



Leslie Marmon Silko

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*The earth is your mother,
she holds you. The sky is your father,
he protects you. Sleep,
sleep. Rainbow is your sister,
she loves you. The winds are your brothers,
they sing to you. Sleep,
sleep. We are together always
We are together always
There never was a time
when this
was not so.*

— Storyteller

”



Biography

In 1948 Leslie Marmon Silko was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, of Pueblo, Laguna, Mexican, and white descent. Growing up on the Laguna Pueblo reservation she attended an Indian school and later attended a school in Albuquerque 50 miles away. After high school she went on to attend the University of New Mexico. Silko published her first work, *Tony's Story* in 1969 and later wrote her first book *Laguna Women Poems* in 1974.

In 1977 Silko published her first novel, *Ceremony*. *Ceremony* explains how vital storytelling is to the Pueblo culture and how White culture has made many attempts to destroy these stories as well as their ceremonies. Silko's second major novel, *Storyteller*, published in 1981, uses the stories passed on in her Native-American tradition to recreate, through poetry and prose, stories about her own family. *Delicacy and the Strength of Lace: Letters*, published in 1986 is an edited version of her correspondence with poet James Wright.

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1948
- * Native American poet, novelist, and short story writer

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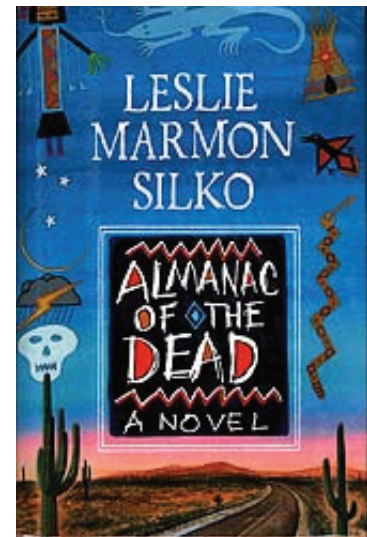
Biography continued

Almanac of the Dead, published in 1991 is perhaps Silko's most talked about novel. As one critic wrote, "this book was written to be discussed." In this book Silko deals with many issues related to American Indians, the most prominent being European conquest of them. This book has a darker tone than her others and the characters are more complicated and angry.

Yellow Woman, first published in 1993, is followed by *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, published in 1996. They are both works on Laguna society before Christian missionaries arrived, as well as political statements against racist policies. These two works once again emphasize the strong connections Silko has to the oral tradition of her past.

Critiques of Silko have focused on issues that she is most involved in. Of these the most prominent focus is on the preservation of oral tradition and ceremonies of the Laguna Pueblo Indians. Silko is the "first acclaimed Native-American woman author" and has used this role to bring attention to many controversial political ideas. Among these are the White European conquest of the Native-Americans and current immigration policies directed at minorities.

Other issues that critiques of Silko touch upon are her involvement in Women's Equality, and stopping violence against women. Most critical interest in Silko springs from her strong ties to tradition. In the introduction to *Yellow Woman*, edited by Melody Graulich, LaVonne Ruoff states, Silko emphasizes the need to return to rituals and oral traditions of the past in order to rediscover the basis for one's cultural identity (Graulich, 20). In as much as Silko needs to be a part of this oral tradition, she needs to be the teller. Kenneth Kidd writes of Silko in his review of *Lullaby*, "A story is a story, but the performance of a storyteller is as much a part of the story as the meaning of the story itself."





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Biography continued

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Pett, Stephen. "An Interview With Leslie Marmon Silko" (*Short Story*, 1994).

Coltella, Laura. "Almanac of the Dead. An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko" (*Native American Literature*, 1992-1993).

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Uisik: Lesulli Mamon Silko changpyon sosol (Ceremony) (Tongasia, 2004).