

patrick dewitt the sisters brothers

patrick dewitt the sisters brothers is a critically acclaimed novel that has garnered significant attention for its unique take on the Western genre. Written by Canadian author Patrick DeWitt, the book blends dark humor, adventure, and complex character development to deliver a fresh narrative set in the American West. This article explores the novel's plot, themes, characters, and its adaptation into film, providing a comprehensive overview of its literary significance. Additionally, the discussion covers Patrick DeWitt's writing style and the impact "The Sisters Brothers" has had on contemporary Western fiction. Readers will gain insight into why this novel stands out in Patrick DeWitt's oeuvre and the broader literary landscape.

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Overview of Patrick DeWitt and The Sisters Brothers

Patrick DeWitt is a notable Canadian author known for his distinctive narrative voice and inventive storytelling. "The Sisters Brothers," published in 2011, is his third novel and the work that brought him international recognition. The novel revitalizes the Western genre by combining traditional motifs with a modern sensibility, characterized by wit and psychological depth. DeWitt's background in screenwriting and his literary influences contribute to the novel's cinematic quality and engaging pace.

Author Background

Born in Vancouver in 1975, Patrick DeWitt has written several novels, but "The Sisters Brothers" remains his most celebrated work. His writing often explores themes of identity, morality, and human folly, which are evident in this novel as well. DeWitt's approach to the Western genre is unconventional,

mixing humor and existential reflection.

Publication and Setting

The novel was published by House of Anansi Press and later by other international publishers. Set during the California Gold Rush in the mid-19th century, the story portrays the journey of two brothers employed as hired guns. The setting plays a crucial role in establishing the atmosphere and challenges faced by the characters.

Plot Summary

"The Sisters Brothers" follows Eli and Charlie Sisters, notorious assassin brothers hired to kill a prospector named Hermann Kermit Warm. As they pursue their target through the dangerous landscape of the American West, the novel explores their complex relationship and individual struggles. The narrative delves into themes of violence, loyalty, and redemption while offering a darkly comic perspective on the harsh realities of frontier life.

Key Plot Points

- The assignment to kill Warm and the brothers' initial pursuit
- Encounters with various characters that challenge their worldview
- Eli's internal conflict regarding his violent profession
- The evolving dynamic between the two brothers
- The climax and resolution of their mission

Narrative Style

The story is narrated from Eli's perspective, providing a reflective and often humorous viewpoint. This narrative choice allows readers to access the emotional depth and moral ambiguity experienced by the protagonist.

Main Characters

The characters in "The Sisters Brothers" are meticulously crafted, with the two brothers at the center of the story. Their personalities and motivations are explored in depth, contributing to the novel's complexity and appeal.

Eli Sisters

Eli is the more introspective and sensitive of the two brothers. Throughout the novel, he grapples with the violence inherent in their profession and dreams of a different life. His character development is a critical element of the story's emotional resonance.

Charlie Sisters

Charlie is brash, impulsive, and often ruthless. His contrasting temperament to Eli's highlights the brothers' differences and adds tension to their relationship. Charlie's loyalty to his brother and their shared past drives much of the plot.

Hermann Kermit Warm

The target of the Sisters brothers, Warm is an intelligent and resourceful prospector working on a secret formula for gold extraction. His character challenges the brothers both physically and philosophically, serving as a catalyst for their transformation.

Themes and Literary Style

Patrick DeWitt's "The Sisters Brothers" addresses multiple themes, including morality, brotherhood, and the mythos of the American West. The novel's style combines elements of traditional Westerns with dark comedy and philosophical inquiry.

Major Themes

- **Violence and Morality:** The novel questions the justification of violence and explores its consequences.
- **Brotherhood and Loyalty:** The bond between Eli and Charlie is central, revealing complexities in familial relationships.
- **Identity and Change:** Characters confront their pasts and contemplate their futures, emphasizing personal growth.
- **Myth versus Reality:** The book deconstructs Western genre tropes, blending mythic elements with gritty realism.

Writing Style

DeWitt's prose is notable for its clarity, wit, and economy of language. The narrative balances action with introspection, employing a tone that is both serious and humorous. This blend enriches the reading experience and distinguishes the novel within its genre.

Critical Reception and Awards

The reception of "The Sisters Brothers" was overwhelmingly positive, earning praise from critics and readers alike. Its innovative approach to the Western genre and compelling storytelling garnered several prestigious awards and nominations.

Notable Awards

- Governor General's Award for English-language fiction (Canada)
- Amazon.ca First Novel Award
- Nominated for the Man Booker Prize
- Received critical acclaim from major literary publications

Critical Acclaim

Reviewers highlighted the novel's originality, character depth, and narrative voice. It is often cited as a modern classic of Western literature and praised for its ability to transcend genre conventions.

Film Adaptation

The novel was adapted into a feature film released in 2018, directed by Jacques Audiard. The adaptation brought "The Sisters Brothers" to a wider audience, interpreting the story through a cinematic lens while maintaining the novel's core themes and tone.

Production Details

The film stars John C. Reilly and Joaquin Phoenix as the Sisters brothers, with a supporting cast that enhances the narrative's dynamic. The screenplay was co-written by Jacques Audiard and Thomas Bidegain, adapting DeWitt's

novel with attention to its dark humor and emotional complexity.

