

UNST 124g fall 2011
interior and exterior landscapes

1 introduction

Leslie Marmon Silko's collection of non-fiction essays, *Yellow woman and a beauty of the spirit: essays on Native American life today* grew from her interest in writing about the spirit of the desert around her home. She writes in the introduction to the collection about the intimate connections among Pueblo people, Pueblo stories, and Pueblo land, using examples from her childhood experiences in the Laguna Pueblo of west-central New Mexico.

I have always felt safer alone in the hills than I feel when I am around people. Humans are the most dangerous of all animals, that's what my mother said. She was fearless with snakes and picked up rattlesnakes with ease. Most of my life I have lived in small settlements or I have lived outside of town, as I do now, in the hills outside of Tucson, where the nearest house is a quarter mile away. I still trust the land—the rocks, the shrubs, the cactus, the rattlesnakes, and mountain lions—far more than I trust human beings. I never feel lonely when I walk alone in the hills: I am surrounded with living beings, with these sandstone ridges and lava rock hills full of life. Luckily I enjoy danger, so I find human beings irresistible; humans are natural forces, just like flash floods or blizzards.

(p. 17-18)

In the next section you are asked to write an extended literary essay in which you make an interpretation and support it with evidence from the primary and additional sources. In essence, your thesis involves an interpretation of the primary source and the essay establishes that your interpretation is valid. You can find guidelines for writing a literary essay at the Purdue Online Writing Lab <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/618/01/> and in the PSU Writing Center library <http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/resources/library.php>.

2 assignment

Thus far you have written essays about how your own life experience affects your understanding of land around. Here, you are asked to respond to the essay *Interior and exterior landscapes: The Pueblo migration stories* by Leslie Marmon Silko (1996) by answering the question: **How does Marmon Silko define landscape?** Reflect on her definition in light

of Margaret Mead's This I Believe essay *A New Control of Destiny*, Dan Flores' *spirit of place*, and your insights from representations of landscape you found at the Portland Art Museum.

This assignment asks you compare material from several sources, an activity that will require more than a few paragraphs to complete and a coherent plan before you start to write. Please write a 3 to 5 page essay following the guidelines established in the course syllabus. Begin by writing an outline of the analysis you plan to describe in the essay. Please turn in both the outline and the finished essay.

3 references

Flores, D. (1998). *A sense of the American west*. Spirit of place and the value of nature in the American west (pp. 31-40) J.S. Sherow (Ed.). University of New Mexico Press.

Marmon Silko, L. (1996). *Yellow woman and a beauty of the spirit: essays on Native American life today*. Interior and exterior landscapes: The Pueblo migration stories (pp. 25-47). New York: Simon and Schuster.

Mead, M., (1953). *This I Believe: A New Control of Destiny*. Retrieved from <http://thisibelieve.org/essay/16809/>