



## Lonesome Dove (Part 1 of 3)

*Larry McMurtry , Wolfram Kandinsky (Read by)*

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Part One Of Three Parts

A love story, an adventure, an American epic, LONESOME DOVE embraces all the West -- legend and fact, heroes and outlaws, whores and ladies, Indians and settlers -- in a novel that recreates the central American experience, the most enduring of our national myths.

Set in the late 19th century, LONESOME DOVE is the story of a cattle drive from Texas to Montana -- and much more. The drive is a risk, sure, but it's a part of the American Dream, a chance to carve a new life out of the last remaining wilderness.

"Once again, McMurtry spins a yarn about the West -- and also about the nature of friendship, of folly, of responsibility, of moral codes and men and their destinies." (The Wall Street Journal)

### Lonesome Dove (Part 1 of 3) Details

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## From Reader Review Lonesome Dove (Part 1 of 3) for online ebook

### Aubrey says

Well. That was a commitment.

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### Richard Burrage says

I never thought I could enjoy a western. I was wrong. I originally read the book 20 years ago and re-read it in 2013 when I told my 16 year-old daughter to read it. I thought I should check for appropriate content and found myself reading the whole thing again. I realize it's more of a guys story but I have yet to meet a woman who's read it to see if they agree. I doubt my daughter will finish it because it takes a few hundred pages to get moving, and it contains adult themes she might find off-putting. We'll see.

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### Albert Norton says

I was going to give this 5 stars and move on, but then I read a bunch of reviews and decided I had to do at least a short one of my own.

Characters – great; landscape, history, atmosphere – great; plot – great in the same way as, say, War and Peace – a lot going on, but not just a one-darn-thing-after-another read, either. Not a whodunit and not a mere western

Is it literature? I'm a literature snob, I guess, and I made a false start on this a few years ago. I came back to it because my son said I should, and he was right. Yes, it's literature. I say that because it's about something, not just about a bunch of guys moving cows in the 19th century.

It's about loneliness. And the driver of loneliness: death. Every action by every person in this book is about the desire to connect with something greater than themselves. Someone, some thing, some epic battle with evil, some meaning to life other than escape from our personal limitations. I ached for Call and Newt, their distance is the hallmark theme of this book, but it is replicated with Clara and Gus; Clara and July; Lorena and Gus; Deets and white society; Pea and Ms. Collins; July and Elmira, Dish and Lorena; it goes on and on, but the most important pairing is this: Call and Gus.

Lonesome Dove is the name of a little town, but "dove" evokes the soul, and "lonesome" describes its state separated in some way from all the souls around it. Lonesome Dove is the most perfectly-named book I've ever read. Never saw the movie, but it's now on the list.

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### Jimmy says

I've owed a review of Larry McMurtry's Lonesome Dove for God knows how long now. The problem is that it's such an epic, long novel that to do it justice in a review seems kinda daunting, especially after so much time has passed. So I think what I'll do is review the book in piecemeal fashion: a bit here, a bit there, until I

get what I want to say out there. Let me start with a couple of general observations that I've made before about the book, and then I'll do a kind of character assessment. First, the novel is extremely well-written. The narrative style is engaging, witty, and very coherent. It is sophisticated and, at times, actually masterful. The dialogue is especially noteworthy for its ability to capture the kind of slang and speaking mannerisms of the 19th Century western United States. I promise you that if you pick up this 800-900 page book and don't let the length of it deter you from starting it, you'll find that it reads easily and that the length of it becomes less daunting over time.

