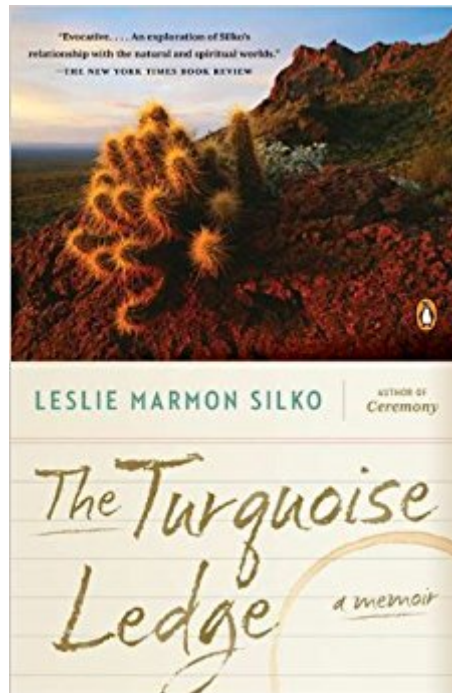




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The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir



Synopsis

Profound reflections on family and the natural world—from the legendary Native American author. With the publication of *Ceremony* in 1978, Leslie Marmon Silko established herself as a storyteller of unique power and brilliance. Now, in her first work of nonfiction, Silko combines memoir with family history and observations on the creatures and desert landscapes that command her attention and inform her vision of the world. Ambitious in scope and full of wonderfully plainspoken and evocative lyricism, *The Turquoise Ledge* is both an exploration of Silko's experience and a moving and deeply personal contemplation of the enormous spiritual power of the natural world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review The turquoise stones Silko finds in the Tucson Mountains near her home embody the story of the land and her own complex heritage. A MacArthur fellow, Silko drew on her Laguna Pueblo, Cherokee, Mexican, and European ancestry in her previous books, including her seminal novels *Ceremony* (1978) and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999). She digs even deeper in this richly veined, dramatic, and mysterious self-portrait, telling gripping stories of suffering and wisdom from each branch of her complex family tree that reveal the consequences of racism, the war against Native Americans, and the abuse of nature, including shocking glimpses into the Indian slave trade and the dire effects of the atomic bomb tests and uranium mining. Vivid portraits of her grandmothers and mother are matched by amazing tales of the animal members of Silko's extended family, from horses and dogs to macaws and rattlesnakes. Mesmerizing descriptions of desert and drought, musings over the significance of turquoise, concern over environmental

destruction, harrowing personal struggles, and haunting revelations of spiritual forces converge in a provocative and numinous memoir that backs Silko's resounding perception that in the Americas, the sacred surrounds us, no matter how damaged or changed a place may appear to be. • --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Leslie Marmon Silko is the author of the novels *Ceremony*, *Almanac of the Dead*, and *Gardens of the Dunes*, as well as many short stories, poems, and essays. She lives in Tucson, Arizona.

I can't put this book down. I read a bit and it seems to go nowhere, just a woman walking and picking up rocks in the desert. But I find myself going back again and again to read more. It feels like I am walking in the desert behind her, noticing the rocks over and over, living with the rattlesnakes and the mastiffs, noticing the rain clouds and hearing the bits and pieces of her life and family history. The prose is beautiful. I can picture the trees and cactus, I can feel this life lived with the animals, reptiles, birds and insects. There is no gossip, no reality shows, no newspapers although here is a woman obviously paying attention to modern society, politics and their impact on the natural world she inhabits. I open the book over and over to listen to this woman share her life with me. She doesn't care if I like her, she is simply speaking the truth of her life, one day at a time. She is intense, focused on her surroundings. She lives as an artist integrated into her environment. She doesn't consider herself as a human being to be the center of the universe. I am married into a Native American family and Silko reminds me of many of my women in-laws. Her voice rings true. She does not have a European American sensibility.

I enjoyed to writing. There was a time in the book that it became monotonous but I gained a sense of living someplace that I never had . got to know a interesting woman and learned a lot as well a developed an appreciation for rattle snakes . I love how she cohabitated with them and gave them respect

Leslie Silko is kinda crazy and it definitely shows in this book. I read it for my bookclub and we all pretty much agreed that it was disjointed; almost as if she'd taken her journal entries and just plopped them onto the pages so she'd have something for the book. Not her best work and certainly nowhere near her prize winning "*Ceremony*". I think it's something I'd pass on if I had my "druthers".

I really enjoyed reading this book. At first I found it difficult to follow, as the time she was talking

about would shift without any notice. I actually did some research on her as a author and about the book. I saw a short interview with her talking about this book and I recall her saying that time was like ocean, flowing all around us. It wasn't something that was in a straight line of chronological order, memories and experiences flowed around us. Sometimes they were close to us and others they drifted further away. Once I heard her explain this the book made much more sense to me and I followed it without any confusion! I loved reading about her finding turquoise stones and reading about her animal friends. Really a great book!

I am a HUGE Silko fan, but this was somewhat of a disappointment. Sure, the book does have its good points (the sudden shift to the 'star people' throws the reader off guard and this is refreshing) but overall I found it boring. It was easy to get through, as the book did flow very nicely, but I simply found myself uninterested in the material. I'm not sure how much of a memoir it is to Silko's life in general, more like a memoir to a certain time period in her life. I will always love Silko's work, but this one was not for me.

One of my favorite books. It really made me consider all the things around me that I don't typically pay attention to...bees, snakes etc. Reading this took me to a place that I really need to be more often! Although I wasn't riveted by the entire book (it is long and goes off into some unusual tangents), I think about it often in my daily life just as I do Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire. I never thought I would find snakes so interesting!

What amazed me about this memoir of a Native American woman was how much I identified with her perceptions and the similarity in our daily rituals. Silko's life is in teardrop perspective--thirty years of roaming the hills and arroyos outside of Tucson; witnessing the passing seasons, shifts in topography, behavior of creatures large and small, flora in its myriad formations, celestial movements, and development for good or ill by mankind. It's a walk with an Indian naturalist. The poetic, loving descriptions of her environment pulled me forward even though some details of her daily existence became tedious. Like her, my walk each day is my meditation. She once loved to ride her horse over the trails, but now finds the slower pace allows her to take in more of what she sees, hears, and smells. I share that feeling and her sense of being connected in the cycle of life without being maudlin. As a student of mythology--American Indian lore in particular--I enjoyed her insights into the ways of her ancestors and learning about the voices of the Star People who channel their wishes through her paintings. I could have done with fewer pet dramas and more

legends of the old people, but I can honestly say I learned a great deal about the desert creatures, plants, and seasons through the eyes of this most caring woman. What stays with me is this: "As I walked I looked at the dark basalt hills, and at the cactus and shrubs and trees; all of them were in harmony with one another, and I felt within that beauty. In an instant I saw that even man-made things--the roll of old fence wire, the old rail ties withered by sixty years of the heat and the sun--were in the light of that beauty. In that beauty we all will sink slowly back into the lap of the Earth."

Lovely prose - very well written and loaded with insight into Native American culture, the human place in the world and images of the desert around the outskirts of Tucson, Arizona.

Break-your-heart beautiful at times and I especially enjoyed Part II = Rattlesnakes. Left me homesick for Tucson, although I have only visited there. Highly recommend! I look forward to reading Leslie Silko's novels next...

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