



Linda Hogan



*Beads made of bone, our vertebrae,
arms and legs
strung together beneath skin,
our own bones still fitting
mortar and pestle. Our hands like the dry reeds
knotted together
could sweep all this away,
break the clear thread.*

— “Finding Beads” from *Calling Myself Home*



Quick Facts

- * Born in 1947
- * Native American poet, novelist, and essayist
- * First published book of poetry is *Calling Myself Home*

Biography

Linda Hogan, a Chickasaw poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, and activist, is widely considered to be one of the most influential and provocative Native American figures in the contemporary American literary landscape. Not only is Hogan a prolific writer, but through her work she has distinguished herself as a political ideologist and an environmental/philosophical theorist. Her characteristically holistic representation of the human experience is important in that it centers on the concept that all life is interconnected; only by acknowledging and appreciating the relation of human life to other life forms, she says, can one fully respect and care for oneself.

Linda Hogan was born in Denver, Colorado, on July 17, 1947 to Charles Henderson, a Chickasaw, and Cleona Bower Henderson, a non-native. Because her father was in the army and was transferred from post to post throughout Hogan’s childhood, the author and her family lived in various locations while she was growing up.

This page was researched and submitted by Amy Leigh McNally on 6/26/99.



Linda Hogan

Biography continued

Nevertheless, Hogan considers Oklahoma, where her father's family lives, to be her true home. Hogan's first collection of poetry, *Calling Myself Home* (1978), is a reflection of her love for the history, oral tradition, and landscape of the Chickasaw relocation land in Gene Autry, Oklahoma. This "home away from home" is represented in her first collection by imagery that is at once rich and earthy, bright and airy.

Remarkably, Hogan admits in an interview with Bo Scholer that when she was writing the poems that would later comprise her first collection, she had no experience as a writer, and little experience even reading literature. In her late twenties at the time, Hogan worked with orthopedically handicapped children and began using her lunch hours to write and read. She explains her call to write: "something about the process of doing that writing tapped into my own life in a way I wouldn't have done without the writing" (Scholer 107). Hogan followed her calling to write by commuting to the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs where she received her undergraduate degree, and to the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she earned her M.A. in English and creative writing in 1978.

In 1980, Hogan received a D'Arcy McNickle Memorial Fellowship at the Newberry Library, as well as a Yaddo Colony Fellowship in 1982, a National Endowment for the Arts grant in fiction in 1986, a Guggenheim for fiction in 1990, and a Lannan Award in 1994. She was also the recipient of a Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Award in 1980 for *A Piece of the Moon*, a short-fiction award from *Stand Magazine* in 1983, and an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation in 1985 for *Seeing through the Sun*. She has also been recognized as a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize for *Mean Spirit* and for a National Book Critics Circle award for her *Book of Medicines*.

In 1979, Hogan adopted two daughters of Oglala Lakota heritage, Sandra Dawn Protector and Tanya Thunder Horse. Her daughters profoundly influenced her next two collections of poetry, *Daughters, I Love You* (1981) and *Eclipse* (1983). The poems within these two volumes range from relatively simple expressions of the beauty of her children to more complex explorations of progeny as it relates to environmental issues. Particularly in *Eclipse*, Hogan writes of the need to preserve the earth from destruction by human forces so that her daughters may grow to become protectors as well. Hence, the author's love for her children is related as a synthesis of personal affection and global eco-feminism.



Linda Hogan

Biography continued

Hogan expands her holistic interpretation of human experience in *Seeing Through the Sun* (1985), her fourth collection of poetry. This volume is more thematically diverse as Hogan explores issues of mixed-blood heritage, human frailty and strength, land allotment, urban relocation, and feminist environmentalism. These issues, though varied, are all reconciled in Hogan's macrocosmic/microcosmic synthesis: "the radiant vault of myself, / this full and broken continent of living" (from "Evolution in Light and Water"). Hogan's ability to transcend the boundaries between herself and others and between humans and their environment, makes this collection not a political criticism but a call for inner-directed strength to heal the earth by working from the inside out.

Hogan's fifth collection, *Savings* (1988), deals chiefly with urban relocation and its effect on Native American peoples. The figures in her poems are frustrated, desperate, and broken. Hogan writes these poems to react to and make sense of urban issues she encountered in Minneapolis while teaching at the University of Minnesota. The fragmented souls of the Native American people in the city landscape of *Savings* fight for space, a sense of wholeness, and release from racism and poverty: ". . . hearts with their own chambers/ of living, hearts/ that want nothing, / not paychecks/ on nightstands, not guns in the drawer, / nothing/ but to know on walls of the body, / let me in, / let me travel veins to the eyes, / light a candle/ with the arteries in nervous hands, / and let me look out/ on the beating world" (from "Neighbors").

Hogan departs from poetry with her first novel, *Mean Spirit* (1990). The novel is set in the 1920s in Oklahoma during the Osage oil boom. Though a work of fiction, *Mean Spirit* functions as an ethnohistory as it re-tells the story of "the great frenzy" from an Osage perspective. This period in Oklahoma history occurred as oil was discovered on Osage allotment lands and, subsequently, whites engaged in exploitation, oppression, and even murder in an attempt to usurp the oil wealth. Hogan tells this story in a compelling manner, describing the complex relationships between three groups of Indians: the town Indians, the Indians who lived in the outskirts of town, and the Hill Indians. She also relates the utter powerlessness the Osage experienced under white government control.



