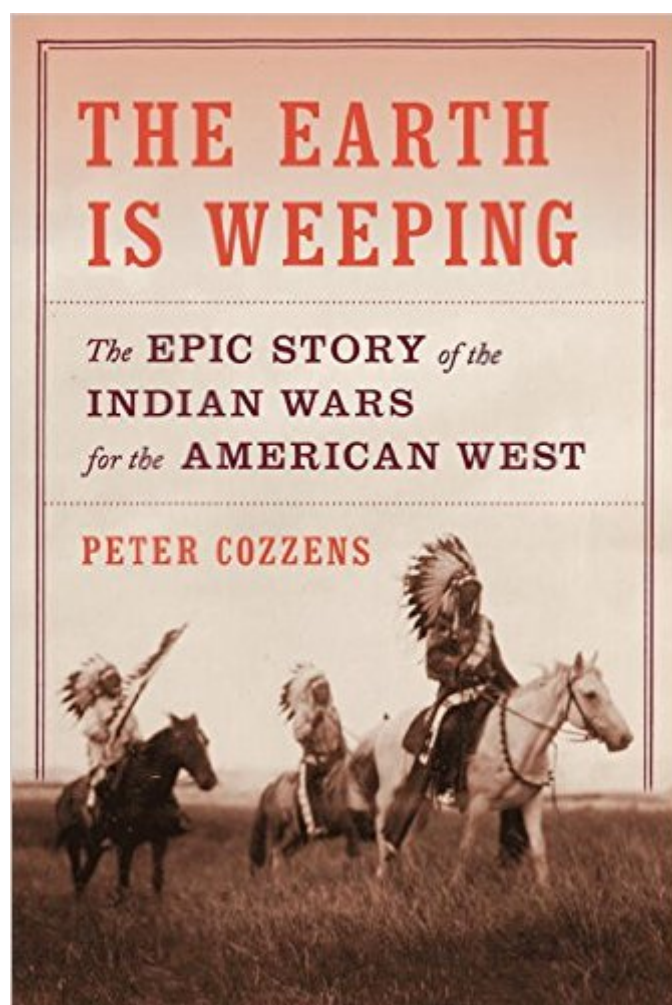


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The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story Of The Indian Wars For The American West



Synopsis

Bringing together a pageant of fascinating characters including Custer, Sherman, Grant, and a host of other military and political figures, as well as great native leaders such as Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and Red Cloud, *The Earth is Weeping* "lauded by Booklist as a beautifully written work of understanding and compassion" is the fullest account to date of how the West was won and lost. With the end of the Civil War, the nation recommenced its expansion onto traditional Indian tribal lands, setting off a wide-ranging conflict that would last more than three decades. In an exploration of the wars and negotiations that destroyed tribal ways of life even as they made possible the emergence of the modern United States, Peter Cozzens gives us both sides in comprehensive and singularly intimate detail. He illuminates the encroachment experienced by the tribes and the tribal conflicts over whether to fight or make peace, and explores the squalid lives of soldiers posted to the frontier and the ethical quandaries faced by generals who often sympathized with their native enemies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An epic story indeed! About 460 pages of text and 50 pages of notes and bibliography. I am the ultimate lay reader; my knowledge of the American West is admittedly sparse. Some of the Indian tribal names were familiar to me -- Lakota, Cherokee, Apache, Sioux -- but others, like Minicom, Mescalero and Chiricahua, were new to me. I knew names of some chiefs and generals -- Geronimo, Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, Custer -- and a few names of battles, like Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee. We visited Fort Verde in Arizona a few years ago. But beyond that, I was pretty much clueless. This book will pull together all the little bits of knowledge you retain from your high

school textbooks. It will also add a depth that was lacking then. The author begins with a memorable quote from President Lincoln, whom the Indians called The Great Father, that portends ill for the Indian nations. Lincoln proclaimed that he would like to live in peace with "our red brethren," and that "if our children should sometimes behave badly and violate treaties, it is against our wish." But, he continued, "it is not always possible for any father to have his children do precisely as he wishes them to do." In this book, not only do you read about the clashes and battles, but also Indian culture, religious beliefs and traditions, as well as U.S. military strategy and life. It was interesting to read that some Indians became scouts and aided the U.S. military, and that some tribes were friendly toward white settlers, while others were warlike not only to whites but also to other Indian tribes. The text is enlivened by dialog taken from numerous sources; even prayers are related.

These were words spoken by General Philip Sheridan in 1869. Thankfully, not everyone in charge of fighting wars with our native Indian tribes shared that sentiment. This book by Peter Cozzens is perhaps the most concise and yet detailed historical narrative of the US government's plan to conquer the American West from the native Indians. Covering thirty years, from 1861 through 1891, Cozzens retells the events that helped shape myths and legends from both sides: the land-hungry whites and the land-holding natives. His mission is to show that much of what is printed in history textbooks about our Indian Wars is inaccurate and romanticized, and the many tribes within our growing boundaries were not always the "barbarians" or "savages" that they were depicted as being. Many tribes fought wars with other tribes. There were good and bad people on both sides. There were rivalries between native tribes over hunting grounds and natural resources before white settlers came in to distract the warring parties. Cozzens starts out his 459-page book summarizing the situation between natives and whites after the Civil War. This is important for the direction of how Indian issues were dealt with, and how they ended up on reservations by the 1880s. President Lincoln, hailed as the Great Emancipator of the African slave, was far less tolerant toward the native Indian. The post Civil War US Army was downsized, many generals were now out of the service or had returned to their previous ranks (usually captains if they were officers) and money was now set aside for post-war Reconstruction. There was no longer a Confederate enemy and daily battles were no longer a part of a soldier's routine.

It would be misleading and untruthful to say that I have read this book thoroughly and exhaustively at the time of writing this review. Comprising over 500 pages, including 16 pages of notes and 10 of references, Peter Cozzens's *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the*

American West • is totally comprehensive and brilliantly balanced. As the author states in the beginning, he is attempting to give as truthful and honest a representation as possible of a turbulent and much-mythologized period in recent history. Cozzens presents a focused account • prefaced by a very helpful chronology • of the 29 years from the Dakota Uprising in Minnesota in 1862 to the final surrender of the Lakotas at Pine Ridge Agency in 1891. There are ample illustrations, and a number of extremely helpful maps. Although my own background and experience has been with the present-day Pueblo people in New Mexico and Arizona, as well as with the Navajos in Arizona (to whom I'm related by marriage) I spent a number of years in Georgia, and thus became familiar with the circumstances of the Cherokee people there. Obviously, due to his focus on the Plains Indians and the Indian wars during and immediately following the Civil War, Cozzens deals only peripherally with other depredations, including those perpetrated earlier by Spaniards and Mexicans. However, this book does indeed round out a part of the picture for me, and is extremely valuable for that reason. The author's style is lively and dramatic, and his descriptions of the battles, tactics and strategies • supported by the aforementioned maps • should be enthralling for the military-minded reader.

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