



# The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard

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## The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard Elmore Leonard

Before he brilliantly traversed the gritty landscapes of underworld Detroit and Miami, Elmore Leonard wrote breathtaking adventures set in America's nineteenth-century western frontier—elevating a popular genre with his now-trademark twisting plots, rich characterizations, and scalpel-sharp dialogue.

No author has ever written more evocatively of the dusty, gutsy heyday of the American West than Elmore Leonard. This complete collection of his thirty-one Western tales will thrill lovers of the genre, his die-hard fans, and everyone in between. From his very first story ever published—"The Trail of the Apache"—through five decades of classic Western tales, *The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard* demonstrates the superb talent for language and gripping narrative that has made Leonard one of the most acclaimed and influential writers of our time.

## The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard Details

Date : Published November 16th 2004 by HarperCollins e-books (first published November 2nd 2004)

ISBN :

Author : Elmore Leonard

Format : Kindle Edition 576 pages

Genre : Westerns, Short Stories, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction

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# From Reader Review The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard for online ebook

## Lesle says

This is his short stories that he provided to a magazine to make a little bit of money.  
I read 3:10 to Yuma as I have enjoyed the movie. The Books ending is not the same at all.

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## John Conquest says

Cormac Mccarthy this is not, being much closer in spirit to John Wayne type movies. These stories were published in old western magazines so the audience likely wanted heroic adventures, not Blood Meridian style massacres. The author is probably most famous for being the inspiration behind the television show Justified. 30 short stories that read like an mlg highlight reel of Indians, outlaws, and prison escapees being unceremoniously blown out by ranchers and the like.

A good collection of well-written, entertaining, often unpredictable yarns.  
My favorites were:

The Rancher's Lady  
3:10 to Yuma  
The Man with the Iron Arm  
Trail of the Apache  
Red Hell Hits Canyon Diablo

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## Joe Valdez says

In the 1950s, Elmore Leonard was married with children and working as a copywriter on a Chevrolet account at Campbell-Ewald Advertising in Detroit. What he really wanted to do was support himself with his fiction. Already a fan of western movies, Leonard discovered he could get paid while he learned his craft by trafficking short pieces in a genre that was enormously popular on newsstands, as he recounts in the foreword, "from *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* down through *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *Blue Book*, and probably at least a dozen pulp magazines, the better ones like *Dime Western* and *Zane Grey Magazine* paying two cents a word."

Leonard is a writer whose craft and facility with dialogue (as well as black, Hispanic and female characters) are qualities I've long admired. I'm not a big fan of the crime stories he'd become world famous for cranking out in the '80s and '90s, many of which fell into formula and self-parody. As for a gaggle of pulp westerns written during the Eisenhower administration, I expected them to be rigid and silly, full of good guys wearing white, bad guys in black and shrieking women tied up on train tracks.

*The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard* is a treasure trove, a Christmas gift for lovers of pulp fiction. Thirty short stories, twenty-seven of them published during the '50s, are included, three of which Hollywood would get hold of: *Three-Ten to Yuma* (released as *3:10 to Yuma* in 1957 and 2007), *The*

*Captives* (released as *The Tall T* in 1957) and *Only Good Ones* (released as *Valdez Is Coming* in 1971).

Each short story is prefaced by their original titles -- if an editor opted for a more sensational one at publication -- as well as the magazine they appeared in and date. My favorites:

*The Big Hunt* (original title: *Matt Gordon's Boy*) in which buffalo hunter Will Gordon is victimized by some unscrupulous men who once took advantage of Will's father in the same manner. After losing his hides to these men, young Will devises a novel plan for getting his valuables back.

*The Boy Who Smiled* in which an Apache named Mickey Segundo watches his father lynched for a crime he didn't commit. Years later, working as an unassuming guide by the name Peza-a, Mickey is contracted by his father's killers to lead them on a hunting party.

*Saint with a Six-Gun* (original title: *The Hanging of Bobby Valdez*) in which Lyall Quinlan gets his break in law enforcement when hired to guard incarcerated gunman Bobby Valdez the week leading up to Valdez's hanging. Both sides of the law underestimate the green youngster.

*The Longest Day In His Life* in which Steve Brady spends his first day on the job as a stageline rep being robbed of his new suit and gun, being drawn on with a shotgun by the daughter of a business client, being recognized by a bandit he shot and testified against seven years ago and proposing marriage to the woman who almost shot him earlier.