Linda Hogan

Biography continued

Hogan's *Book of Medicines* (1993), a poetry collection, centers around the author's eco-feminist philosophy. While acknowledging the need during the woman's movement for women to break away from the duties of being caretakers, Hogan believes that it is important for women to embrace the role of caretakers of the environment. Women, she feels, have a natural affinity for this role because they are biologically designed to be the bearers of life. In the poems within this volume, Hogan reinterprets biblical events from her environmentalist/feminist perspective in which God resides within all nature and represents the ultimate female caretaker. The poems in this volume function as prayers, therapeutic and rhythmic incantations through which humans may begin to find the spiritual strength to heal the earth from its damaged state.

In 1995, Hogan published *Dwellings*, a collection of seventeen essays which relate her ideas about the interconnection of humans and nature while exploring concepts of myth and spirituality. Also published in 1995, *Solar Storms*, a novel, follows a young woman as she leaves her foster home to reconnect with her family. Once the young woman finds her great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother, she embarks with them on a canoe voyage to join a political protest against the construction of a hydroelectric power plant. The power plant represents not only a threat to the overall environment, but also a threat to the destruction of tribal interests; thus, the novel relates the connected interests of Native American continuity and environmental sensitivity.

Hogan's third novel, *Power* (1998), has been praised for its beauty of language, mythical structure, and allegorical power. The review in *Publisher's Weekly* notes that Hogan's principal vocation as poet shines through her newest novel: "the current work reflects that vocation in her lyrical, almost mystical use of language." Using her gifts for poetics, clarity of vision, and spiritual and ecological theorization, Hogan once again communicates the complex relationships between myth, nature, and humankind. Clearly, Hogan will continue her affirmation of life and human vitality even as she reminds her readers to respect and take care of the natural world.



Linda Hogan

Selected Bibliography

Works by the author

Poetry, Essays, Fiction, Plays

Sightings: The Gray Whales' Mysterious Journey (2002).

The Woman Who Watches Over the World: A Native Memoir (2001).

The Sweet Breathing of Plants: Women and the Green World (2000).

Power (1998).

Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World (1995).

Solar Storms (1995).

Book of Medicines (1993).

Red Clay: Poems and Stories (1991).

Mean Spirit (1990).

“Aunt Moon’s Young Man” in *The Best American Short Stories 1989*, ed. Margaret Atwood and Shannon Ravenel (1989).

Savings: Poems (1988).

“The Two Lives” in *I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (1987).

That Horse, with Charles Colbert Henderson (1985).

Seeing Through the Sun (1985).

Eclipse (1983).

Daughters, I Love You (1981).

A Piece of Moon (1981).

“The 19th Century Native American Poets” (*Wassaja*, 1980).

“Who Puts Together” (*Denver Quarterly*, 1980).

Calling Myself Home (1978).

Edited Volumes

Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals, ed. Hogan, Brenda Peterson, and Deena Metzger (1997).

The Stories We Hold Secret, ed. Hogan, Carol Bruchac, and Judith McDaniel (1986).



Linda Hogan

Selected Bibliography

Works about the author

- Blair, Elizabeth. "The Politics of Place in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*" (*Studies in American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association For the Study of American Indian Literatures*, 1994).
- Carew-Miller, Anna. "Caretaking and the Work of the Text in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*" (*Studies in American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association For the Study of American Indian Literatures*, 1994).
- Musher, Andrea. "Showdown at Sorrow Cave: Bat Medicine and the Spirit of Resistance In *Mean Spirit*" (*Studies in American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association For the Study of American Indian Literatures*, 1994).
- St. Clair, Janet. "Uneasy Ethnocentrism: Recent Works of Allen, 'Silko,' and Hogan" (*Studies in American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures*, 1994).
- Steinberg, Marc H. "Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*: The Wealth, Value, and Worth of the Osage Tribe" (*Notes on Contemporary Literature*, 1995).
- Taylor, Paul Beekman. "Woman as Redeemer in Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit*" in *Native American Women in Literature and Culture*, ed. Susan Castillo and Victor M. P. Da Rosa (Fernando Pessoa University Press, 1997).

Interviews

- "An Interview with Linda Hogan" (*The Missouri Review*, 1994).
- "To Take Care of a Life" in *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*, ed. Joseph Bruchac (University of Arizona Press, 1987).
- Coltelli, Laura. "Linda Hogan" in *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak* (University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
- Miller, Carol. "The Story is Brimming Around: An Interview with Linda Hogan" (*Studies In American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures*, 1978).
- Scholer, Bo. "A Heart Made Out of Crickets" (*The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 1988).
- Smith, Patricia Clark. "Linda Hogan" in *This is About Vision: Interviews with Southwestern Writers*, ed. William Balassi, John F. Crawford, and Annie O. Eysturoy (University of New Mexico Press, 1990).