and an outsider. Often, as in the movie, she is a teacher.

If I were going to make a movie of any of these stories, the one I'd choose is "The Indelible Kind", about a teacher's relationship with an 8-year-old boy of the People in the mid-late 1960s. Teacher, child, and the child's family all end up rescuing a stranded cosmonaut after there's an explosion in his space capsule.

The stories are bound together by continuing characters and places and also by two framing stories. Of these, I like Mark and Meris better, because they are more positive and proactive. In both framing stories, however, the People help the human characters deal with grief.

Another reviewer commented that Alexander Key must have been influenced by Zenna Henderson. I wouldn't be surprised if that were true. I also wouldn't be surprised to find she influenced many other writers, including Orson Scott Card, the developers of "Roswell", and perhaps even Stephenie Meyer. If you enjoy gentle, character-driven speculative fiction with positive messages and a firm sense of place, you'll find these stories worth a look.

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### **Chris says**

Has the distinction of being, in my recollection, the only book that has ever made me cry that did not in some way involve brave animals. (Brave animals always make me cry.)

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### **Pat Cummings says**

I was a teenager just discovering the power of the short science fiction story by the likes of Sturgeon and Bradbury when a kind librarian put a collection of stories by Zenna Henderson, *The Pilgrimage*, into my hands, and I met the People for the first time. Refugees from a Home that demolished itself, the People live apart from others in the remote reaches of an Arizonan desert canyon, and in scattered other communities elsewhere.

Like Superman, another alien who fell to Earth in the same era, they possess powers they brought from that other world. Unlike Superman, however, their powers must be hidden from a world that is too ready to reject the odd and different. They fly, and lift their broken-down jalopies above the trees. They bring molten metal and artesian water flowing from beneath the earth. They converse silently and Share their powerful memories.

Also unlike Superman, the People live ordinary lives around these powers. There is sibling rivalry, and naughtiness in the back of the classroom, and despair, and the innocence of children. And when I found Henderson's second collection of People stories, *The People: No Different Flesh*, the title made it obvious why. The People are people. They are us, plus.

To a geeky teen in an era when to be a geek (indeed, to be an ardent reader!) was to be an object of scorn, the People were a wonderful promise of community somewhere, a hope that I could be an Insider there *because* of being an Outsider here.

Henderson's power was to bring that feeling to a wide variety of out-group readers:

*A wide variety of people have embraced and recommended these stories: Jews, Wiccans, Latter-day Saints and other Christians. People in the GLBT community have felt unique kinship with the People, probably not realizing that Muslim readers have felt the same way. —from an essay on Adherants blog*

***Ingathering*** combines the two collections of the People stories, adding some story-to-story narrative linkage to the first book. Since I had lost my original paperbacks along the way, I was happy to add this double collection back into my library.

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