

SPUR AWARD

Spur Awards are literary prizes awarded annually by the Western Writers of America (WWA). Spur Awards honor writers for distinguished writing about the American West.



Learn more about the Spur Awards at: <http://westernwriters.org/spur-awards/>

SPUR AWARD WINNERS

FICTION

BADLANDS

Wheeler, Richard S.

To finish her dead father's study of fossils, spirited Candace Huxtable leaves England for the Nebraska Territory in 1859 to join a field expedition. The other members attempt to exclude her, but she goes with them to the arid and untamed Badlands. There pompous Professor Wood plunders the sacred Sioux burial grounds for artifacts, putting the party in grave danger. Some violence.

DB 40919

BIG DRIFT: A NOVEL

Dearen, Patrick

In the winter of 1884, cowboy Will Brite finds himself trapped under his horse with a blizzard descending. On-the-run former slave Zeke Boles becomes his unexpected savior, and Will offers him shelter. After a brutal cattle run the next spring, their lives are forever linked. Some strong language. 2014.

DB 85215

COMANCHE MOON

McMurtry, Larry

In this sequel to *DEAD MAN'S WALK* (DB 43928) and prequel to *LONESOME DOVE* (DB 22959), Texas Rangers McCrae and Call face Comanche raids and attacks by bandits, aid white settlers in the region, and try to survive frontier hardships. Bestseller. Some strong language and violence.

BR 12758; DB 45001; LB 04582

CROSSING PURGATORY

Schanbacher, Gary Lester

A young farmer in 1858 sets out across the American frontier to deal with his guilt at not being home to prevent a devastating family tragedy. He finds himself tested in ways he hadn't imagined. Some violence and some strong language. Spur Award. 2013.

DB 80212

DAMNATION ROAD

McCoy, Max

Oklahoma Territory, 1898. On a train heading to Texas, lifelong outlaw Jacob Gamble meets Anise Weathers, a tattooed woman who survived captivity by the Mohave tribe. Anise hires Jacob to help her recover Confederate gold lost in an Apache cave. Violence and strong language. Spur Award. 2010.

DB 75224

DANCES WITH WOLVES

Blake, Michael

When Lieutenant Dunbar arrives at Fort Hays, the drunken, half-crazed major in charge immediately assigns him to Fort Sedgewick, an abandoned army outpost. Then the major is sent back east because of mental incompetence, and the army is unaware of Dunbar's presence at the fort. Alone, with only a wolf and Indian friends, Dunbar finds himself adapting to the Indian way of life--a life in which he is happy until his past comes back to haunt him. Bestseller.

DB 32009

DOWN THE LONG HILLS

L'Amour, Louis

When Indians massacre a party of settlers heading west, seven-year-old Hardy Collins and his three-year-old sister are left alone with only a horse and a knife with which to face the hardships of the wilderness.

DB 20424

FOOL'S COACH

Wheeler, Richard S.

Idaho Territory, 1863. Accumulating money is easy in a gold-mining town; transporting it elsewhere is what's difficult because of the "road agents"—ruthless highwaymen. Trying to escape in a broken-down coach is a desperate and foolhardy venture. Spur Award. 1989.

DB 54408

FROM WHERE THE SUN NOW STANDS

Henry, Will

Fictionalized account of Heyets, a Nez Perce Native American, who grows up in traditional ways. Heyets experiences a forced stay at a white school and participates in the one-hundred-thirteen-day unauthorized trek of Chief Joseph and his people from Idaho to Montana. Spur Award. 1960.

DB 70559

HELL HATH NO FURY: JOHN HAWK, BOOK 1

West, Charles

Jamie Pratt and his young bride are abandoned by their wagon-train leader while traveling westward. They decide to press on, but after they vanish, Jamie's brother, Monroe, enlists John Hawk, a well-known scout, to aid in the search for them. Violence and strong language. 2017.

