

Critical Insights: Southwestern Literature

"Literature of the Southwest has evolved along a unique path influenced by a stunning landscape and diverse peoples. This volume in the *Critical Insights* series gathers a **good variety of essays which explore the many themes in and responses to Southwestern literature**. The volume discusses works by such writers as Larry McMurtry, Willa Cather, Cormac McCarthy, and Sandra Cisneros.

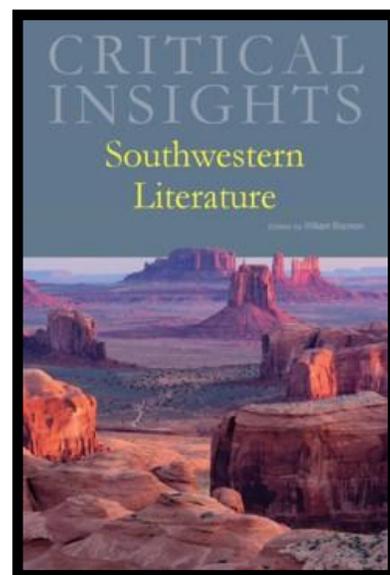
Four essays in the Critical Contexts section provide **foundational material to understanding the genre**. The essays include a survey of major works and critical response, an introduction to the recurring elements and themes found throughout the literature, and more. Of particular note is the essay "Writing (and Righting) the Desert Southwest: Literary Legacies and the Restoration of Glen Canyon," by Laura Smith. This essay connects the literature to an ecological mandate by pointing out how the Glen Canyon Dam controversy inspired writers such as Edward Abbey and Ellen Meloy to the point where their literature impels the discussion.

The Critical Readings section houses **10 essays offering more pointed examinations of the genre**. Essays may explore themes of culture clash or take on the view of a physical landscape that inspires both creativity and violence. For example, Maria O'Connell's "Of Judges and Fairybook Beasts: The Male Mentor and Violence in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*" posits that the violence rendered within the story comes in response to the unrelenting need to exert control over the natural landscape. Three essays discuss Mexican American literature and spotlight writers María Ampara Ruiz de Burton and Ana Castillo as well as a variety of Mexican American memoirists. And two essays discuss how the environment influenced Willa Cather's visual sense. John Samson, for example, establishes how the simple elements of light, form, and color express this influence in his piece "Willa Cather and Southwestern Aesthetics." **Each essay concludes with a list of cited works.**

A Resources section of the volume contains a list of additional categorized examples of Southwestern literature, a bibliography, notes on contributors, and an index. **Recommended."**

—ARBA Staff Reviewer

Text Reviews



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