

# Delve Deeper into Sweetgrass

A film by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Gina Blume of the Monroe Township Public Library, includes books, films and other materials related to the issues presented in the film *Sweetgrass*.

*Sweetgrass* presents a riveting and poetic portrait of the American West just as one of its traditional ways of life dies out. Shot amidst the grandeur of Montana's Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, the film follows the last modern-day cowboys to lead their flocks of sheep up into the breathtaking and often dangerous mountains for summer pasture. Magnificently photographed and unsparingly candid, *Sweetgrass* discovers a world of harsh beauty and arduous labor, where humans still work in rugged intimacy with nature.

## ADULT NONFICTION

### American West

**Bell, Laura. *Claiming Ground*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.** In 1977, Laura Bell, at loose ends after graduating from college, leaves her family home in Kentucky for a wild and unexpected adventure: herding sheep in Wyoming's Big Horn Basin. By turns cattle rancher, forest ranger, outfitter, masseuse, wife and mother, Bell vividly recounts her struggle to find solid earth in which to put down roots.

**Blunt, Judy. *Breaking Clean*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.** The author describes her life in the contemporary American West and the skills she developed to survive in a man's world as she details her experiences with blizzards, prairie fires, and extreme isolation in the harsh western landscape.

**Ehrlich, Gretel. *The Solace of Open Spaces*. New York: Penguin, 1986.** In this collection of personal essays, Gretel Ehrlich delivers a poetic depiction of the American West. Her rich imagery and deep appreciation for the landscapes of the region come together to probe larger issues of gender, the power of nature, and the quest for solitude.

**Milner, Clyde A. and Carol A. O'Connor. *As Big as the West: The Pioneer Life of Granville Stuart*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.** Granville Stuart is a quintessential Western figure, a man whose adventures rival those of Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill, or Sitting Bull, and who embodied many of the contradictions of America's westward expansion. Stuart collected guns, herded cattle, mined for gold, and killed men he thought to be outlaws. But he also taught himself Shoshone, French, and Spanish, denounced formal religion, married a Shoshone woman, and eventually became a United States diplomat.

**Petersen, Gwen. *The Ranch Woman's Manual*. Aberdeen, SD: North Plains Press, 1976.** Petersen delivers a tongue-in-cheek account of life on the ranch, putting a humorous spin on the daily challenges faced by the American ranch wife.

### Filmmaking and Ethnography

**Barbash, Ilisa and Lucien Castaing-Taylor. *Cross-cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.** Addressing the concerns of anthropologists, this handbook covers the practical, technical, and theoretical aspects of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking.

**Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.** In this book, three leading scholars develop a series of guidelines, suggestions, and practical advice about how to write useful fieldnotes in a variety of settings, both cultural and institutional. Using actual unfinished, "working" notes as examples, they illustrate options for composing, reviewing, and working fieldnotes into finished texts.

**Gardner, Robert and Ted Perry. *The Impulse to Preserve: Reflections of a Filmmaker*. New York: Other Press, 2006.** Filmmaker Robert Gardner reflects on a life spent observing, recording, and illuminating the human condition in some of the most remote regions of the world.

**MacDougall, David. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006.** MacDougall, a leading ethnographic filmmaker and film scholar of his generation, argues for a new conception of how visual images create human knowledge in a world in which the value of seeing has often been eclipsed by words. He explores the relations between the body behind the camera as well as the body seen in ethnography, cinema, and photography.

**Pink, Sarah and László Kürti; Ana Isabel Afonso. *Working Images: Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.** Visual methods offer increasingly accessible & popular resources for ethnographic research. In 'Working Images' experts describe how visual methods can be integrated into fieldwork to effectively communicate knowledge about cultures.

**Wolcott, Harry F. *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2008.** Wolcott discusses the fundamental nature of ethnographic studies. Tracing its development from its disciplinary origins in sociology and anthropology, he points out what is distinctive about ethnography and what it means to conduct research in the ethnographic tradition. Wolcott distinguishes ethnography as more than just a set of field methods and practices, separating it from many related qualitative research traditions as "a way of seeing" through the lens of culture.

### Anthropology

**Rabinow, Paul; George E. Marcus; James D. Faubion; Tobias Rees. *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.** This text is focused on challenges involved in designing anthropologies of the contemporary and how ethnographic research projects are designed and carried out.