DB 88995

HELLFIRE CANYON

McCoy, Max

Missouri. Female reporter Frankie Donovan interviews Jacob Gamble, an old man known as the outlaw fiddler, who as a boy knew the notorious murderer Alf Bolin. Gamble recounts a tale of being forced by circumstances to join Bolin's gang—but he may not be telling the complete truth. Violence. 2007.

DB 68047

HOLDOUTS: A NOVEL

Decker, William

Arizona, 1964. Stolen yearlings that he didn't even know were missing are returned to rancher Sam Howard. What's more, he can't figure out how they could have been taken. Sam holds a roundup to determine just how many cattle are still gone. In the process, he uncovers a complex scheme. Some strong language. Spur Award. 1979.

DB 86807

KIOWA VERDICT: A WESTERN STORY

Haseloff, Cynthia

A fictional account of the 1871 arrest and trials of Kiowa chiefs Satanta and Adoltay that proved a downturn in the treatment of Native Americans by the U.S. government. Sequel to SATANTA'S WOMAN (DB 48847). Some strong language. Spur Award.

DB 48848

LAST MIDWIFE

Dallas, Sandra

It is 1880 and Gracy Brookens is the only midwife in a small Colorado mining town where she has delivered hundreds, maybe thousands, of babies in her lifetime. But everything changes when a baby is found dead—and the evidence points to Gracy as the killer. With her friends taking sides and a trial looming, Gracy must decide whether it's worth risking everything to prove her innocence. Unrated.

DBC 01669

LONESOME DOVE

McMurtry, Larry

A three-thousand-mile cattle drive, from the banks of the Rio Grande to Montana's big sky country, is the setting for this vivid epic which describes the developing American West and the ranchers, cowboys, prostitutes, and adventurers who attempt to make a new life for themselves in its vast reaches. Strong language, violence, and some descriptions of sex. Bestseller 1985.

BR 06198; BR 13696; DB 22959

MEDICINE HORN: BOOK ONE OF THE BUCKSKINNERS

Sherman, Jory

Lemuel Hawke is only fifteen when he marries Roberta, but his dream is to be self-sufficient on the land. By 1807, he is farming outside Lexington, Kentucky, when Roberta moves to town leaving Lemuel with a son and a distrust of women. Some violence, some strong language, and some descriptions of sex.

DB 47770

PARADISE SKY

Lansdale, Joe R.

Willie, an African American cowboy, flees his farm after his father is murdered. After a mentor teaches him a variety of skills, he makes a new life as a buffalo soldier, calling himself Nat Love. When his woman is attacked, however, he faces a final, deadly showdown. Unrated.

DB 82034

PLAIN LANGUAGE: A NOVEL

Wright, Barbara

Mid-1930s. Virginia Mendenhall travels to Colorado to marry Alfred Bowen, a man she has met only twice. Virginia adjusts to ranch hardships, but as the drought and Depression worsen, tensions rise, secrets surface, and Virginia's troubled brother pays a visit. Some violence and some descriptions of sex. Spur Award. 2003.

DB 69279

REMEMBER BEN CLAYTON

Harrigan, Stephen

1920. Texas rancher Lamar Clayton, lamenting his failure as a father, commissions sculptor Francis “Gil” Gilheaney to create a statue of Lamar’s son Ben, who was killed in World War I. Accompanying Gil is his daughter Maureen, who has secret artistic ambitions of her own. Violence and strong language. 2011.

DB 74902

SANCTUARY

Svee, Gary D.

At age twelve, Judd Medicine Elk knows the feeling of cold and the ache of hunger. But on this day in the 1800

s in Sanctuary, Montana, perhaps his luck will change when the train arrives, and someone will give him a few coins for carrying their luggage. In fact, luck is about to change for the entire town, for on the train is a preacher who exemplifies love for all mankind.

BR 08658; DB 33219

SHAVETAIL: A NOVEL

Cobb, Thomas

Arizona Territory, 1871. When seventeen-year-old Ned Thorne arrives for duty, Corporal Brickner, a conniving old mule driver, takes advantage of the young “shavetail”—a name applied to untrained mules and soldiers. Outranked but not outwitted, Ned faces scorpions and Indians in a battle for survival. Violence. Spur Award. 2008.