*The Kid* (original title: *The Gift of Regalo*) in which an opportunistic horse trainer finds a mute Indian boy and decides to keep him as an indentured servant, until a young prospector determines the boy was stolen by Apaches at one time and now deserves humane treatment, even if it means shooting the kid's master.

Even this early in his career, Leonard demonstrates a sharp ear for character and dialogue. These aren't stories about some guy in a hat and something happens to him(!), but a guy in a hat who was a certain sort of man (!) and something happens to him. With this focus on character, I was invested in even the average stories. The historical detail is impeccable. Leonard specialized in a very specific place and time: the Arizona Territory of the 1880s. Cavalry garrisons, stagecoach runs and Apache resistance offer a different look and feel than most westerns; it's war territory, not the stock landscape of the wild west town.

At 528 pages, this mother lode took me two weeks to finish, but the stories are bite sized and a couple of them can fit into your commute or lunch break. If you don't cotton to the pulp western, or to the Elmore Leonard of *Get Shorty*, I recommend giving these pieces a try. Not every story is a keeper, but Leonard delivers what I crack open fiction for in the first place: vivid landscape, terse storytelling, character, dialogue and social justice.

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## **Liralen says**

I loved this collection, inside and out.

There are some really gorgeous tales in here, and some really amazingly brutal and entirely historical stories of the old old West. Elmore Leonard's dialog is razor sharp and ONLY what needs to be there. I love the progression through these as well, as he hits his stride and the 3:10 to Yuma is just absolutely perfect.

There are stories in here to break your heart, to figure out what real courage really is, and with the lovely plot twists that are utterly and beautifully character driven. I've always loved many of the Leonard villains as much as the heroes in the derived movies and TV series, and I find that they're just as personable and driven by their own circumstances and needs in these stories, if not more so.

Oddly enough what I treasure most about this treasury is one of the reasons I also love the Damon Runyon omnibus: While there are a few utterly brilliant stories that leave me in utter awe and despair of ever touching something that perfect in my writing, the others are really good but are not that penultimate expression of the form. Even the masters aren't *\*always\** at their best, and even the not-best can be published and enjoyed.

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### **Jamie says**

"Three-Ten to Yuma," still one of my favorites. Twelve pages long and riddled with more tension than you can stand. The rest of the entrants vary from solid to gold, Elmore Leonard doing what Elmore does best.

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### **Andre T says**

I'll continue to update this as I read through the short stories.

I liked the introduction of the book that talked with Elmore Leonard about his experiences writing in the western genre, which is also his first foray into professional writing. This is particularly interesting as you hear how he got started as a writer and how he had to manage having a full-time job, a family and pursue his dreams. Since Leonard's style has evolved quite a bit, it's interesting to hear about his aspirations as a young writer.

#### **Trail of the Apache - 1951**

I wasn't sure what to expect of this first story, Leonard first published piece of writing, and I was somewhat surprised by it. Because of the decade, 1950s and watching reruns of "The Rifleman," "Bonanza," and other TV westerns from that era, I expected a sedate, perhaps lighthearted tale of the Wild West with macho cowboys and politically incorrect, if not stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans and instead I read a modern and sympathetic description of the Apache Native Americans and how bureaucracy can make a mess of their lives. While the story starts off slow, it is all a setup for a turn of events, a build up to some unexpected violence, a scene that is almost brutal in its description, that really pulled you emotionally into the story. I was really surprised by this scene, and you can see the beginnings of how Elmore Leonard would later experiment with the genre, an ability to prod and pull at a genre's boundaries, something he'd pull off with greater accomplishment in his later westerns and especially when he transitioned later to the crime genre.

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## Lu says

It took me way too long, but after this and Leonard's debut novel "The Bounty Hunters", I think you can count me as an unabashed fan. I remember reading this while waiting for my car to get fixed, with other people present in the waiting room, and I had to actively suppress saying out loud "Dat's cool!" when something cool happened.

Now, this almost visceral reaction happened about three pages into a story. Let it be a testament to the efficiency of Leonard's writing that I had, in three pages or less, gotten such an affinity for the characters and situation presented that I had to bite my tongue not to embarrass myself in public.

Leonard is no Tolkien (thankfully), but, for a writer who appreciates terseness and getting to the point, he was also surprisingly good at sketching landscapes, an inescapable factor in a good western story. After the first few shorts, I was thoroughly ingrained in the Arizona pecos and mountain ranges.