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## Montana

**Doig, Ivan.** *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind.* Florida: Harcourt Books, 1978.

In this memoir, Ivan Doig remembers growing up in the harsh Montana wilderness and the powerful ways in which the environment impacted his life. In a world where sheepherding was the way of life, Doig explores issues of family, intimacy, independence, and love.

**Morehead, Don.** *A Short Season: Story of a Montana Childhood.* Nebraska: Bison Books, 1998. Don Morehead writes of his experiences coming of age on a ten-thousand acre sheep ranch in northern Montana during the 1940's. Providing a complex look at grueling ranch life, this memoir focuses particularly on the bond between father and son.

**Stone, Robert.** *Day Hikes in the Beartooth Mountains: From Billings to Red Lodge to Yellowstone National Park.* Red Lodge, Montana Day Hike Books: Guilford, CT; Distributed by Globe Pequot Press, 2006, 4th ed. This book includes an extensive collection of hikes within this mountain range and the adjacent foothills and plains.

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## ADULT FICTION

### American West

**Galvin, James.** *Fencing the Sky: A Novel.* New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1999. Circumstances spiral out of control when an accidental murder springs from the best intentions. With one man dead and another on the run, this is a story about violence and how it destroys lives when the land is at stake, and the disappearance of the American West.

**Galvin, James.** *The Meadow.* New York: Henry Holt & Co; 1992. Galvin depicts the hundred-year history of a meadow in the arid mountains of the Colorado/Wyoming border. Galvin describes the seasons, the weather, the wildlife, and the few people who do not possess but are themselves possessed by this terrain.

**Lennon, J. Robert.** *On the Night Plain: A Novel.* New York: Henry Holt, 2001. The novel explores the rivalry between two brothers and the brutally hard life of sheep ranchers on the Great Plains just after World War II.

**Proulx, Annie.** *Brokeback Mountain.* New York: Scribner, 2005. Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist, two ranch hands, come together when they're working as shepherd and camp tender one summer on a range above the tree line in Wyoming. At first, sharing an isolated tent, the attraction is casual, inevitable, but something deeper catches them that summer. The *New Yorker* won the National Magazine Award for Fiction for its publication of "Brokeback Mountain," and the story was included in Prize Stories 1998: The O. Henry Awards.

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## NONFICTION FOR YOUNG READERS

### American West

**Johnson, Neil.** *Jack Creek Cowboy.* New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1993. Text and photographs follow ten-year-old Justin Whitlock through the summer when he and his older brother Corey helped their father with an important cowboy job on their Wyoming ranch.

### Montana

**Stein, R. Conrad.** *Montana. "America the Beautiful," Third Series.* New York: Children's Press, 2010. A tour of Montana, describing the state's history, culture, land, economy, government, and sights, and including unique facts, color maps and photos, the state song, suggested activities, lists of famous people, cultural institutions, and annual events, and other resources.

**Wolf, Bernard.** *Cowboy.* New York: W. Morrow, 1985. Describes the life and work of Wallace McRae and his family on their ranch in Rosebud County, Montana, including the spring roundup and branding of cattle, the local rodeo, the gathering and storing of hay, and the interaction with the coal workers in town.

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## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

### American West

*Home on the Range: Cowboy poetry.* Selected by Paul B. Janeczko; pictures by Bernie Fuchs. New York: Dial Books, 1997. Nineteen poems celebrate cowboy life.

**James, Will.** *The Will James Cowboy Book.* Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press, 2003; originally published: New York: Scribner, 1938. A collection of stories and art from Will James, who grew up on a ranch and wrote many books about his experiences at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.

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## FILMS, VIDEOS AND BROADCASTS

**"Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life." A film by Merian C. Cooper.** Persia, 1925. DVD. This classic documentary by the filmmaking team that would later go on to make King Kong chronicles the great migration that the 50,000 strong Bakhtiari Tribe undertakes twice a year in order to bring their herds to greener pastures. This is one of the first interactions between Hollywood and Iran and because of its documentary nature remains one of the most objective portrayals to this day.

**"Old Believers: Three Films by Jana Sevcikova."** Facets Video, 2005. DVD. Celebrated at film festivals worldwide, these revealing documentaries are poetic, intimate portraits that capture the unique lives and customs of people unknown to most of the world. Films include **Old Believers**, **Piemule**, and **Jakub**.

**"Wolves In Paradise."** A film by William Campbell. Homefire Productions, Independent Lens Television Service PBS. Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films, 2007. DVD. This documentary follows Montana ranchers as they struggle to co-exist with wolves who have been reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and gradually migrate from the park.

