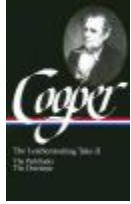


Western Americana: A Primer

Discover the distinctly American literary tradition of Western Americana.

Origins

Books emerged chronicling the early American settlers and the wild, restless spirit of explorers and pioneers such as the enigmatic Daniel Boone.



The [Leatherstocking Tales](#) by James Fenimore Cooper ***Last of the Mohicans*** is certainly the most popular of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. The first book of the series, ***The Pioneers: The Sources of the Susquehanna; a Descriptive Tale*** takes place in the emerging frontier of New York state. It has many of the themes and hallmarks later recognized in the distinctly Western tradition.



[The Virginian](#) by Owen Wister
Owen Wister's 1902 novel ***The Virginian*** is considered by many to be the first ground-breaking literary Western novel. The touchstones of common Western themes are all represented: untamed Wyoming wilderness, a rough do-gooder on a quest for justice, and the universal theme of good vs. evil.



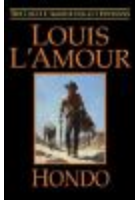
[The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book](#) by J. Randolph Cox
The House of Beadle and Adams and its Dime and Nickel Novels; The Story of a Vanished Literature. With a Forward by John T. McIntyre
Western Dime Novels enjoyed popularity during the 1940's, the purported Golden Age of the American Western. With simple, accessible language these books were often quickly written, rapidly published, 'potboiler'-type novels with wide readership.

Classics

Most avid readers will recognize at least a couple of the below names. These are the Louis L'Amours and Zane Greys. These novels represent a natural extension from the dime and Western pulp books so enjoyed by readers.



[Riders of the Purple Sage](#) by Zane Grey
Quite possible THE most popular Western novel and one of the earliest examples of a book rooted firmly in the evolving Western genre.
*A gentile sage-rider is about to be whipped by the Mormons to coerce the rich and beautiful Jane Withersteen to marry against her will. In desperation Jane whispers the prayer, "whence cometh my help!" Just then an unlikely hero, the infamous gunfighter, Lassiter routs the persecutors and is drawn into this conflict on the Utah-Arizona border.



[Hondo](#) by Louis L'Amour

Hondo was L'Amour's first popular and commercial success. It is now regarded as his best work, and a classic within the genre. Features all the elements one has come to recognize in the Westerns: a lone gunman, the 'damsel in distress', and the unforgiving landscape.

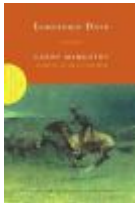


[Destry Rides Again](#) by Max Brand

The film adaptation of Brand's book was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant". The influence of Brand's interest in mythology and classical studies pervades his novels, contributing to the success of Brand's works.

Contemporary

These works and authors have taken the genre and tradition into the modern era. Albeit Westerns usually celebrate a simpler, antiquated time, contemporary Westerns have fused elements of modernism and other aesthetics to parallel and comment on current concerns.



[Lonesome Dove](#) by Larry McMurtry

*A love story, an adventure, and an epic of the frontier, Larry McMurtry's Pulitzer Prize-winning classic, **Lonesome Dove**, the third book in the Lonesome Dove trilogy, is the grandest novel ever written about the last, defiant wilderness of America. Journey to the dusty little Texas town of Lonesome Dove and meet an unforgettable assortment of heroes and outlaws, whores and ladies, Indians and settlers. Richly authentic, beautifully written, and always dramatic, **Lonesome Dove** is a book to make us laugh, weep, dream, and remember.



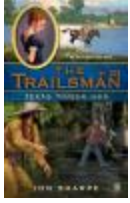
[The Border Trilogy](#) by Cormac McCarthy

Beginning with **All the Pretty Horses** and concluding with **Cities of the Plain**, McCarthy's sparse Faulknerian-style lends itself to the sprawling, rugged borderland of south Texas. A master of his craft, McCarthy's **Border Trilogy** will make a fan out of anyone who appreciates beautiful narrative.



[Blood Meridian; or, The Evening Redness in the West](#) by Cormac McCarthy

McCarthy's most critically acclaimed novel tells the story of the Glanton Gang, commissioned to hunt Indians along the Texas-Mexico border in the 1850's. **Blood Meridian** represents McCarthy's most powerful, apocalyptic vision. An epic in the truest sense, this should reside between **Moby Dick** and **The Odyssey**. Harold Bloom described it as 'the ultimate Western...in that it cannot be improved upon and it completes the tradition.'



[The Trailsman \(series\)](#) by Jon Sharpe. The *Trailsman* series (along with *Slocum* and *Longarm*) represent a continuation of the Western tradition even as most publishing houses have discontinued large scale printing of Western novels.

* (*Annotation courtesy of Syndetic Solutions*)