I've said this before and I'll repeat it again here: it is an epic story where the characters, their personalities, and their relationships are much more central than the actual storyline itself. Essentially the storyline is simple: it's about a cattle drive from South Texas to Montana. But my criticism is not so much that the plot is very basic, and that the focus is on the characters; but rather that the plot is contained exclusively by the characters. What do I mean by that? I mean, essentially, that if you read this book, you'll come to think that the only people who constituted this vast expanse of territory were the 25-30 folks who make up the various characters introduced in the story. There is not a single character that we are introduced to with some measure of development that isn't just some passing personality in the whole epic story. This just seems incredulous to me, especially in an epic story. I mean, really, there must have been plenty of side stories and marginal personalities that flitted in and out of this epic story, and surely some of them were probably important for brief flashes in the story timeline. But we just don't hear much about them. Even the cattle driver who shows up at the Hat Creek Ranch at the beginning of the story factors into the story in a significant way later. The actual reality of the epic of human existence is that some people enter into narrative story arcs, have important roles to play for brief periods of time, and then just disappear into the unknown afterwards, never to be heard from again. But in *Lonesome Dove*, you hardly ever get this picture of reality. There is not a single character that I can think of that you are introduced to in the story who isn't, at some point, of vital importance to the storyline. And that the characters we meet are all neatly threaded together in ways that simply defy one's sense of what the real course of human interaction is like. How likely is it, for instance, that July Johnson will hunt for Jake Spoon, then give up the hunt for Spoon to go after his pathetic wife, but bumping into Gus McCrae along the way, only to find himself making his way to Clara's ranch (Clara, of course, is the erstwhile love of of Gus McCrae's life) and becoming one of her ranch-hands, where his pregnant, fleeing wife just happens to have also landed and given birth to his son. I mean, come on!! That never happens in real life. It's all so tidy and neat! Anyway, that's my major criticism of the narrative style. It's just too impossible and unbelievable. That said, it's still a riveting read.

But what I'd like to do, since the novel is character-centric, is to focus on individual character profiles and to review them a bit. To give my thoughts on what each character means and symbolizes to me. And I'll start with Jake Spoon.

Jake Spoon:

He has to be one of the most tragic and pathetic characters in the whole novel. The genius of McMurtry's creation of Spoon is that you never can reconcile yourself to the character. You can never really decide if you like the man or if you despise him, if you feel sorry for him or if you think he's a heel who got what he deserved. What you do get with the Spoon character is a strong sense of the real tragedy of human existence. He is a character who is charming, talented, and full of potential, only to be brought down by his human weakness. His vanity, his pride, his loneliness drives him into situations that he simply can't escape from and which ultimately become his undoing. The fact that he ended up being hanged for cattle and horse thieving by his lifelong friends Gus and Call was surprising to me. That kind of indiscriminate justice, without due process of trial and judgment according to constitutional rights, seems so foreign and merciless; and yet we know that Gus and Call are reasonable and merciful people. It just didn't square with modern sensibilities. I suppose McMurtry did capture here a lost sense of justice that pervaded the wild west of 19th Century America. It was a time of different moral codes and different ideas of constitutional rights. But, back to Spoon ...

You always want to like the man, but just can never bring yourself to do so, even though you know that his luck is always so damn rotten. And yet, in spite of the fact that he faces lots of bad luck that is not of his own making, there is a lot of bad luck he encounters that comes of his poor decisions, too. And here is another element of the tragedy of his character. His undeserved misfortune degrades his mental state such that he gets down on himself and gets depressed. And then it is this self-loathing and depression that leads him to consciously make bad decisions and choices that also contribute to his bad luck. You get the sense that he is one of those people whose fate has been predetermined to always be bad and that he is just condemned to a miserable life. No matter how much he tries to fight against his fate, it's almost just pointless. And this is where the reader feels a bit of empathy for the character. There is an unfairness about his life that almost approaches injustice; and it's hard for a reader to therefore condemn Spoon for anything about the bad things that he does or gets caught up in. In short, Spoon is the classic tragic figure in the story whose life ends without any sense of redemption. We can contrast Spoon with July Johnson, who is another tragic character, but one whose inherent goodness brings his tragic reality to a point of redemption. More on July Johnson later.

Lorena Wood:

It is hard not to be enamored of Lorena Wood. She is obviously beautiful. And she is clearly a sweet, good-hearted person. Neither her bad luck with men, nor her hard life as a prostitute have hardened her like it had with other prostitute characters in the story. And you just can't help but ache for her upon reading her treatment while in captivity with the outlaws that Blue Duck turned her over to after he kidnapped her.

McMurtry really captures the innocence, beauty, sorrow, and kindness of Lorena in his characterization of her.

That said, one also can't help feeling very frustrated with her. I know this may sound misogynist, but she sometimes comes across as naive, stubborn, and downright stupid at times. For all of her hardened experience, she doesn't seem to really understand the difficulties or dangers for a woman living in that part of the United States at that time in the country's history. However, in my defense, I think this take on Lorena as a kind of 19th Century "blonde bimbo" is partly how McMurtry wanted to portray her.

