

Books about or set in the Southwest with Water Themes

Books for Children and Tweens

Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa by Erica Silverman and Betsy Lewin, grades K-2 (fiction), first in the series

Kate is a "cowgirl from the boots up," and Cocoa is her loquacious and irascible equine companion. Together they share four amiable adventures in this easy chapter book. Beginning readers learn how the cowhorse was acquired and, in the process, discover that Kate is subtly clever and Cocoa is a bit of a slacker...Simple sentences and lots of repetition make these tales accessible, while occasional cowpoke vocabulary establishes the locale. While the narrative is somewhat lacking in excitement, the genial humor and feisty horse have child appeal. Strong black lines lend rustic solidity to the watercolor illustrations that are generously distributed throughout the text. --Carol Ann Wilson, formerly at Westfield Memorial Library, NJ

The Desert is Theirs Byrd Baylor, age 4-8 (fiction)

You may think of the desert as a harsh, dry place where no one would ever want to live -- but think again. The Desert People know. So do the animals. Both love the land, and "share the feeling of being brothers in the desert, of being desert creatures together." Byrd Baylor's spare, poetic text and Peter Parnall's striking illustrations lime the sky, stone and sand of the desert in this haunting book. A Caldecott Honor Book.

Downriver by Will Hobbs, grades 7 and up (fiction)

Eight problem kids (four boys, four girls, high school age) have been sent to a camp called Discovery Unlimited where they are to meet problems, make responsible decisions, and develop as adults. "Hoods in the Woods" the kids call themselves. Action occurs in the outback of southwestern Colorado and northern Arizona...The book is exquisitely plotted, with nail-biting suspense and excitement. --George Gleason, Department of English, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield

In My Mother's House by Ann Nolan Clark, ages 4-8 (nonfiction)

Told through the eyes of children, this collection of Pueblo Indian [Tesuque Pueblo] poems has been used in classrooms, reading programs, and with parents and children since it was first published in 1941. "A perfect picture book." --*The Horn Book*. A Caldecott Honor Book. Full-color and black-and-white illustrations.

Josefina an American Girl (The American Girls Collection) by Valerie Tripp, Jean-Paul Tibbles, and Susan McAliley (fiction)—Box set

All six beloved Josefina stories are set in 1824, each story reveals more of this hopeful girl growing up under the bright New Mexican sky.

Juan the Bear and the Water of Life: La Acequia de Juan del Oso by Enrique R. Lamadrid, Juan Estevan Arellano, grades 3-5 (in English and Spanish)

According to New Mexican folklore, the region's acequias, or irrigation canals, were created by Juan del Oso, the product of an unusual union between a woman and a curious, gentle bear...The English and Spanish versions of this engaging tall tale sit side

by side. [Illustrator] Córdova's bold colors and brushstrokes evoke the rustic folk-art styles of the Southwest. This book may resonate most strongly among Latino families with roots in Mexico and the American Southwest. However, children of all ethnic backgrounds will enjoy this story about animals with human characteristics... The glossary is especially noteworthy because it identifies certain expressions in the text as Southwestern regionalisms. A good choice for public libraries that serve bicultural families, and for school libraries where folklore is part of the curriculum. --Mary Landrum, Lexington Public Library, KY

Meet the Wild Southwest: Land of Hoodoos and Gila by Susan Twiet, grades 4-8 (nonfiction)

Twiet's eclectic collection of natural-history facts and trivia provides a fascinating look at the American Southwest. Topics ranging from geology and climate to rock art and love bites (spiders) are introduced in illustrated double-page spreads that offer a narrative overview, pen-and-ink drawings, and numerous sidebars containing specialized information. Generous appendixes provide lists of museums and cultural centers; a bibliography; checklists of plants, animals, natural features, and important places; a glossary; and an index. Although the text may be too scattered to satisfy report writers, it has plenty of browser appeal and will be especially useful for families planning hikes or nature walks in the Southwest. --Kay Weisman

One Day in the Desert by Jean Craighead George, age 9-12 (fiction)

'A wounded mountain lion moves from his mountain habitat to a Papago Indian hut in Arizona's Sonoran desert during a record-breaking July day. All creation adapts to the blistering heat until a cloudburst causes a flash flood. With a measured yet vivid style, this introduction to desert ecology makes a memorable impact.' --*School Library Journal*

River Thunder by Will Hobbs, grade 7 and up (fiction)

The premise is that the cast from *Downriver* has been asked to work as interns by "Discovery Unlimited" owner Al, rejoining him for a raft trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Their joyful reunion at the launch site is stressed almost to the breaking point when they find out that Troy, the manipulative, buffed, bad boy who nearly sank their earlier escapade, has bankrolled this trip, and that Al is not involved at all. Setting aside misgivings about Troy's duplicity, they row off, settling into a realistic rhythm of river work, problem solving, play, and stress management. The characters are interesting individuals who have changed in mostly positive ways since their first trip together. --Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Jr. High School, Iowa City, IA

A Walk in the Desert (Biomes of North America) by Rebecca L. Johnson and Phyllis V. Saroff, grade 2-5 (nonfiction)

Johnson offers clear, concise definitions of these biomes and discusses the distinguishing features of each climate. She then focuses on the flora and fauna of these areas and their interactions. This approach will be especially effective in helping children alter their perception of the desert as a barren wasteland. The many full-color, close-up photographs and black-and-white drawings are sure to engage readers' interest. Desert offers some unique information for reports and general interest reading.

