



The Light of Western Stars

Zane Grey

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A New York society girl buys a ranch which becomes the center of frontier warfare. Her loyal superintendent rescues her when she is captured by bandits. A surprising climax brings the story to a delightful close.

The Light of Western Stars Details

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From Reader Review The Light of Western Stars for online ebook

Amanda says

One of my favorite Zane Grey Westerns!

Stefaniab says

"The Light of Western Stars" is the 12th Zane Grey book that I've read, and far better than I expected. "Stars" takes places roughly in the same year that it was published, 1914, about the same time as the publication of "The Rainbow Trail." "Stars" begins in the same fashion as the former book. A stranger from the East journeys to the Southwest, and the fish out of water plot commences. This time, the newcomer is Majesty Hammond, a wealthy woman from a patrician New York area family.

Grey writes some amazing heroines, and Majesty might be at the top of a distinguished list. "Stars" is written in the third person, solely from Majesty's point of view. So we don't get to see the cattle drives or the gun play (except in a few critical spots) that are featured in Grey's novels told from the cowboy or gunslinger perspective. What we do see is Majesty planning, ruminating, and reveling in the ranch life that she experiences. She goes from being a terribly bored and emotionally empty member of the early 20th century leisure class to an active owner of a huge rancho on the New Mexico/Mexico border. And there's a revolution going on down South.

Might I add that there is a love story undercurrent that Majesty stubbornly refuses to realize until the tumultuous end. The object of her extremely suppressed affections is Glen Stewart, her trail boss. Stewart also goes through a momentous character arc, from drunken yahoo to selfless hero. Former gunslingers Monty, Link, and Nels, round out a great trio of secondary characters.

Every Zane Grey book I've read has a big set piece, usually, but not always, near the finale. As other reviewers have noted, "Stars" has one of the best. In 1914, huge, crank-started cars were around but not in wide use. Few roads pierced their way through the Southern New Mexico desert. Grey gives us a fantastic car race to the border and beyond, in an era when cars were not common, prone to breakdowns and flat tires, and viewed by people as a terrifying travel option.

CRINGE ALERT: The cowboys' constantly use the term "Greaser" to refer to Mexicans. Though he does introduce a few minor, admirable Mexican characters, modern reader me needed to swallow my 21st century sensibilities when that epithet came around. Kinda like Black high school kids reading "Huckleberry Finn" or Jewish audiences watching "The Merchant of Venice."

Theresa says

What an amazing ride! If only I could find more Zane Grey books like this one!

I think perhaps the reason I like it so much is that it is told from the woman's perspective. I'm not really sure.

I feel in love with every single one of "Majesty's" cowboys. None more so than Gene Stewart. What a man. I embarrass myself sometimes. I love how much he loved her from afar, trying to be everything she wanted and keeping her safe.

All of the cowboys change with her around, they go from hardened men, to big softies. Doing anything to keep her safe and happy. Even so much as to die for her. The bad guys are really over the top bad, but that's exactly how I like my westerns.

This story is like a rose. You think it is the most beautiful thing you have ever read and then another petal opens and you can't imagine it can get more wonderful and another petal opens. The padre's story? Oh my I smiled so much. Such perfect timing. I could so see myself in Madeline's agony both before and after.

The ending? Oh my gosh, chills and tears. What suspense. What a thrill. I read online that people were unsatisfied with the ending, and I get that. I would have loved an embrace and a kiss, but for sheer drama, that one couldn't have been beat.