I also think it's pretty clear that Lorena is a rather one-dimensional character. Other than some vague idea of her dream of wanting to escape to San Francisco and live a more refined life, we really know very little about her inner workings beyond her confused emotions about Jake and Gus. It is interesting, though, to note that her identity is completely wrapped up in the men around her and who have an interest in her. She, herself, wraps her identity in the male figures of her life. She is not an independent woman, nor is she a very sophisticated or deep-thinking woman. She's actually very simple, which is quite a contrast to both of the other main female characters in the book, Clara and Elmira. Even Elmira was a conflicted and more complex person than Lorena. But perhaps if McMurtry had painted a different picture of Lorena, the reader wouldn't be as sympathetic to her as the "damsel-in-distress" requiring her rescue by the heroic handsome prince that Gus turns out to be.

Augustus "Gus" McCrae:

Out of all of the character in Larry McMurtry's novel *Lonesome Dove*, Gus McCrae is, in my estimation, the most compelling character by far. He's not only the intellectual (such as they came then and in those parts), but he's also perhaps the wisest, and certainly the most generous and selfless, character of the bunch. And in spite of his booming self-confidence and his sometimes cockiness, he's also really perhaps the warmest and truly kindest character in the novel. And that doesn't even get into his amazing skills with a horse and a gun. He's just one of those intuitively all-around good guys with unparalleled talents, but with enough genuine modesty about it, too.

I loved that there was always an air of carelessness and seeming recklessness in his actions. He was a risk-taker; but one who knew the limits of his abilities and one who also had an acute ability to measure up a

situation with precision accuracy, to always make the best decision in crisis situations, and to accept fully the consequences of the deck he was dealt without a single complaint or without a loss of his infectious positive attitude and good humor.

The one and only disappointment I had with the character of Gus McCrae, and the one action of his, that just seemed totally inconsistent with his expansive love of life was his decision not to have his gangrenous leg amputated in order to save his life. For a man who never gives up the fight in tight spots, the fact of giving up the fight for life when the saving of his life was there for the taking just seems totally out of character.

McMurtry seems to imply that when Gus accepted the fact that he just couldn't have the love of his life, Clara, in the way that he hoped, he simply gave up on life. Gus would rather have died physically whole rather than live a life with an amputated leg without Clara. Maybe he just finally got tired of it all, accepted that his time had come, and was o.k. with that. Even if this were true, it still would seem out of character.

Gus's death was the watershed moment in the novel. You just knew that without Gus around, not only would nothing ever be the same again, but also that what did remain just didn't seem to matter all that much, or seem to have that meaningful lustre.

In the character of Gus McCrae, McMurtry gave the literary world of novels in the frontier Western tradition their epic hero. Although I'm not very well-versed in westerns, I can't imagine there being any character more iconic than Gus McCrae. To the western literary genre, Gus McCrae is the equivalent of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Gatsby or Tolstoy's Anna Karenina.

Pea Eye:

Dumb as an ox; but self-aware enough to know this about himself and not be overly defensive about it. On the other hand, one of the hardest-working characters, very skilled at what he does, and essentially good-hearted and pure of spirit. There's not an unkind bone in his body. Pea Eye's 15 minutes of fame in the book came with his epic journey from the Indian attack on him and Gus back to the Hat Creek crew (and, therefore, to Gus's rescue). Pea Eye's essential goodness as a character, I would argue, made the story of his being led to safety by the spirit of a dead Deets both palatable and believable. I'd argue further that only Pea Eye's character could have carried this off in the novel. It just wouldn't have passed muster otherwise.

I'd also like to take this moment to compare Pea Eye to a modern political narrative: the dumb-as-an-ox redneck stereotype. When Sarah Palin gins up populist outrage over the elite's condescension towards what she would say is the heartland American, Pea Eye is the character that she probably means. However, what Sarah Palin doesn't really get is that the elitist condescension she often references is not one that is directed against the "Pea Eyes" of America, but rather against the self-absorbed cynics like herself who claim to be a "Pea Eye" equivalent, but who are really nothing of the sort. It's the abuse of the "Pea Eyes" of America by televangelists and Palin-esque politicians that earns elite contempt.

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## Realini says

Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry  
10 out of 10

This is an outstanding, glorious novel and having read it a second time, the pleasure, the thrill, entertainment of the read is equal to the first encounter with this winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1986, a novel with an interesting story about its development, not just inside the covers.

Larry McMurtry is a Texan genius whose scripts have attracted for his films no less than twenty-six Oscar nominations, with ten wins, for celebrated features like *The Last Picture Show* – one of the best films ever – and *Terms of Endearment*.

