

Western Lore and Language: A Dictionary for Enthusiasts of the American West

Thomas L. Clark

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Thomas L. Clark : Western Lore and Language: A Dictionary for Enthusiasts of the American West before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Western Lore and Language: A Dictionary for Enthusiasts of the American West:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. What is a fish-burner since it has nothing to do with fish? By Victoria Tarrani What is a fish-burner since it has nothing to do with fish? This book is perfect for writers who want to reveal the old west as accurately as possible including anachronistic terminology that help set the scene. Among the authors of Western Fiction, based in truth, are Zane Gray, Larry McMurtry, and Louis L'Amour. Their books are popular because they are realistic and do not throw in a modern term that would destroy the time setting. Time travel novels for the SF/F genre, historical romance, history, mystery, and discovery writers benefit from this great dictionary as well. Today a zephyr is most commonly thought of as a gentle breeze, but in the 1860's the Washoe zephyr was a strong west wind blowing through the Truckee River Valley during the Spring and the Fall. Not only is the time frame provided, but also the specific location. Washoe was an Indian tribe that inhabited the area that has now become known as Reno, Nevada. The famous Comstock Lode at nearby Virginia City during the 1850's created many terms that are now obsolete. The Washoe canary was the nickname for a burro. Camisa is a beautiful word, a great name for a heroine. However, it is a Spanish based word used in 1830 to describe a loose blousy shirt or chemise. What is a

hydrophobia skunk? The psychological etymology would be a skunk has an abnormal fear of water. In the Southwest of 1910 it was the term that was used to describe a skunk whose bite caused madness; rabies were common to many pests and rodents in the region. The water dog is not canine. It is the Western name for any variety of salamander that was most commonly used as fish bait for Bass. The time frame was about 1850. A fish-burner (also spelled fish burner) is an Alaskan term for a sled dog, especially one that is used in competitive sled rides. A hayburner, on the other hand, is a jocular term for a horse. The design of the book places the words in a left column, the meaning are in the right. It has sufficient white space to make it easy to match the word with the meaning. Photographs are connected to the some of words for descriptive purposes. One of the most effective aspect of the book is to provide dates, areas, language base (e.g., Spanish, Alaskan, Latin, Chinook, etc.), and some history for each word. Anyone interested in the old west will find the book fascinating; writers will find a wonderful tool that help create the stories of the American West. Without a doubt this is a 5 star delight. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. You can do better. By Chris Garcia I bought this book because of the other review. It made me think this would be a book like Dictionary of the American West by Winfred Blevins, which is a rich and wonderful short-course on Western history and spirit. It isn't. Western Lore and Language will answer some basic questions about western words and sometimes gives you pictures of the critters and plants it defines. It's hard cover and laid out with words on one side and definitions on the other--it's kind of attractive. But you can do better, and for much less.

This generously illustrated resource gives readers everything they need to speak "western", from Border Spanish to California Mellow, from Old West spit and spurs to New West silicon chips and surfing. The color and grandeur of the West has generated an evocative language all its own. This book captured the charm and variety of the Western landscape and people in Western Lore and Language. Lovers of words or the West will spend hours browsing the wide range of witty entries. Researchers of the Old West and the New, from Alaska to Baja, will find succinct, accurate definitions and discussions. This engaging, highly readable book is as big and appealing as the West itself. Richard W. Slatta author of The Cowboy Encyclopedia

From Library Journal Clark (English and linguistics, Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas; Dictionary of Gambling, Lekek House, 1987) has compiled a work covering Westernisms? words or expressions regularly associated with the West (defined here as the Mountain and Pacific time zones of the United States and Canada). Terms are drawn from Western life and folklore emanating from the land, occupations, or pastimes of Western America's inhabitants. Most terms are beyond the scope of general dictionaries (e.g., "billiken" and "bungo"), and occasional photographs clarify or illustrate some words. Alphabetically arranged main entries include pronunciation aids, parts of speech, definitions, sources, etymologies, and dates of first occurrence. The definitions are short, and, as the subtitle notes, the book is for enthusiasts. For larger regional collections. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This work differs from the several dictionaries of western words recently reviewed in RBB in that it covers more than just cowboy and western slang terms but also puts emphasis on places, such as states and cities, and on foods--abalone, cilantro, garbanzo, geoduck, mescal, etc. It includes the nicknames of most western states (Golden, Beehive, Stubtoe, and so on). It also briefly covers broader subjects, such as mission design architecture and the polite expression, "Mi casa es su casa." Entries vary from a few lines to a quarter page, and there are some black-and-white photographs and line drawings. Authorities are rarely cited in the text, but most western dictionaries are mentioned in the prefatory matter and are listed in the bibliography. The work shows a want of editorial tightness. Listings, for example, of the date or period of "first occurrence" seem, in many instances, to be too late. For example, the term zanja madre is dated to the period "from 1870's," but Los Angeles had a zanja madre (water-carrying ditch) as early as the 1780s. Clark says that the term joshua tree dates "from 1870's," but they were named in the early 1850s by Mormons who fancied they resembled the biblical Joshua, praying with extended arms. There are some surprising omissions. The words rancheria and gambusino were in common use by 1849. There are also some outright errors. Tule fog does not regularly occur in the Imperial Valley but in the Central Valley of California. The Santa Ana Mountains were not named for General Santa Anna but for the nearby Santa Ana River in about 1769, when the future general was not yet born. And Silicon Valley is southeast, not southwest, of San Francisco. The work does cover many interesting and little-known facts about western lore, and it provides more etymologies than do some other dictionaries of western words. The book has merit, but libraries already well supplied with dictionaries of western words, cowboy slang, and the like might wish to pass.