Another surprisingly positive thing -- especially for shorts mostly published in the 50s -- is how damn progressive Leonard was when it came to race and gender.

A few days ago, I dubbed him the anti-Whedon: everything's funny, but nothing's trying to be.

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## brian says

clint eastwood tells us that the only authentically original american art forms are jazz, blues, and the western. lemme up the ante and say that no other form reveals more about america than the western. and the great practitioners of the form (ford, mann, hawks, boetticher, peckinpah, leone, eastwood) tell us as much about america as any novelist, essayist, historian, or sociologist. maybe more. this 531 pg. tome is the fifth book of elmore leonard westerns i've read over the past two weeks -- a period that's been supplemented by townes van zandt's *live at the ol' quarter*, steve earle's *train a'coming*, bob wills and his texas playboys' *king of western swing*, and daily rounds of mezcal and dos equis... just because i was born a pale, neurotic jew from new york doesn't mean i can't pretend.

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## Carl R. says

The Complete Western Short Stories of Elmore Leonard completes for the time being. my compulsion with Elmore Leonard's work, which was always there, but which turned into nearly an addiction following his death . From modern Detroit and Miami to frontier Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico, the Leonard's career traversed more time and space than perhaps any other American writer.

My answer to my tendency to pick a favorite from this group is "The Nagual." I'd give the award to "Tonto Woman," but I already picked it from *When the Women Come Out To Dance*, so it was declared ineligible. Besides, "Nagual" has a paranormal element to it that seldom appears in L's work, so I hereby hand over the statuette.

We're righteously lucky to have had this man in our midst.

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## Eric says

I own the Kindle version of this book, and read these short stories on my iPhone.

After reading a few of these stories, I saw Elmore Leonard's growth as a short story writer. 'Trail of the Apache,' his first short story, was overlong and unsure about what point it intended to impress upon the reader. But 'Trouble at Rindo's Ranch,' 'Saint with a Six-Gun' and other stories he wrote later, were much more powerful and gripping. 'Three-Ten to Yuma,' for example, was a perfectly formed short story.

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## SeriouslyJerome says

I kept seeing Elmore Leonard's name on movies or TV shows that I liked. I had a vague notion that he wrote crime novels, so why would his name be on "Justified" or "3:10 to Yuma" or "Hombre"? Well, everyone starts somewhere, & the western genre was where Leonard started - waaaaaaay back in the 1950's ;)

I enjoyed reading the progression of his writing style & skill. By the end of the collection, his focus was more on the story than the description of the scene. And I appreciate his research into his subject area. My Arizona friends might like this collection.

The title suggests that this an exhaustive collection of his western stories, but it is only a collection of his **short** stories. I was disappointed to find Hombre missing, as well as others. I guess those are full length novels. Time to see if the library has them...

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## Randy says

In the introduction, Elmore Leonard states that when he decided he wanted to be a writer, after college, he chose a genre he could learn to write while getting paid. Since he liked westerns, that's what he chose to start.

Of course it wasn't that easy.

His first effort was rejected and he decided a little research might be handy. His aim was for the higher paying magazines, Saturday Evening Post and Colliers. There were also a half dozen pulp magazines still in existence. There his early success was found.

Leonard expressed a liking for the American southwest and the Apache, not caring much for the high plains tribes. His first half dozen or so tales mixed the Apache with Union soldiers, various situations which turned a number of stereotypes on their ears. One, the green officer fresh out of West Point sure if he went by the rules, he could defeat those "savages." They are there to be sure, but a bit smarter in most cases.

Thirty stories in the collection, all but a few written and published in the early to mid-fifties. The last few spread out from the sixties to the nineties. 3:10 TO YUMA is here(made into two excellent movies with only minor changes to the story), The Captives(made into the film THE TALL T), and Only Good Ones which he

later expanded into the novel *Valdez is Coming!* (made into the film starring Burt Lancaster).

Most early in his writing career, one can see the developing style and his way of putting the reader square into the story: the sweltering heat of the southwest desert country, the prejudices, and the valiant people of all stripe.

A most excellent collection.

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### **Kirk says**

So I've decided to teach a short-story class next semester (theory of, not creative writing), and I've decided to do some genre lit. In addition to some noir, I thought it would be fun to do Westerns; since I'm not particularly well-versed in them, I thought it would be a good opportunity to edumacte myself. So I immediately reached for the Elmore.

