

Common Themes for the rest of Genesis:

1. less than honorable characters - it's a real soap opera
2. deception
3. disguise
4. dishonesty
5. three 'd's come back to bit them on their bottoms
6. rash oaths with unforeseen consequences
7. Covenant moving from individuals to the tribes
8. Idea of the promised Seed is never far away
9. repetitions - common images or ideas happening to different people
 - meeting people at wells; being wanderers; hand under the thigh; famine; conflict between brothers
10. action and flow of story being interrupted by another story that seems unrelated but actually shadows how the interrupted story will turn out.
 - Isaac and wells foreshadows Jacob and Esau;
 - Tamar and Judah foreshadows conclusion of Joseph
11. Younger son favored over the older one
12. wealth of the tribe is dwindling instead of increasing

Things to Keep in Mind

1. the book is not written in chronological order
2. people disappear not when they die but when their story is finished
3. honor or dishonor (disapproval) shown in how people are treated in their burial
4. don't try to figure out the peoples' ages, but they're older than they seem.
5. We're not told everything that happened to the people, just scattered incidents from their lives and there's a lot of stuff left out that we might have included if we were writing a modern biography
6. The information is presented as straight history, but our author is not overly concerned with all the details being consistent.
7. Some of what might look like inconsistencies or contradictions can be resolved or explained.
8. The patriarchs aren't the heroes or main character of the story, that role belongs to God and His intervention in their lives.
9. They are not good role models or often even good people; God has chosen them and used them often despite themselves.
10. In addition to the characters of the stories, there's also the presence of the narrator, who'll fill in things we wouldn't know otherwise and will add explanatory details for his audience.
11. These were real people living real lives in a real world, not just Bible characters who walked around in bathrobes carrying walking sticks. To help get away from the Sunday School images we have in our heads we're switching to a translation that, while it might not always be the most accurate, doesn't sound as "Bibley."
12. Our new translation will be "The Message" by Eugene Peterson. The ideology behind this translation is that the Bible was written not in high-toned, religious language such as the King James, but in the down-to-earth everyday language of the common people and that's the flavor that he tries to capture.

Isaac

Genesis 24:62-67; 25:19-26; 26:1-28-8; 35:27-29

How do you follow such a father as Abraham, the friend of God? How do you top that and come out from under his shadow?

The short answer is: you don't.

Isaac is presented to us as a meek and mild man, but meek doesn't mean weak, although he'll wind up presented in a less than flattering light;
he never goes to war like his father and grandchildren;
he is presented as successful in herding and farming and acquiring wealth;
he is a peaceful man but not afraid to confront Abimelech

But he's a minor character compared to Pop and the boys, more of a bridge from one major story to another:

He's one of the big three (I Am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), but the way our Bibles are divided, he only has one chapter of his own, the rest of the time his story is intertwined with his father, wife and children. By contrast, Abraham's story took from chapters 12 through part of 25; Jacob's story begins in 25, picks up in 27 and continues through 37; and Joseph begins in chapter 37 and ends with his and Jacob's deaths by chapter 50

his story is overshadowed by his father and his children and his wife as shown by a quick look at the chronology that I told you to be too concerned about:

1. he is nearly sacrificed as a grown man
2. his mother dies when he's 37 and he's grieving 3 years later
3. his father picks out his wife when he's 40 years old.
4. his father remarries at the age of 137 or older and has six children before we hear from him again
4. his own children are born when he's 60 and start taking over the story.
5. His father dies when he's 75.
6. He's presented as a weak and nearly blind man ruled by his appetite, trying to thwart the will of God, who's tricked by his wife and son.
7. He disappears from the story when he's only a little over 100 and thinking that he's going to die any time, but he actually lives through the next 10-11 chapters (although his death is recorded in chapter 35) and actually only dies 10 years before everybody goes to Egypt.

Parallels between Isaac and Abraham

Both are obedient to God

Both wait a long time have a child - Abraham 25 years, Isaac 20 years

Both only have children due to the intervention of God

both are wandering nomads and herders, although Isaac also does some farming

Both live through a famine in the land

Both have a lapse of faith and pass off their wife as their sister and both are caught
Both are kicked out of a land
Both have contention or quarreling between herdsmen and wind up moving
Both dig wells and build altars
Both are visited by 3 visitors and prepare a feast for them
Both make peace treaties with the people in the land of the Philistines
Both make preparations for passing on the blessing before they die

Positive Traits of Isaac

He loved his wife.

When he and his wife couldn't have the promised children, instead of taking a maid servant or concubine like his father and son, he prayed.

He obeyed God.

When asked to leave a land because he was too powerful, instead of taking over and proving it, he moved on.

When asked for a peace and friendship treat with the people who kicked him out, he agreed.

He loved his children

Things to listen for in chapters 25 and 26

1. The above-mentioned parallels
2. The rejuvenating power of God's Spirit: when Abraham was 99 he was considered dead in his reproductive abilities and Sarah laughed at the thoughts of their even having marital relations again. When God put his spirit of life in them, however that happened, Abraham not only sired Isaac at the age of 100, but after Sarah dies he remarries and up and has at least six more children between the age of 137 and 175.
3. Like Jacob, Ishmael has 12 sons who make 12 tribes.
4. Rebekah is told that her unborn sons who are already fighting will always be fighting one another and the older will serve the younger, although Isaac blesses Esau that he'll eventually throw off his brother's yoke. This will happen when Esau forgives Jacob and becomes wealthy in his own right.
5. We'll see that the idea of Esau serving Jacob comes back to us at Christmas time when King Herod is so upset at the wise men telling him about the birth of the King of the Jews.
6. He's the rich son of a rich sheik, why is Jacob sitting around the camp cooking bread and lentil stew in the first place? He's a sneaky rascal.
7. The word used when we're told that Esau despised his birthright in 25:34 means the same thing as our idea of contempt of court and was designed to evoke shock and outrage at the audience.
7. God says in 26:5 that Abraham "obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws." This is more than 600 years before

God gave his commandments, statutes and laws. What are they talking about?

8. a little play on words: Isaac's deception with Rebekah was up when Abimelech looked out the window and saw him fondling, caressing, fooling around with his supposed sister. The Hebrew word there is about the same as his name, so it reads that the jig was up when Abimelech saw Isaac isaacing Rebekah (a little Old Testament humor there that's lost in the translation)

9. Isaac's three wells in 26 are supposed (according to some) to prepare us for the story of Jacob and Esau as follows:

Isaac's first well was named "Esek" "contention"

Isaac's second well was named "Sitnah" "enmity"

Isaac's third well was named "Rehoboth" "room" "...saying 'Now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.'"

Jacob and Esau have "esek" as they contend for the blessing and first place in the family

Jacob and Esau has "sitnah" as Esau plans to kill Jacob and Jacob takes off After 20 years they have both prospered and Esau greets Jacob warmly with smiles and tears before they go their separate ways again because the same land can't support both their herds and they need "rehoboth"