DB 69759

SHOOTIST

Swarthout, Glendon

Notorious gunfighter John Bernard Books arrives in El Paso, Texas, in 1901 to confirm a cancer diagnosis. Rather than endure a torturous death in a boarding house, Books decides to die early--and to take along a few outlaws. 1976 John Wayne movie. Some violence and some strong language. Spur Award. 1975.

LB 05175; DB 55309

SIERRA: A NOVEL OF THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

Wheeler, Richard S.

In 1849 young Ulysses McQueen heads for the California gold field, leaving his pregnant wife in Iowa. That same year, former soldier Stephen Jarvis strikes gold and makes his fortune. The two men become partners in a farming venture, just as McQueen's wife arrives to join him.

DB 43937

SILENT WE STOOD: A NOVEL

Chappell, Henry

On July 8, 1860, Dallas, Texas burned. Three slaves were accused of arson and hanged without a trial. Today, most historians attribute the fire to carelessness. Texas was the darkest corner of the Old South, too remote and violent for even the bravest abolitionists. *Silent We Stood* weaves the tale of a small band of abolitionists working in secrecy within Dallas's close-knit society. With war looming and lives hanging in the balance, ideals must be weighed against friendship and love, and brutal decisions yield secrets that must be taken to the grave. Violence and strong language.

DT 07782

SNOWBOUND

Wheeler, Richard S.

After his 1847 court-martial, Colonel John Fremont, known as the Pathfinder, resigns from the army and embarks on an expedition to survey a proposed railway between St. Louis and San Francisco. Trapped in the Colorado mountains during winter, his team battles starvation and freezing temperatures. 2010.

DB 72743

SO WILD A DREAM

Blevins, Winfred

1820s. Eighteen-year-old Sam Morgan leaves western Pennsylvania seeking adventure and fortune in frontier America. Through his encounters with bandits, soldiers, fur traders, Indians, and such historic figures as William Clark, Sam learns the ways of mountain men. Some descriptions of sex, some violence, and some strong language. Spur Award. 2003.

DB 61705

ST. AGNES' STAND

Eidson, Tom,

Accused of shooting a man in the back, Nat Swanson has been running for his life for a week when he spies the Apaches circling two overturned wagons. Nat spots a woman's face, but knows he can't save her and continues on. The face haunts him and soon Nat turns back. Sneaking past the Apaches, Nat finds three nuns and seven orphans who think Nat has been sent by God. Violence and some strong language.

DB 38988

SUMMER OF PEARLS

Blakely, Mike

In 1944 Ben Crowell at eighty-four recalls events of 1874, his fourteenth summer. Then, during the pearl rush in Port Caddo, Texas, Judd Kelso, a local riverboat captain, was murdered, and Ben witnessed greed, was rescued from a steamboat explosion, and fell in love. Some strong language. Spur Award. 2000.

DB 56653

TIME IT NEVER RAINED

Kelton, Elmer

A cantankerous, independent-minded Texan, Charlie Flagg, fights to save his medium-sized ranch in Rio Seco during a drought. His problems are compounded by ineffectual federal aid programs and difficulties with Mexican ranch workers. Some strong language. 1973.

DB 49217; LB 03803

TROUBLE AT THE REDSTONE

Nesbitt, John D.

A woman who calls herself Irma Welles hires cowboy Will Dryden to find her husband, Alfred. The trail leads to the Redstone ranch, where a young hand was just murdered. Will uncovers shady dealings that he has a hunch bear on Alfred's disappearance. Some descriptions of sex. Spur Award. 2008.

DB 70070

TUCKER'S RECKONING: A RALPH COMPTON NOVEL BY MATTHEW P. MAYO

Mayo, Matthew P.

Bereft and drifting in Oregon, widower Samuel Tucker witnesses the murder of Payton Farraday. When Tucker arrives in Farraday's town with the victim's gun, he becomes a suspect. But Farraday's niece believes Tucker's story--and she needs his help. Some violence and some strong language. Commercial audiobook. 2012.