Frank says

This is considered a classic western by Zane Grey...when men were men, women were on a pedestal, and Hispanics were Greasers! I've read a few other Grey westerns and remember enjoying them for the most part (he was a favorite author of my father's who read them back close to when they were written) but I just couldn't get into this. The story was about a young woman, Madeline, who decides to travel west where her brother is working as a cowhand on a ranch in New Mexico. As soon as she gets there, one of the other cowboys tries to forcibly marry her on a bet! Of course Majesty (Madeline's pet name) thinks this was romantic rather than sexual assault and later in the novel her maid actually does appear to be forced into a marriage. But of course the maid decides this is love and Majesty liked the idea. Well, Majesty being a woman of means, bails out her brother and his boss and establishes a ranch called Majesty's Rancho where all seems wonderful. The book is full of descriptions of the country and of life on the ranch including cattle roundups and branding but to me the story just seemed to go nowhere and the characters were very cliched and could have been out of a Hopalong Cassidy or Roy Rogers movie. In fact, *Light of Western Stars* was made into several different movie versions from the silent days up through 1940 or so. I stopped reading this about halfway through, deciding to move on to something a little more up to date and realistic.

Karen says

Oh god. This started out as a fun activity and has now turned into a Sisyphean task.

But first, backstory. I'm writing a western. Yes, a western. Hey, they say write about what you know, and I know about the Southwest. Also, research helps. Thus, I thought, you know, I've seen lots of westerns, I should also read some. So a while back (probably about a year now, god I'm bad at life) I bought three westerns. 1.) *How the West Was Won* because I saw the movie and figured it was pretty classic. Same for 2.) *The Ox-Bow Incident*. The third one I got, 3.) *The Light of Western Skies*, is a Zane Grey novel, because Zane Grey's got his fingers in all the pies out here. Hell, there's a ballroom named after him at the fancy,

old-timey, tourist-trap hotel in our downtown here in Flagstaff. I used to go sliding down a waterfall named after him in the Tonto forest. So I was thinking, this'll be classic too.

I want to poke my eyes out.

This is bad. And not just in the “vainly attempt to overlook the overt racism and misogyny of the time” kind of bad. Because that’s bad. Apparently all Mexicans are dirty and lazy if left to their own devices and will only be clean and hard-working if you as a white person force them to be so. Oh, and don’t forget, treacherous. And cowardly. And you also can’t tell how old they are because not white. And probably all these white people think they look the same because racism.

Then there’s also the misogyny. I think this is most deeply rooted in the depiction of the main character as being so perfect. She’s pretty and wonderful when she firsts comes out to the West but she literally does nothing else except for getting more wonderful and pretty. She literally says that her “beauty has trebled” since she came West. She’s not full of herself at all, that one. Literally everyone is in love with her. And she’s dumb as a bag of bricks. And condescending. She pretends to take these cowboys seriously but really she just sees them as quaint. There’s nothing to her. She’s not interesting, she’s not flawed, she’s not even useful. I can’t figure out the point of her, except that he needed a main character.

Madeline seriously is too perfect. There was an inkling of hope at the beginning when her brother’s like, “I lost all my fortune and cattle and everything because being dumb as a bag of bricks runs in the family,” and they could have really struggled. But she simply writes a check and all the bad things go away. The run-down ranch becomes as pretty and wonderful as she is and all their hopes and dreams come true and if only other people would just stop being so nasty and let them enjoy it then everything would be wonderful and pretty and perfect!

And don’t get me started on the chapter solely devoted to “desert golf”. I thought I was gonna hurl.

There were also many things which were an affront to us native Southwesterners. Such as, “the grotesque shapes of yucca and ocotillo”??? Are you really from the Southwest??? Because yucca and ocotillo are BEAUTIFUL, YOU DAMN FOOL. Or, when the party is riding to a camping spot and a thunderstorm is rising up. The leader of the party is like, “let’s keep going” and where do they end up? On a mountain top. Where they are more likely to be struck by lightning. Or washed completely away by torrential rains. What idiots.

Ultimately, this book rubbed me the wrong way. The action didn’t have the right pacing, I didn’t care about the characters, and the meaning felt preachy. Men are manly and ladies are feminine and fainting and you better be the best person ever or else everyone will hate you! Oh, I’m sorry, wait, you better make sure everyone *knows* you’re the best person or they’ll hate you anyway automatically assuming the worst of you. And judging you unnecessarily.