Reception of the Film

The film received positive reviews for its performances, direction, and faithful representation of the source material. It was praised for capturing the novel's unique blend of humor and pathos, though some critics noted differences in pacing and tone compared to the book.

Legacy and Influence

Patrick DeWitt's "The Sisters Brothers" has left a lasting impact on contemporary literature and the Western genre. Its success inspired renewed interest in Western narratives that challenge traditional archetypes and explore deeper psychological themes.

Influence on Literature

The novel has influenced other writers to experiment with genre blending and character-driven storytelling within Western settings. It is frequently studied in academic contexts for its thematic richness and stylistic innovation.

Continuing Relevance

The enduring popularity of "The Sisters Brothers" is evident in its continued readership and cultural presence. It stands as a testament to Patrick DeWitt's skill in crafting a story that is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the author of 'The Sisters Brothers'?

The author of 'The Sisters Brothers' is Patrick DeWitt.

What is the genre of 'The Sisters Brothers'?

'The Sisters Brothers' is a Western novel with elements of dark comedy and historical fiction.

When was 'The Sisters Brothers' published?

'The Sisters Brothers' was published in 2011.

What is the basic plot of 'The Sisters Brothers'?

The novel follows two notorious assassin brothers, Eli and Charlie Sisters, as they travel across the American West during the Gold Rush to carry out a contract killing.

What themes are explored in 'The Sisters Brothers'?

Themes include brotherhood, morality, violence, identity, and the harsh realities of the American frontier.

Has 'The Sisters Brothers' received any notable awards?

'The Sisters Brothers' was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2011 and won the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction in Canada.

Is 'The Sisters Brothers' based on a true story?

No, 'The Sisters Brothers' is a work of fiction, though it is set against the historically inspired backdrop of the California Gold Rush era.

Was 'The Sisters Brothers' adapted into a film?

Yes, 'The Sisters Brothers' was adapted into a film released in 2018, directed by Jacques Audiard and starring John C. Reilly and Joaquin Phoenix.

What style of writing does Patrick DeWitt use in 'The Sisters Brothers'?

Patrick DeWitt employs a darkly humorous and gritty narrative style, blending sharp dialogue with vivid descriptions of the Western landscape.

How does 'The Sisters Brothers' differ from traditional Western novels?

Unlike typical Westerns that often romanticize the frontier, 'The Sisters Brothers' provides a more cynical and introspective look at the lives of outlaws, focusing on character depth and moral ambiguity.

Additional Resources

1. *True Grit* by Charles Portis

This classic Western novel follows the determined 14-year-old Mattie Ross as she hires the tough U.S. Marshal Rooster Cogburn to track down her father's killer. The story features themes of justice, revenge, and the harsh realities of the Old West. Its mix of dark humor and vivid characters makes it a compelling read for fans of "The Sisters Brothers."

2. *Blood Meridian* by Cormac McCarthy

Set in the violent borderlands between the United States and Mexico in the 1850s, this novel explores the brutal journey of a teenage runaway known as "the Kid." With its poetic yet savage prose, "Blood Meridian" is a profound meditation on violence and manifest destiny, resonating with the gritty tone found in Patrick DeWitt's work.

3. *Butcher's Crossing* by John Williams

This novel tells the story of a young man who leaves Harvard to seek adventure in the American West, joining a buffalo hunting expedition. It explores themes of obsession, survival, and the clash between civilization and wilderness. Its detailed character study and grim atmosphere echo the tone of "The Sisters Brothers."

4. *Little Big Man* by Thomas Berger

Narrated by Jack Crabb, a man raised by Native Americans and later living among white settlers, this novel provides a satirical and poignant look at the American West. It blends humor with historical events and critiques of Western myths, similar to the darkly comic style of DeWitt's novel.

5. *The Son* by Philipp Meyer

Spanning multiple generations, this epic Western novel traces the rise and fall of a Texas family involved in ranching, oil, and conflict with Native Americans. The narrative's rich historical detail and exploration of violence, family, and power make it a compelling companion to "The Sisters Brothers."

6. *Deadwood* by Pete Dexter

Set in the lawless town of Deadwood, South Dakota, this novel delves into the lives of outlaws, prospectors, and townsfolk struggling for survival and power. Its gritty realism and complex characters provide a vivid backdrop reminiscent of the rugged world DeWitt creates.

7. *Winter's Bone* by Daniel Woodrell

Though set in the Ozarks rather than the West, this novel shares the harsh, survivalist tone found in "The Sisters Brothers." It follows a teenage girl navigating a dangerous rural community to find her missing father, highlighting themes of family loyalty and desperation.

8. *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy

The first book in McCarthy's Border Trilogy, it tells the story of John Grady Cole, a Texas rancher who ventures into Mexico seeking a new life. Its

lyrical prose, coming-of-age themes, and exploration of the fading cowboy lifestyle resonate with readers of Western fiction like DeWitt's novel.

9. *The Cold Dish* by Craig Johnson

This mystery novel introduces Sheriff Walt Longmire of Wyoming, combining Western motifs with contemporary crime-solving. Its blend of rugged landscapes, complex characters, and moral ambiguity offers a modern take on Western storytelling that fans of "The Sisters Brothers" may appreciate.

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