***Kitchissippi Men’s Book Club, January 2021***

**The Sentimentalists** *(A Novel)*

*2010 Scotiabank Giller Prize Winner*

**By Johanna Skibsrud**

Review by Richard Christie

Just for the record I did not enjoy this book. I’m not sure how it won the Giller prize but I leave that to the higher level scholar.

The story is about a now aged Vietnam veteran who has moved from North Dakota to a fictitious town, Casablanca, in Ontario. The town was flooded out during the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway and moved inland where it remained a backwater community.

This was Skibsrud’s first novel and was critiqued as “the debut of a powerful new voice in Canadian fiction”. I kept waiting for essential nuggets to emerge that would tie the cryptic descriptions of the characters and the story line together but for me it never happened. In a nutshell I found the writing to be tedious.

It turns out the principal character, Napoleon Haskell, the father of the author, was involved in a My Lai type massacre in Vietnam and how this led to such dysfunction in his life. On the positive side there are some elements that kept me somewhat interested as the upheaval of communities during the Seaway construction and the misery of the average soldier in the Vietnam war but overall it was a slog.