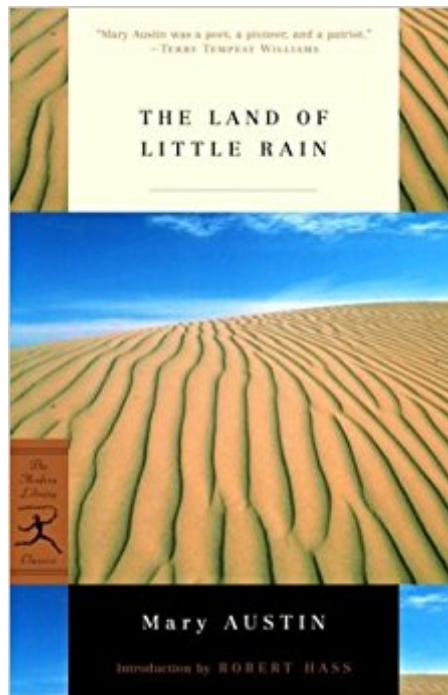




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The Land Of Little Rain (Modern Library Classics)



Synopsis

"Between the high Sierras south from Yosemite--east and south over a very great assemblage of broken ranges beyond Death Valley, and on illimitably into the Mojave Desert" is the territory that Mary Austin calls the Land of Little Rain. In this classic collection of meditations on the wonders of this region, Austin generously shares "such news of the land, of its trails and what is astir in them, as one lover of it can give to another." Her vivid writings capture the landscape--from burnt hills to sun-baked mesas--as well as the rich variety of plant and animal life, and the few human beings who inhabit the land, including cattlemen, miners, and Paiute Indians. This Modern Library Paperback Classic is set from the original 1903 edition.

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Customer Reviews

"Mary Austin was a poet, a pioneer, and a patriot." --Terry Tempest Williams

"Between the high Sierras south from Yosemite--east and south over a very great assemblage of broken ranges beyond Death Valley, and on illimitably into the Mojave Desert" is the territory that Mary Austin calls the Land of Little Rain. In this classic collection of meditations on the wonders of this region, Austin generously shares "such news of the land, of its trails and what is astir in them, as one lover of it can give to another." Her vivid writings capture the landscape--from burnt hills to sun-baked mesas--as well as the rich variety of plant and animal life, and the few human beings

who inhabit the land, including cattlemen, miners, and Paiute Indians. This Modern Library Paperback Classic is set from the original 1903 edition.

I read this because of its positive reviews and a personal interest in natural history. It can take a while to get into the book, written in an archaic and sometimes convoluted style. (The excellent preface prepares you for this.) Once you learn to ride the waves and rhythms of her writing, she introduces you to the depth of what we would now call "the ecosystem." The author is a brilliant observer of nature, and the parade of essays in this book introduces you the varieties of flora and fauna found in the late 19th Century in the southern Central California and lower eastern Sierra Nevada regions. Also of interest is her experience of the native peoples of the area. A good read.

If you have any interest in knowing what the Owens Valley was like 100 years before Los Angeles took most of its water, this is the book for you. Though she wrote and published other books, Mary Austin's writing may never have reached this level of poetry again.

I like early 20th century writing style. I like similes and metaphors (sp?). If you like straight, clear, relatively short sentences, you probably won't like this book. I was raised in the area and have spent a lot of my time in the mountains and deserts of California. I loved the imagery and imagination Ms. Austin put into her work.

great piece of environmental and southwestern lore

Bob Hass wisely recommended this book. It is a beautiful book Full of great observations by a very wise woman.

Not the most exhilarating read . I can appreciate the attention to detail that the author employs, but good grief, I was bored. A great read if you're into exhaustive descriptions of landscapes.

This is a great classic, but like many great classics it has gotten stereotyped, in this case in its reputation as a "desert book." There are many other less famous classics that have much more to say about California desert-- Van Dyke's *The Desert*, Chase's *Desert Trails*, Jaeger's *The California Desert and Desert Wildlife*. Mary Austin's experience of the Mojave Desert around Owens Valley was deep and perceptive, but it was marginal. She didn't explore most of the California desert, and

she didn't altogether understand desert biology-- she didn't believe, for example, that some desert species don't need to drink water but can metabolize it from food. The Land of Little Rain is basically about her experience of interior southern California-- as much about the Central Valley and Sierra as the desert-- and about desert people, of which her treatment is somewhat controversial. Some critics like Peter Wild consider her attitude to the Paiutes and Shoshones patronizing and sentimental, although I find it realistic and sympathetic, given my limited knowledge. Her chapter about the Mexican village, Pueblo de las Uvas, does seem patronizing and sentimental to me..Robert Hass's introduction gives a good idea of the book's literary worth, but it tends to perpetuate the stereotype of Austin's book as THE desert book that engendered other popular "desert" books like Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire. But, like Austin's, such books tend to be as much about the author's experiences and perceptions as about the desert.

This is a famous classic with a very early appreciation of the wonder of nature. Focused on the Owens valley rural life, it contains many beautiful stories of the land, lifeforms and people of the area.

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