



# **James A. Michener: A Critical Companion (Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers)**

*Marilyn S. Severson*

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In a career writing fiction that spans more than 40 years, James A. Michener has refined the art of telling an engrossing story while presenting massive amounts of factual information. His narratives are characterized by an acute sense of place and important themes such as human tolerance, the relationship between human beings and their environment, and the value of human courage and hard work. This study is the first to assess and analyze his fictional work in more than ten years and discusses his recent fiction, as well as his important historical fiction. The work features a biographical chapter, an overview of his fictional works, and close, critical readings of nine of his most noted novels which will be of special interest to students of American history.

An opening chapter discusses his life, including his childhood, education, travels, and the path that led him to become a premier storyteller. The overview chapter examines the characteristics of his fiction and general thematic concerns and offers brief consideration of the novels not analyzed in individual chapters. The remaining eight chapters focus on individual novels: *The Fires of Spring*, *Hawaii*, *Centennial*, *Chesapeake*, *The Covenant*, *Space*, *Texas*, *Alaska*, and *Miracle in Seville*. Each novel is analyzed for plot structure, characterization, and thematic elements. In addition, Severson defines and applies alternative critical perspectives from which to read the novel. A complete, up-to-date bibliography of Michener's fiction and bibliography of reviews and criticism complete the work. This up-to-date critique of Michener's work will supercede the out-of-date works on the public library shelf and will support the secondary school interdisciplinary American history/literature curriculum.

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