DB 77006

VENGEANCE VALLEY

Wheeler, Richard S.

Colorado. Will "Hard Luck" Yancey discovers telluride gold under a hospital managed by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. When a ruthless syndicate run by Alfred Noble--the same man who swindled Yancey out of his own mining fortune--plots to steal the sisters' claim, Yancey vows to help. Spur Award. 2004.

DB 61386

VIOLENT LAND

Overholser, Wayne D.

To help support his struggling family, eighteen-year-old Daniel Nathan finds work with mighty Oregon cattle boss Jim Perrin. But as time passes, Dan finds his loyalties divided between his land-hungry employer and the settlers who are losing their spreads. 1954.

DB 60244

WANDERER SPRINGS

Flynn, Robert

Called home for a funeral, Will Callaghan returns to the dying town of Wanderer Springs in northwest Texas, where he recalls the scenes of his youth.

Callaghan's remembrances of his own past combine with stories of the town's history in a sometimes funny and sometimes painful narrative.

DB 28194

WAY OF THE COYOTE

Kelton, Elmer

In the fall of 1865, after the Civil War, risks run high on the Texas plains. Former Texas Ranger Rusty Shannon faces many dangers as he makes his way home with ten-year-old Andy Pickard, raised by the Comanches and called BADGER BOY (DB 52321). Some strong language. Spur Award. 2001.

DB 56027

WILD RAN THE RIVERS: ONE FAMILY'S WESTERN ODYSSEY: FIVE TRAILS WEST

Crownover, James D.

A story of pioneers, kidnappings, forced marriages, pirates, natural disasters, a mysterious wilderness settlement, and how the second generation of a Cherokee family found a home on the upper reaches of the Little Red River in the early 1800s. Some violence. 2014.

BR 21805; DB 86950

SPUR AWARD WINNERS
NONFICTION

ANDREW JACKSON AND HIS INDIAN WARS

Remini, Robert Vincent

Historian reexamines President Jackson's policy on Native Americans, emphasizing the cultural and social context of the early nineteenth century. Discusses Jackson's personal attitudes and his responsibility for the removal of Native Americans from the east coast. Contends that Jackson believed his actions would improve the Indians' chances to escape extinction. 2001.

DB 54210

BLACK ELK: THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN VISIONARY

Jackson, Joe

A biographical account of the life of the Native American holy man known for his 1932 testimonial *BLACK ELK SPEAKS* (DB 22552). Black Elk fought at Little Big Horn, witnessed the death of his cousin Crazy Horse, and traveled to Europe with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, among many other things. 2016.

DB 87658

BLACK KETTLE: THE CHEYENNE CHIEF WHO SOUGHT PEACE BUT FOUND WAR

Hatch, Thom

Biography of the nineteenth-century chief who worked to secure survival of the Cheyenne nation. Portrays Black Kettle in the social, political, and historical context of America's western expansion. Describes the battles and betrayals leading to his death in 1868 when Lieutenant Colonel Custer attacked Black Kettle's village. Spur Award. 2004.

DB 61754

BLOOD AND THUNDER: AN EPIC OF THE AMERICAN WEST

Sides, Hampton

Documents U.S. government efforts in the nineteenth century to drive Mexico out of the Southwest and California and simultaneously to decimate the Navajo nation. Focuses on the role of frontiersman Kit Carson, a comrade of Native Americans, who became instrumental in their defeat. Some violence. 2006.

DB 64017

BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS: BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE MASSACRE AT MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

Bagley, Will

Salt Lake City journalist discusses the massacre of more than one hundred wagon train emigrants from Arkansas on September 11, 1857, in southern Utah. Details the attack by local Mormon settlers and Southern Paiute warriors and explores the possible involvement of territorial governor Brigham Young. 2002.

DB 63040

CRAZY HORSE: A LAKOTA LIFE

Bray, Kingsley M.