He was working for a project for a Western, with the great director of *The Last Picture Show*, Peter Bogdanovich, that alas James Stewart, Henry Fonda and John Wayne did not like – which goes to prove again that fabulous actors can make the silliest mistakes outside the set – and therefore the writer bought the rights back for \$ 35,000 and created a chef d’oeuvre.

If the under signed loved it when he had the first chance, he admired it again for the past few days, on the second engagement – a fantastic story of adventure, love, courage, thrilling fights, humorous dialogue and characters, especially Augustus “Gus” McCrae, the protagonist who towers over the narrative.

Gus, Woodrow Call – his longtime friend, companion and business partner- Joshua Deets, Jake Spoon and Pea Eye have been Texas Rangers and after retiring they have had a farm in Lonesome Dove, Texas, where life has been rather good, up to the point where Spoon returns, wanted for an accidental homicide and followed by the sheriff July Johnson.

Jake tells his friends about the beauty of Montana, an unconquered, pristine territory at that moment in the nineteenth century and he convinces Captain Call that they have to take the cattle, horses from Mexico and travel three thousand miles north to settle near the mountains.

Reluctant at first, Gus becomes thrilled by the journey, although he has to try and save Lorena Wood, a former “sporting woman” that has decided to travel along with the man she is fascinated by, Jake Spoon, and who was kidnapped by a vicious Native American called Blue Duck, one that had killed, raped women and stolen children.

If one can find some issue with this extraordinary novel, it is the image of the Native Americans, who are often depicted as loathsome, killers and horse thieves, some of them indeed killing one of the main characters of the novel, together with a number of others.

Granted, Gus among others have a somewhat different opinion on the Native Americans, even if he has fought and battles them in the present, for he appreciates their freedom, spirit, although he has to cope with the disgusting results of the actions of bad enemies.

After liberating Lorena, the woman he likes so much, killing six Indians – as they are called in the book – he travels with July Johnson to where the camp was, only to discover that the deputy, the nice and amusing Roscoe Brown, July’s step son, Joe, and a girl that had just been freed from the tyranny and abuse of an old pervert are all dead, killed by the monster Blue Duck.

Many die in the difficult road to Montana, one killed by snakes as they cross one of the first rivers, another as they catch some horse thieves that turn out to be just dirt poor, destitute American Indians that took the animals to have food over the winter and they even have to hang one of their own, together with a gang of treacherous, awful outlaws led by Dan Suggs.

Gus is the light, the god that Lorena loves after she had been rescued from a terrible ordeal, having been raped and abused by American Indians – this alas seems to be their profile in this tale – but he wants to reach Nebraska, to see if he can marry Clara Allen, the woman he loved years ago, before she married another man and left Texas for the North.

Clara has two daughters, while all the sons she has had have died, her spouse has been hit by a horse and he is dying, when she meets Elmira Johnson, the fleeing wife of the young sheriff, who gives birth at the farm, abandons the baby, only to be killed by...”Indians” they do bad things again.

First July Johnson arrives, only to find that his wife is the next town, with a buffalo hunter and will do anything she can to run from him, the sheriff is offered a job, and then discovers he has fallen in love with Clara, sometime after learning the news of his wife’s death.

When Gus arrives at the Allen Farm, he has Lorena with him, such a nice girl that Clara takes to her, invites her to stay over, at a place where more and more characters find love and a home, with the arrival later in the story of Dish Boggett a top hand who is enchanted by Lorena Woods, in spite of the fact that the latter is mesmerized still by Augustus, who asks Clara about their old relationship, only to be told that she would not marry him, no matter what the fate of her terminally ill spouse is.

Newt Dobbs is one of the other many interesting characters, the son of Captain Call, who has not yet had the bravery to tell the boy he is his father, give him his name, although Gus gives the news to the young man, who is thinking this is a joke when he first hears about it.

Other colorful, amusing personages include the cooks, Bolivar in Lonesome Dove and Po Campo on the trail to Montana, Lippy Jones, the piano player in the saloon in Texas, Joshua Deets, the brave, intelligent, dedicated, modest man that dies rather early and is a victim of fate, in what looks like such a stupid accident.

Lonesome Dove is an extraordinary, divine read which combines dramatic events – so many deaths, chases, gun fights – with the humor of the hilarious Augustus McCrae, the love between various characters, fascination of the tremendous journey, admiration for the immense courage of the heroes, some of them reluctant to cross water, face the enemy or even...ghosts.

