

A Comprehensive Study Guide for Zane Grey's "Riders of the Purple Sage"

Plot Summary

Set in the rugged American Southwest in the late 1800s, "Riders of the Purple Sage" tells the story of Lassiter, a mysterious and enigmatic figure who arrives in the isolated town of Cottonwoods. Lassiter is on a mission to avenge the murder of his brother, who was killed by the Mormon leader, Elder Tull.



Study Guide for Zane Grey's Riders of the Purple Sage

by Lisi Harrison

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English

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Lassiter initially seeks the help of the town's sheriff, Tull's nephew, but the sheriff refuses to assist him. Undeterred, Lassiter decides to take matters into his own hands. He recruits a group of outlaws and vigilantes to join him in his quest for revenge.

As Lassiter and his men begin their pursuit of Tull, they encounter a fierce resistance from the Mormon community. The Mormons, led by Elder Tull,

are determined to protect their leader at all costs. A bloody conflict ensues, with Lassiter and his men facing off against the Mormon militia.

In a climactic showdown, Lassiter finally confronts Elder Tull. In a fierce battle, Lassiter kills Tull and avenges his brother's death. However, his victory is bittersweet. Lassiter has lost many of his friends and allies in the fight, and he is forced to leave Cottonwoods to escape the wrath of the vengeful Mormons.

Character Analysis

Lassiter: The protagonist of the novel, Lassiter is a complex and enigmatic figure. He is a skilled gunman and a fearless leader, but he is also haunted by a troubled past. Lassiter is driven by a thirst for revenge, but he is also capable of great compassion.

Elder Tull: The antagonist of the novel, Elder Tull is a ruthless and ambitious Mormon leader. He is determined to control Cottonwoods and the surrounding territory, and he will stop at nothing to achieve his goals. Tull is a powerful and dangerous enemy, but he is also a deeply flawed individual.

Jane Withersteen: A strong-willed and independent woman, Jane Withersteen is one of the few people who understands Lassiter. She becomes his ally and confidante, and she helps him to heal from his past wounds.

Venters: A skilled outlaw and Lassiter's right-hand man, Venters is a loyal and dependable friend. He is always ready to fight alongside Lassiter, and he is one of the few people who knows Lassiter's true identity.

Bishop Dyer: A wise and compassionate Mormon bishop, Dyer is a voice of reason in the conflict between Lassiter and Tull. He tries to negotiate a peace between the two sides, but he is ultimately unsuccessful.

Themes

Revenge: The novel explores the complex and destructive nature of revenge. Lassiter's quest for revenge leads him down a dark and dangerous path, and it ultimately costs him dearly.

Justice: The novel also explores the theme of justice. Lassiter believes that he is justified in taking the law into his own hands to avenge his brother's death. However, the novel raises questions about whether vigilante justice is ever truly justified.

Love: Despite the violence and bloodshed, the novel also contains a strong love story. Lassiter and Jane Withersteen fall in love, and their relationship provides a glimmer of hope in the midst of the darkness.

Historical Context

"Riders of the Purple Sage" is set against the backdrop of the Mormon-Gentile conflict in the American West. The Mormons, who were persecuted in the eastern United States, settled in Utah in the 1840s. They established a strong and independent community, but they also came into conflict with the non-Mormon settlers who moved into the region.

The conflict between the Mormons and Gentiles was a complex and often violent affair. Both sides committed acts of violence and aggression, and the conflict eventually led to the Utah War in 1857.

"Riders of the Purple Sage" reflects the tensions and conflicts of this period. The novel portrays the Mormons as a powerful and oppressive force, but it also shows that the Gentiles were not always innocent victims. The novel's depiction of the conflict is complex and nuanced, and it provides a valuable insight into this important chapter in American history.

Study Questions

1. What are the main events of the plot of "Riders of the Purple Sage"? 2. Describe the main characters of the novel and their relationships to each other. 3. What are the major themes of the novel? 4. How does the novel reflect the historical context of the Mormon-Gentile conflict? 5. What are your thoughts on the novel's ending?

"Riders of the Purple Sage" is a classic Western novel that explores the complex themes of revenge, justice, love, and history. Zane Grey's vivid prose brings the characters and setting to life, and the novel's suspenseful plot keeps readers on the edge of their seats. "Riders of the Purple Sage" is a must-read for anyone interested in Western literature or American history.



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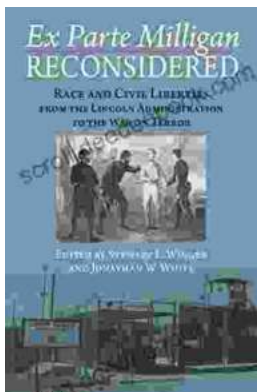
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