Documents the life of the Oglala Sioux leader Crazy Horse (1842-1877) from primary sources including oral histories. Traces the spiritual beliefs and armed conflicts that influenced the war chief until his death the year after the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Violence. Spur Award. 2006.

DB 69019

CUSTER'S TRIALS: A LIFE ON THE FRONTIER OF A NEW AMERICA

Stiles, T.J.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *THE FIRST TYCOON: THE EPIC LIFE OF CORNELIUS VANDERBILT* (DB 70495) examines General George Armstrong Custer's life and often-ignored aspects of his legacy, attempting to dismantle Custer's historical caricature. He also details the self-conflict that sometimes resulted from Custer's own efforts. Descriptions of sex and some violence. Commercial audiobook. 2015.

DB 83009

DINÉ: A HISTORY OF THE NAVAJOS

Iverson, Peter

A cultural history of the largest North American Indian nation. Describes their Southwest origins bounded by four sacred mountains and their evolving lifestyle through the start of the twenty-first century. Discusses their adaptability as a means of survival, focusing on the final 150 years. 2002.

DB 58526

GALL: LAKOTA WAR CHIEF

Larson, Robert W.

History professor's biography of Hunkpapa Sioux warrior Gall (ca. 1840-1894). Explores Gall's relationship with Sitting Bull during the Battle of the Little Bighorn and its aftermath, his clashes with the U.S. government before he ultimately moved his tribe onto a reservation, and his dedication to his people. 2007.

DB 68174

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON: THE OSAGE MURDERS AND THE BIRTH OF THE FBI

Grann, David

An examination of the 1920s murders of wealthy Osage Indian Nation members in Oklahoma. When the newly-formed FBI bungled the investigation, young Director Hoover turned to ex-Texas Ranger Tom White, who put together an undercover team, including one of the only American Indian agents in the Bureau. Violence and some strong language. Commercial audiobook.

DB 87767

KILLING OF CRAZY HORSE

Powers, Thomas

Investigates the death of Sioux warrior Crazy Horse in 1877, after he surrendered to the U.S. Army. Describes the tensions between whites and Native Americans at the time and discusses critical events, including General George Custer's defeat and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills. 2010.

DB 75199

LINE BECOMES A RIVER: DISPATCHES FROM THE BORDER

Cantu, Francisco

After being stationed at the remote crossroads of a drug route and a smuggling corridor, the Mexican-American author, plagued by nightmares, abandons the Border Patrol for civilian life. Then a friend—a regular at the cafe where he now works—travels back to Mexico to visit his dying mother and doesn't return. Violence, strong language. Commercial audiobook. 2018.

DB 90287; LB 10593

LINEA SE CONVIERTE EN RIO: UNA CRONICA DE LA FRONTERA

DB 91442

ONE VAST WINTER COUNT: THE NATIVE AMERICAN WEST BEFORE LEWIS AND CLARK

Calloway, Colin G.

Traces the history of America's native peoples from the Appalachians to the Pacific until 1800. Describes constant environmental changes with development of a corn-growing agriculture, introduction of horses, acquisition of guns, and decimation from disease, among other factors. 2003.

DB 58263

RESHAW: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN BAPTISTE RICHARD: EXTRAORDINARY ENTREPRENEUR AND SCOUNDREL OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER

Glass, Jefferson

In the early American West, John Baptiste Richard, known as Reshaw, was a fearless adrenaline junkie, always on the edge of danger in his many personifications: frontiersman, trapper, Indian trader, whiskey smuggler, reliable friend, and ruthless barterer. Considered a scoundrel by some, he lived by his own code of ethics and helped shape the American West. Some violence.

DBC 02989

SHOT ALL TO HELL: JESSE JAMES, THE NORTHFIELD RAID, AND THE WILD WEST'S GREATEST ESCAPE

Gardner, Mark Lee

Recounts the final holdup of the eight-man James and Younger gang. Details the outlaws' 1876 attempt to rob the First National Bank of Northfield, Minnesota; the response from the employees and citizens; and the two-week manhunt that followed. Violence and some strong language. Spur Award. 2013.

DB 79089