Don’t Fence Me In: Rethinking Western Readers Advisory

Laura Jean Norris
Traditional Westerns

- Native Americans
- Mountain Men
- The Way West
- Army Life
- Range and Ranch Life
- Good, Bad, and Ugly
- Business of the West
- Sagas
Characteristics of the Western Novel

- Setting/frame has vividly described landscapes and imprecise place and times periods for a sense of timelessness
- Character is often a loner, simple story arc, tries to use reason over violence, but often resorts to it in the end
- Plots can be simple or complex
- Common themes: redemptive power of the west, surviving in a harsh environment, revenge, lawlessness environment, need for just laws and lawmen
- Nostalgic tone for romance of eras past
- Pacing: Can we action packed, but others may be slow due to landscape descriptions similar to worldbuilding in fantasy and science fiction
- Dialog: Sparse, but colorful and full of jargon. Some lyrical descriptions of landscape
NonTraditional Westerns: Don’t Fence Me in

- Contemporary West
- Contemporary Western Mysteries
- Western Romances
Genre Westerns vs Historical Fiction set in the West

- **Genre**
  - General story arc
  - Strong sense of place
  - Satisfying ending
  - Patron may ask for specific author or give you a general story arc

- **HIF set in the West**
  - More literary: Different POV, Diff literary styles, More lyrical style, issue based
  - Lengthy descriptions of setting
  - More complex relationships and emotions among characters
  - Patron may ask for fictional books about explorers or pioneers
  - Historical details and accuracy are key
Weird Westerns: Jumping the Fence

- Weird Westerns
  - Western/Horror
  - Western/Paranormal
  - Western/Sci Fi
  - Western/Fat
Western Genre vs location and adrenaline genres

- **Location Genre**
  - Vivid descriptions of place
  - Imprecise time period and place
- **Other location genres**
  - Fantasy
  - Science Fiction
  - Historical Fiction
- **Adrenaline Genres**
  - Adventure
  - Suspense
  - Thrillers
Traditional
Native American
Mountain Men
The Way West
Army Life
Range and Ranch Life
Good, Bad, and the Ugly
Business of the West
Sagas
NonTraditional Westerns: Don’t Fence Me in

- Contemporary West
- Contemporary Western Mysteries
- Western Romances
- Short Stories
Contemporary West
Contemporary Western Mysteries
Western Romances
Weird Westerns: Jumping the Fence

- Weird Westerns
  - Western/Horror
  - Western/Paranormal
  - Western/Sci Fi
  - Western/Fat
Weird Westerns: Jumping Over the Fence
Tips

- Try not to make assumptions
- Short stories, TV shows, or Films as an intro to genre-blend
- Non-Fictional accounts, biographies, or autobiographies of settlers, pioneers, and other western people both familiar and anonymous
Awards

Spur Awards

Western Heritage Awards

WILLA Award
Western RA Internet Resources

Western Fictioneers

Western Fiction Review

True West Magazine

James D. Best: Blog About Western Fiction Books
Western Podcasts

Western Wednesday Classic Westerns

Powder Burns a Western Audio Drama

Old Time Radio Westerns
Additional Resources

Questions?

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