I've been enjoying the stories, which aren't as formulaic as you might expect. Of course, there's a lot of repetition, but it tends mainly to be in the description (the word "ramada" gets used over and over) as opposed to the action. There are many clever turns of plot in various entries that help us understanding why this stuff was so entertaining fifty/sixty years ago. I imagine most students will be interested in "Three-Ten to Yuma," which is really only a sliver of the movie---and not necessarily the meat of that flick, either. There's also a nice introduction here that makes it clear that Leonard TRAINED himself to write through these pieces. It'll be interesting to see how the class responds to this as opposed to, say, Tim O'Brien and Sylvia Plath.

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### **Andy says**

In the 1950s there were two major figures in western noir; one was filmmaker Anthony Mann and the other was writer Elmore Leonard. Leonard's writing was so dark that several western magazines turned down his stories for that very reason.

In this excellent collection of stories you get frontier femme fatales like "The Colonel's Lady", tales of Injun justice in "The Big Hunt" and a young Mexican seeking revenge in "The Boy Who Smiled". The latter two stories mentioned are significant in that they address issues of racism amid a cowboy style setting, making it less didactic than any sermon.

While I never cared much for Leonard's modern crime writing I find his western tales to be totally tall and badass in the saddle.

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### **Jim says**

This is an abridged version of the book having only 11 stories in it. I don't think they're abridged, though. Read by Tom Wopath, Henry Rollins & David Strather & William Atherton. (I wrote those names down as I heard them. I have no idea if they're spelled correctly, but all of them were excellent readers.)

For some reason, I never equated Elmore Leonard with westerns. I'd forgotten who wrote *Hombre*. It's been a lot of years since I read the book, though I've probably watched the movie with Paul Newman in it a dozen



times over the years & it is an old favorite.

One of the best things about Leonard's writing is that everyone in them are real people. Good/bad, black/white/red, male/female, they're not perfect in any way. They're strong, opinionated, & have reasons for being what they are. They get dealt a hand & play it out, often based on a past that is painted in with broad strokes, just enough to give them depth, but with enough detail left out for some wiggle room. I was never quite sure which way they'd go, but usually the author seemed to find a pretty unique path for them.

Blood Money - 3.5 stars - A good solid story to start the ball rolling. Typically well written & gritty about a bank robbery & what happens after. Exactly what I'd expect from Leonard.

Only Good Ones - Wow! 5 stars, a story of prejudice & vigilantism so unbelievable, but so starkly written that it felt true. Surely it was too stark & outrageous to be mere fiction

Trail of the Apache - 4 stars - another solid story with a bit more meat than the first. Government treatment of Indians & a pretty exceptional man that carried the orders out. There's duty, there's dedication, & then there is just being built a certain way. Add them together & Leonard came up with a very remarkable hero.

Trouble at Rindo Station - 3 stars. Not bad, but pretty similar on a lot of points to the other stories. If I hadn't just heard them, I probably would have rated it a bit higher.

The Boy Who Smiled - 3 stars. Serviceable & would have been more chilling if everything hadn't been telegraphed so far ahead.

The Tonto Woman - 4 stars. I loved the characters & the ending. It's not what I would expect from Leonard at all, but I loved it. It's the kind of story that makes you think about it after it's done.

Hurrah for Captain Early - 3 stars, maybe 4, but it could have been 5 & blew it. This was an excellent story in a lot of ways, but it got too scattered, tried to make too many points & wound up not really making any of them with the impact they deserved. Still, it wound up being a disappointment.

The Colonel's Lady - 4 stars - Wow! Great action with a great ending. I can't say more without a spoiler, unfortunately. I won't even post a spoiler, just tell you that you have to read it without knowing what is going to happen for the impact. Go read it now. Seriously. It's too cool not to.

Saint With A Six Gun - 4 stars. This is an excellent story where a young man learns some of the facts of life the hard way, but with a superb twist. It was thought provoking, but had a really fun twist, too.

You Never See Apaches - 3 stars. Not particularly interesting over all, but it does show Indians in a very good light. It was too obvious in most ways.

3:10 to Yuma - 3 stars. A much shorter story than I expected, so it didn't have the history of the movies which added to the impact. Basically, it's the last scene of the movies - sort of - just the walk from the hotel to the train.

This is definitely a 'must read' western collection. Highly recommended.

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