

Zane Grey's Women Tame the West-II

Course Description

We will read 6-7 Zane Grey western novels and note that women dominate the stories and action. The course will be a mix of lecture, discussion, and DVD presentations. It is my belief we'll discover universal literary themes in Mr. Grey's work.

Weekly Layout:

Introduction to the course and the novels/materials to be considered. Why do we still enjoy reading Zane Grey a century later despite the frequent claim his novels are just male gothic romances? Zane Grey's poetry of the land and his impact on people in comparison to other authors and their literary treatment of the land (Kazakis, Whitman, and Hillerman). The pattern of narrative focused on the ladies (not the gun slingers), and the advantages to a storyteller.

How might we understand the cycle of adventure pursued by our hero and her helpers? Review Northrop Frye's assessment of the literary hero in the five modes of literature ("Anatomy of Criticism"). Consider Joseph Campbell's literary archetype of the Monomyth ("The Hero with a Thousand Faces") and the adventure of all stories.

Bio of Zane Grey and his wife Lena. Lena's tolerance (or understanding) of Grey's expeditions, flings, and dalliances with numerous women and the incorporation of such experiences in the novels. Review Tom Pauly's "Zane Grey: His Life, His Adventures, and His Women" to consider the interplay of dalliances vs. the literary use he made of women as heroes. This is an exquisite bio of our author, and your best source of information if you wish to dig into the stories more deeply.

"The Rainbow Trail." The rest of the story about the "Riders of the Purple Sage." The rescue of Fay, Jane, and Lassiter from Surprise Valley by a defrocked clergyman, a Navajo Chief, and a stalwart Mormon.

"Forlorn River." Ben Ide, a disowned wild horse hunter, and his pard Nevada (whom he has rescued) live blissfully in the California hills chasing wild horses, until Ina Blaine comes home from college. Ina hears nasty stories about Ben being spread by entrenched rustlers who have misled her father and the towns' people. She makes contact with Ben, her childhood love, and with his sister Hettie confronts family and crooks to correct the injustice.

Over 40 Zane Grey novels were converted to movies, some multiple times. Consider the movie version of "Nevada" before reading the Sequel to "Forlorn River."

"Nevada." The story of Ben's 5 year search for his pard Nevada who has ridden off after killing Less Setter and his phony sheriffs at the end of "Forlorn River." Hettie Ide has grown up and with her brother sells off the Tule Lake ranch and heads for the wilderness of the White Mountains of Arizona. Once again Nevada must use his gun to protect Ben, Hettie, and Marvie from the wickedness of rustlers in disguise.

"The Drift Fence." Tenderfoot Jim Traft heads west at his uncle's request to learn the cattle business and take over a large spread. When Jim is caught up in a dangerous situation, and about to quit, he meets Molly Dunn who "bucks him up" and encourages him to stick at it. Though only 16, she teaches him the way of the West while saving his life twice.

The poetry of Zane Grey's landscapes. The concomitant sense of beauty/peace and excitement.

"The Hash Knife Outfit." When Jim's sister Glorianna shows up, Molly decides she isn't good enough to marry into the family. Nevertheless Molly saves Jim's life and brokers a deal between her brother and Jim, which saves the day.

"The Light of Western Stars." Will Madeline (Majesty) Hammond ruin Gene Stewart before she discovers the

meaning, values, and power of the West?

Gender discrimination and harassment in 2025. How did the women of Zane Grey's west cope with sexually aggressive men? Sometimes with a slap and well chosen words (Ina Blaine), sometimes by fighting back and a good bite (Molly Dunn), and sometimes with a well-placed shot (Lark Burrell). The ACLU guide to confront sexual harassment.

Summary of the course. Why Zane Grey's western novels are still enjoyable a hundred years and more after their writing, despite gender stereotyping. The women and the discovery of love for the land save the day.