If the rest of Zane Grey’s novels are like this, count me out. If there’s one in the pack that could redeem him, let me know. I’ll take the chance, I guess.

Loren Robertson says

Perfect

What can I say that other Zane Grey fans haven't already said in high praise for his brilliant westerners? I can honestly recommend this book to all audiences.

Diana Thomsen says

Read for Goodreads 2018 Summer Reading Challenge, Expert Level.
High Noon: Read a classic or contemporary Western

I'm not a big Western fan, but I decided to go ahead and give this one a try. The Light of Western Stars just happens to be part of the lyrics of a lullaby my mother used to sing to me, so I had automatic nostalgia going on. And I did like the book. Granted, the thing is smashed full of negative stereotypes of Mexicans, but since it's faithful to the opinions of the time, I'll call it historical fiction and let it go. Ditto on the opinions toward women. At least the main character had some independent thought. I'll give her that. The plot was relatively predictable, but there were some twists I didn't anticipate, which was a bonus. So, no, I'm not likely to suddenly start reading piles of Westerns, but I don't regret the time I spent with this one.

Lisa Brown says

One of my favorite Zane Grey novels. I love the romance, the tension, the devotion, and especially the character Gene Stewart. If you are one who reads the ending first, don't do that with this book - it will spoil a lot of it.

PS. Be sure to read the sequel, Magesty's Rancho, as well.

Robert Hepple says

First published in 1914, The Light of the Western Stars is a routine Western romance of the sort that Zane Grey specialised in, set against a background of Texas ranching and border clashes with revolutionary Mexico. Meandering in places, especially in the mid-section when a group of 'dude' easterners are invited along to stay at the ranch as guests. Enjoyable enough, just so long as any resemblance to reality is ignored. Good for Zane Grey purists.

Anne says

This is Zane Grey's best western ever! I've read some of his other books like "Riders of the Purple Sage" and "The Last Trail" which were good but this one was amazing!!! As soon as the book started there was action and I knew that I would thoroughly enjoy this title. I wish that he wouldn't write out the swear words that the cowboys use. (He has only used 2 words) but in some titles (like Riders of the Purple Sage) they swore ALOT!!! His descriptions of places and landscapes and so such, are really good and very descriptive. I love all the characters and I hope that you will get this book and read it and enjoy it like I did! There is also a

sequel to this book, but I haven't been able to find it yet, but I'll be looking :D

Dawn Bolton says

This was a book in which a wealthy young woman leaves New York for a town near the Mexican border. I felt the woman who gradually acclimatises herself to living in rural America was a trifle smug through out. She meets a cowboy and the author shines in this instance by developing his character and showing how the girl's faith in him makes him abandon the drink and wild ways and reform himself.

The cowboys are characterised very well as are the wealthy New Yorkers who come for a bit of fun amongst the uncivilised wild west men. A lot of research was clearly done and the language is very authentic as are the descriptions of the lifestyle of the cowboys and the Greasers and the war-mongering along the border.

Sadly the style was rather prolonged and dreary. At least three hundred pages could have been axed. The relationship between the heroine and the cowboy seemed stilted. It is not a book I would recommend others to read.

Janet Lynch says

I haven't gotten around to Zane Grey until now, and I thought I'd like him much more. He's excellent at scenery and the way of the cowboy life, but the characters seem cliché and the plot at times ludicrous. The novel did sort itself out at the end, however. I know Grey is a product of his times, but the racism is annoying; Mexicans are evil and lazy and lumped together as "greasers." Grey does pretty well by women, since the protagonist "Majesty" is a strong female character. The story is all told in her viewpoint, and for scenes in which she is not present, the events are relayed to her in tedious, stilted dialogue. Multi-character or omniscient viewpoint might have served Grey better. I'm glad I read this, but I don't think I'll pick up another.

P.S. Romance writers take note: read Grey and you're sure to pick up on a thing or two!