Books for Adults

Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water by Marc Reisner (nonfiction)

In this stunning work of history and investigative journalism, Reisner tells the story of conflicts over water policy in the West and the resulting damage to the land, wildlife and Indians. PW stated that this "timely and important book should be required reading for all citizens." --*Publishers Weekly*

Dead Pool: Lake Powell, Global Warming, and the Future of Water in the West by James Lawrence Powell (nonfiction)

For some, "dead pool" is a betting game involving the death of celebrities. What Powell is referring to is the emptying of the arid West's precious reservoirs, prime among them Lake Powell, which was created when the Colorado River was dammed in 1963, submerging Glen Canyon, one of the planet's most spectacular places. The reservoir was a recreational haven until 2005, when it fell to one-third of its capacity. Given the enormous water needs of our desert metropolises—Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix—this is a catastrophe in the making. Powell presents a scientifically grounded inquiry into the grievous failure of the West's megadams, which for all their colossal expense and engineering marvels wreak environmental havoc now exacerbated by global warming. --Donna Seaman

The Milagro Beanfield War by John Nichols (fiction)

Joe Mondragon, a feisty hustler with a talent for trouble, slammed his battered pickup to a stop, tugged on his gumboots, and marched into the arid patch of ground. Carefully (and also illegally), he tapped into the main irrigation channel. And so began—though few knew it at the time—the Milagro beanfield war. But like everything else in the dirt-poor town of Milagro, it would be a patchwork war, fought more by tactical retreats than by battlefield victories. Gradually, the small farmers and sheepmen begin to rally to Joe's beanfield as the symbol of their lost rights and their lost lands. And downstate in the capital, the Anglo water barons and power brokers huddle in urgent conference, intent on destroying that symbol before it destroys their multimillion-dollar land-development schemes. The tale of Milagro's rising is wildly comic and lovingly told, a vivid portrayal of a town that, half-stumbling and partly prodded, gropes its way toward its own stubborn salvation.

Rainwater Harvesting in Drylands, Vols I through III, by Brad Lancaster (nonfiction)

Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands: Guiding Principles to Welcome Rain into Your Life and Landscape is the first volume of three-volume guide on how to conceptualize, design, and implement sustainable water-harvesting systems for your home, landscape, and community. This book enables you to assess your on-site resources, gives you a diverse array of strategies to maximize their potential, and empowers you with guiding principles to create an integrated, multi-functional water-harvesting plan specific to your site and needs.

The River in Winter: New and Selected Essays by Stanley Crawford (nonfiction)

"Reflections in Mud," Crawford's essay about [his own mud] floor, is one of the many pieces collected in this book about his life in northern New Mexico. The novelist who

didn't know how to lay a mud floor is now a seasoned farmer, irrigator, and northern New Mexico villager...Whether he is writing about the river whose water irrigates his land, the plants and animals with which he lives, or the continuing struggle he and his neighbors must engage in if their small farms and farmers markets are to survive, Crawford's thoughtful, witty essays are the kinds of summing up that his fans have been cutting out of periodicals for years. Now that they are in book form we can all throw away the clippings, reread the essays, and give the book to friends who have yet to discover the pleasure of reading Stanley Crawford.

The Secret Knowledge of Water: Discovering the Essence of the American Desert
by Craig Childs (nonfiction)

Childs's obsessive quest to find, map, observe and get wet in the waters of America's deserts has personal roots. Born in the Sonoran Desert of West Texas, this naturalist, river guide and author of four previous books grew up learning to revere water, that fickle, scarce, elemental sustainer of life. More than a fiercely lyrical travelogue through Arizona, Utah, the Grand Canyon and northern New Mexico's cottonwood-willow forests, his hypnotic new book describes an existential adventure. Trekking for days or weeks, alone or with a companion, in search of random waterholes, rare creeks, waterfalls, springs, shrimp-filled pools and sudden, furious floods, Childs mingles personal observations with a cosmic perspective...to make readers feel an integral part of earth's hydrologic processes. Far from being arid, his narrative ripples with adventure. --*Publishers Weekly*

Unquenchable* and *Water Follies by Robert Glennon (nonfiction)

Review for *Unquenchable*: America faces a water-supply crisis. Profligate consumption of water for agriculture, power generation, industry, and homes has led to reduction of groundwater, threats to rivers, and mortal danger to many of the nation's lakes. Much of the blame for this state of affairs lies with uncontrolled growth in the nation's South and Southwest. Desert cities such as Las Vegas use fountains as decorations. Phoenix households draw down the finite resources of ever-shrinking Lake Mead...Glennon submits a list of possible reforms to decrease water consumption. Some, such as waterless toilets, are technological innovations. Others, such as restructuring sewer systems, require governmental intervention. --Mark Knoblauch

When the River Runs Dry: Water--The Defining Crisis of the Twenty-first Century
by Fred Pearce (nonfiction)

From the Amazon to the Nile, the Congo to the Colorado, the rivers of the world are running dry. Former *New Science* news editor Pearce presents the alarming ways in which this ecological emergency is affecting population centers, human health, food production, wildlife habitats, and species viability. Having crisscrossed the globe to research the economic, scientific, cultural, and political causes and ramifications of this underpublicized tragedy, Pearce's powerful imagery, penetrating analyses, and passionate advocacy make this required reading for environmental proponents and civic leaders everywhere.-- Carol Haggas