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### **Sydney Young says**

Even better than before, completely believable, and once you get into it you can't put it down. This is McMurty's masterpiece, and it a masterpiece of the west, but even bigger than that. If you haven't read it in a while, pick it up, you'll be surprised. (The audio version is just tops, you forget that you are being read to and believe you are hearing these folks in real life.) If you have never read it, read it. I am fearful that books like these won't ever be written again for two reasons, which really boils down to one reason in the end: pure economics. First, we -- the readers, are afraid of long books. We just won't pick them up anymore. I know it is certainly a struggle for me, but then I am never sorry when I do so I still do it. Second, due to the first, publishers won't pick them up either. What a loss! But at least we have this book.

Lonesome Dove is about men and women that are so believable, wonderful and flawed and normal, good and bad and in between. Captains Augustus McCray and Woodrow Call own a "ranch" down in South Texas. Because of their former partner, Jake Spoon, they go on a cattle drive, in order to be the first cowboys to take cattle into Montana. So many things happen that hinge on Jake Spoon's actions, so many lives changed, but this was life back then, and it is life as I have experienced it. Lonesome Dove gives you all that you would expect from a cattle drive, but so much more. You care about the women and the men, and even the animals that are a part of the story. You laugh and you cry. And you finish it and wonder at the fact that these are the people that you have known and loved in Texas, they are still here and living.

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### **Elinor says**

This was a fascinating, gripping, epic voyage of a novel that left me wanting more. And thank goodness there are two other books featuring the more-than-real life characters, Gus McCrae and Woodrow Coll. Author Larry McMurty always claimed this isn't a Western novel in the true sense of the word, but it is crammed with cowboys, bad guys, hookers with hearts of gold and all the other archetypal characters. The excellent TV miniseries with Tommy Lee Jones and Robert Duvall can also be appreciated on a different level, but the book itself burns with its own true fire.

### **Josh Doerksen says**

If you like westerns and a little bit of humor mixed in then you would like the Lonesome dove series by Larry McMurtry. This western is about a group of cowboys who are retired Texas rangers who want to take a herd of cattle up to Montana. This is a very long novel so I just read part one of three which is about seven hundred pages long. My favorite character is probably Captain Call who is the leader of the group and is a no nonsense kind of guy. He and Gus are lifelong friends even if they don't always agree on every thing. I have watched the movie and the book is very different from the movie but it still probably my favorite movie.

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### **Josh says**

Excellent writing, story, character development... altogether a very well-written book. McMurtry is very talented at fleshing out the story with many unique little details, such as including the blue shoats on the journey. I really enjoyed McMurtry's fabulous writing.

What I didn't enjoy was the fact that this story was ultimately quite miserable. I got nothing worthwhile out of this book, other than the enjoyment of good prose. Every single character in this book has major flaws, and by the end of the book, they are all equally miserable. A masterpiece of writing, but you will feel nothing but gloom and unhappiness by the time you have finished all 800-something pages. This book is like a gigantic Gothic home full of dust and darkness.

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### **Elizabeth Lopez says**

For the first western I ever read this was a good one. I just loved the jargon they used to tell the story of way back then and how many people were involved on getting a drive across lands. Boy the struggled they faced. I learned a lot about the old west. I would definitely read the book again.

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### **Lorma says**

This was a book club selection, which I didn't really want to read at all...I am so not into westerns. But boy was I wrong!!!! It turned out to be such a Great Read...I was so sad when I got to the final page that it was going to be over. The western part won me over and it was in fact a beautiful love story with a sad ending...I truly enjoyed it and learned never to judge a book by its cover again.

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### **Jeff says**

If you can get through the first 100 pages of tedium, it's a pretty good story with interesting characters (Gus, Call, Deets, Newt, Blue Duck...). The ending was pretty disappointing but still worth the read.

### **Cindy R says**

Even if you don't generally like westerns you'll probably like this one. Some memorable characters. The original movie is good as well.

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### **Monty desai says**

A real good book. I really loved the characters Gus and Call. They both are the heart of the whole story. They both are well described by the author. GUS Is a funny Guy who lightens up the scene with his funny quotes, whereas as Call is completely opposite of Gus. The only sad part for me was one of the two dies, but I wont mention who dies. Read the whole book and find that out. A great western epic saga. :-)

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### **Molly says**

This book changed the way I looked at early American history. I didn't want it to end. My then-boyfriend and I fought over who was going to get to finish it first. It was a big, heavy hardcover that we both dragged around with us on the subway or bus because we couldn't put it down. I finally had a real understanding and feel for what it must've been like to live in America at that time.

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