Bruce Thomas says

Zane Grey wrote about the West in ways that make you feel part of the story and involves the reader in his characters. The Light of Western Stars is like that - I was interested in the story and wanted to know what made them laugh in spite of the kill or be killed tensions of the Cowboys. Majesty's Eastern friends thought their visit was a "romp" and their adventures were staged for their benefit, not realizing the danger they were in at times and how the Cowboys were not only taking risks for the city folk's amusement but also keeping deadly danger away from them. The ending is so simple that I wanted more, but don't read it or you will ruin much of the book.

David Mann says

A self-declared Romance; both as to the love story between the two protagonists and the regular literary flourishes relied upon to describe southwestern New Mexico and Southeastern Arizona. While usually miring his readers in melodrama, Gray is a little more subtle in this book, and weaves a thoughtful narrative around a likely plot. The effect is a memorable Western story with intelligent drama. As with all great Westerns, the Star role is the landscape itself, which Gray is expert in bringing to life.

Axslin gin says

If you like Zane Grey western's, you'll not be disappointed with this book. It's a story of a woman who is searching for some meaning in her life, as the sun sets on the classic cowboy life. Oh, it's a horse riding, cattle herding, fist fighting, desert pounding gun fighting western alright, but the 20th century is creeping in...

A city girl goes to the country and gets culture shock, which is exactly what she was looking for. The rich and popular Madeline had everything a girl could want on the surface: money, prestige, a gaggle of friends and a string of gentlemen pursuers that would put her on a pedestal. But for the girl who had *everything*, she still wasn't satisfied. *What do you want* may be the most difficult question you'll ever ask yourself, especially if that answer is in the abstract, and Madeline saw nothing in New York that even smacked of definition.

After arriving in *Hell Hole USA*, Madeline is accosted by a filthy, drunken cowboy, *Mean Gene* Stewart. She was revolted, she was frightened, she was appalled, but at the same time, it was a universe away from the phony sociophiles in New York, and that is the spark Madeline was looking for, although she didn't realize it at the time.

Zane Grey is an artist of words, and throughout the book he paints a picture of the west that in and of itself makes the book worth reading. But there is a story behind the hyper descriptive chronicling of every piece of dirt and cactii that came within Madeline's purview. There were more filthy, crude cowboys in her future, and when she got to where she was going she found that Gene was one of them. *Of course*. But then, when you're in the middle of nowhere (and that's where they were), it's not unusual to run into the same people.

Very quickly Madeline begins to adapt to the environment. She buys a ranch, spruces it up, and in seemingly no time turns the area in some kind of paradise. The 'hoss loves her, the cowboys love her, and not one of those sex-starved mongrels laid a finger on her; it was all just great. Well, not all great, or that would be the end of the story. There was a revolution in Mexico at the time, and they were 10 miles from the border. Trouble abounded. If she thought the cowboys were revolting, she never got a load of the cretins that made their way back and forth across the border. Apparently, they needed a wall even back then, but had there been one, the story wouldn't have been nearly as entertaining.

As for Mean Gene, he appeared to be the ultimate screw up, and would have self destructed nicely on his own if not for Madeline. Still, even with her influence, he was an ongoing project. Rome was not built in a day, and Gene was not reformed with a few kind words.

The story may have been bit predictable, if not a little politically incorrect. Although Madeline controlled her spread, she slowly but surely started to enjoy the rough manhandlers that surrounded her. She started to like

the *bad boy* antics of the cowboys, and even accepted the bad, *bad* boys as part of the picture. It was all there, the brooding anti-hero, the classic villain, the kindly old repository of advice, the friend she could confide in, and even a hooker to make her jealous. I said earlier that the cowboys were sex-starved. Maybe not, but after a lifetime of *Bonita's* at two bits a night, Madeline was something else...

Madeline fell for the *western stars*, and something else as well. I can understand one, but was mystified by the other. But, there's no accounting for taste, so I just enjoyed the story and the graphic descriptions, along with all the action—which there was plenty of, and took the story in its totality. Sure, you could pick apart the plot, but the story is relatively plausible, and Grey has a pleasing style. Three stars...
