



# Nothing But the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature

*By John L. Purdy, James Ruppert*

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This anthology includes some of the best works of Native American Literature — with a good representation of major authors, geographic dispersion, gender balance, and a variety of genres. Its illustrative and popular material promote a deeper appreciation of different themes and approaches. Complete works that have become classics in the field, combined with ones from the modern era, make this collection rich in historical and theoretical context. Selections of non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama, include works by Paula Gunn Allen, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Carter Revard, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sherman Alexie, Kimberly Blaeser, Peter Blue Cloud, Louise Erdrich, Scott N. Momaday, Simon Ortiz, and many more. An effective introduction to Native American Literature for readers interested in this area of writing.

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## **Nothing But the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature** By John L. Purdy, James Ruppert Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #430635 in Books
- Brand: Purdy, John (EDT)/ Ruppert, James/ Purdy, John/ Ruppert, James (EDT)
- Published on: 2000-08-26
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.40" w x 6.00" l, 1.94 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 640 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

From the Inside Flap

### **PREFACE**

As the old saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention, and necessity certainly drove the creation of this anthology. As any educator will tell you, one of the difficult duties we face year after year, semester after semester, is the selection of texts for classes. Even in the case of literature courses that cover the writings of "dead white guys" who no longer produce literary works, there is still a continuous stream of secondary books about them and myriad analyses of their writings. In the area of writings by American Indians, this task is even more difficult because of the growing body of secondary sources, of course, but also because of the tremendous increase in the numbers of pieces of literature produced by writers of Native American descent. It is a perplexing quandary when one tries to choose from such a wonderfully rich selection.

Such difficulties also arise when one tries to compile an anthology, and there are some very good examples in print today. Some try to provide the widest coverage: an expansive array of writings from as many nations and tribal groups as possible. Some try to provide an all-inclusive sense of history: coverage from the late eighteenth century to the present. Others center on specific thematic concerns—identity issues, political policies—and thus narrow their scope. Some simply opt for the editors' favorites.

This present endeavor, however, cuts across the various attempts of the past, and it has one simple, perhaps obvious, guiding principle. It was our intention to compile the pieces of literature that our colleagues who teach Native American literature use time and time again. To accomplish this task, we surveyed our colleagues around the globe and asked them to give us a list of their "core" texts. The questionnaires—sent by post and also posted on the Internet—covered all genres and eras. Our only stipulation was that we were looking for complete works of literary art and not "excerpts," that is, sections of longer works, like novels, which rarely stand as discrete units of art. (There are short stories included here that became novel chapters later.) The response was wonderful, and although there were some obviously central authors listed on significant numbers of questionnaires, there was also a great diversity in the recommendations they made.

This may seem to be a very self-serving effort: to create the anthology we always wanted to have. To a degree, this is true, but primarily this book is an attempt to construct an effective introductory collection to written Native literature. In our questionnaire, we asked for lists of pieces used most often because "they work." We did not get into a lengthy attempt to define this vague qualifier, believing that every educator knows when something has a profound, productive effect on a class, an audience. We simply wanted to bring together literary pieces that have this effect, because we also realize that the students who read these pieces of literature in the myriad courses our colleagues teach at a wide array of public and private institutions around the globe constitute the reading public itself; they come from every element of society, cutting across every group distinction employed in the world today: class, gender, race, and political ideology, to name just a few. Nonetheless, the literature speaks personally and compellingly to them, and that is a remarkable achievement.

We truly hope it speaks to you, the current reader, as well. Acknowledgments

We want to thank all the people who have made this anthology possible, including all our colleagues around the world who took the time to answer our survey and thus provided the list of works they find most useful in

their courses. We would also like to thank Steven Beech, who tracked these works down, and our editor, Carrie Brandon, for helping us realize our goal. Finally, however, our greatest appreciation goes to the Native American writers and storytellers who have made such remarkable contributions to the literary arts and enriched our society with their myriad voices and their illuminating insights.

We would also like to thank the reviewers of our manuscript for their input on this anthology: Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, Ph.D., Governors State University; Gloria Lynn Larrieu, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute; Louis Roma-Deeley, Paradise Valley Community College; Patrick Clark Smith, University of New Mexico; and Norma Clark Wilson, University of South Dakota.

— John Purdy,  
James Ruppert

From the Back Cover

AN ANTHOLOGY THAT features both classic and contemporary Native American Literatures, **Nothing But The Truth** is a healthy collection of the best works of Native American Literature. The pieces of literature selected for this anthology are core texts used in classrooms and are conducive to discussion in the classroom. Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Drama are included as well as some theoretical discussion and introductions by various scholars and teachers of the literature.

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— *John Purdy,*  
*James Ruppert*

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