

# **Education of a Wandering Man Study Guide**

**Education of a Wandering Man by Louis L'Amour**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Education of a Wandering Man Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 and 2.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3 and 4.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 and 6.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 and 8.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9 and 10.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 and 12.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13 and 14.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 15 and 16.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17 and 18.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 19 and 20.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 21 and 22.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 23 and 24.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 25 and 26.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 27 and 28.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>



# Plot Summary

In "Education of a Wandering Man," famed writer of the American West, Louis L'Amour, provides a detailed account of his unique education. Reading was the foundation of L'Amour's education and his later phenomenal success as a writer. He had been exposed to reading from the time that he was born. Not only was the L'Amours a family of readers, they would discuss what they read and learned each day at the dinner table. From these discussions, L'Amour learned to analyze and question what he learned which served to fuel a growing hunger to read more and learn more.

When L'Amour was just twelve years old, he wanted a bike. His father told him to get a job and buy it himself. L'Amour took his advice and began delivering messages and mail for Western Union. It was a serendipitous point in L'Amour's young life. Magazines were among the material that L'Amour delivered. A naturally curious young man, L'Amour peeked inside and read short stories and reports of scientific advancements and became intrigued with the written word. It was the beginning of a love affair that would last a lifetime.

At sixteen, L'Amour was forced to quit school because of family economics. Although his father was a veterinarian and had served in various law enforcement capacities, times were tough leading up to the Great Depression and money was tight. But L'Amour had another reason to leave school - he felt that his "education" at school was standing in the way of a true education. He was happy to leave. L'Amour seemed to have no trepidation about taking off into the world at such a young age. It seemed his destiny.

L'Amour, a tall sixteen-year-old young man, convinced the captain of a seafaring vessel that he was twenty-two. L'Amour got a job on the ship and sailed across the Atlantic. At the same time that his high school class was graduating back in Jamestown, North Dakota, L'Amour was hanging out with a crew of seasoned and rugged sailors in a bar in Singapore.

Having been a sparring partner for some boxers in his hometown, L'Amour made some money on the side by signing up for boxing matches. Boxing was an important factor in the lives of many poor young men at the time. If these young men had some talent and ability, they could sometime parlay their skills in the ring into a lucrative career. When L'Amour was stateside, he rode the rails with the other hobos who were looking for seasonal work. The pre-Depression, hobo was a valuable and respected element of the work force. After the Depression, however, jobs were scarce and the hobo persona devolved into the more modern definition of the term "hobo."

L'Amour worked in mines, skinned cattle, harvested, served in the military during World War II, and did scores of other odd jobs to support himself. However, all the while, L'Amour was locked into a process of self-education. No matter what job that he had, L'Amour was observing and learning. He loved to hear the tales of old-timers about their struggles in taming the wild west. And he read—he read anything and everything he could get his hands on. The only time he didn't read was during his service in the

military. It was impossible to read most of the time during the war. However, it didn't stop him from thinking and observing and hearing the stories that others had to tell. He never forgot those stories.

Louis L'Amour had a unique education, one that probably stands unparalleled before and since. L'Amour became one of the most successful and prolific American writers of all time. However, even as an accomplished writer, his education didn't end. His hunger to read and learn never ebbed. His education was endless as was his thirst for knowledge. In his later years, he did not wander the world physically but his mind never stopped wandering through the infinite knowledge that was available in books.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 1, Louis L'Amour was in Singapore when his high school class back in Jamestown, North Dakota, was preparing for graduation. L'Amour was a shipmate on a seagoing vessel. He didn't look at his trek so much as an adventure but more as an education. Education was available to anyone in reach of a library, a newsstand or a post card. Some make the excuse that they don't have time to read. But there is no excuse. L'Amour read twenty-five books while waiting—waiting for a dentist, waiting for interviews, waiting in restaurants for friends.

L'Amour had fallen in love with learning and it became a lifelong romance. This book is about an education but not an education in the traditional sense. A university can provide a guideline but it is in life that one really gains his education. A formal education prepares one to live a full life. Teachers are paid dismal salaries. If in the future, if our country produces a volume of fourth-rate citizens, we only have ourselves to blame. Education begins in the home but so does morality. The child observes his father break traffic laws and lie to cops. How can this have no impact the child?

L'Amour left school at fifteen for two reasons: economics and because his education was standing in the way of his being educated. His first job was at twelve years of age as a messenger for the Western Union. He had always done well at school, earning grades at the top of his class. He'd always read a lot about everything but especially about history. He came from a family of readers. They read great literature and about politics and current events and discussed them at family meals.

In Chapter 2, L'Amour's education included skinning dead cattle in Texas, baling hay in New Mexico, working with a traveling circus and participating in boxing exhibitions. It was on a freight train that L'Amour read his first Little Blue Book given to him by a hobo. They were small books that could be purchased at newsstands for five cents. The books included works by Shakespeare, Poe, Jack London, Henry James, Balzac and hundreds of other literary giants. They covered a wide-range of subjects and themes.

In pre-Depression America, the country depended on seasonal workers known as hobos. They traveled around the country and took on work that needed to be done from planting to harvesting. A segment of the hobos were college boys earning money for their educations. Most were white but some were black and some were European immigrants. The hobos after the Depression were different. They weren't carefree like the earlier hobos. They were serious and frightened men. After the Depression, people clung to jobs and the hobos were set adrift.

From a young age, L'Amour planned to write. On his wanderings, he had no particular skill to offer, his size and physical strength. What compelled L'Amour to get his first job at age twelve was his desire for a bicycle. His father told him to get a job and buy it



himself. He delivered adventure magazines, peeked inside and learned about writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs. He discovered magazines that were devoted to science and published some of the first science fiction stories. L'Amour also visited the town library at every chance he got and read whatever he could find with no preconceived notion.

Like his father and his older brothers, L'Amour boxed and worked out in the YMCA gym. It was around that time that the Petrolle boys came to town.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 3, Peter Petrolle was a lightweight fighter hailing out of Schenectady, New York. His manager, Lee Shrankel, owned a cafe in Jamestown and also managed Pete's younger brother, Billy. They were both good fighters with Billy just beginning his career. Boxing was a way for a young man to come off the streets and make a name for himself. Getting to the top in that sport meant years of learning in the ring.

L'Amour was only fourteen years old when he became the sparring partner for both brothers. Although he was young, L'Amour was tall, athletic, and had a good reach. L'Amour kept up on the boxing circuit by reading a boxing magazine published in St. Paul. It didn't interfere with L'Amour's other reading in the least. The town had been gifted with a library by townsman Alfred Dickey. L'Amour was ever grateful because it was the basis of his education. An avid reader can learn from the mistakes of others and not repeat them.

In his reading, L'Amour learned that as a writer he needed to be prepared for rejections and how very difficult it was to get published. Of course, he hadn't read where it would be as hard as it was. L'Amour had been hungry, too. He read about hunger, but it didn't adequately describe it. When L'Amour wrote about hunger, thirst and cold, he had experienced them.

L'Amour did not take on jobs so he could write about them. He took them because he needed to earn money. Needing work was what led L'Amour to the sea. L'Amour, sixteen but passing for twenty-two, dreamed of a career as a boxer.

In Chapter 4, after a trip at sea, L'Amour wound up in Houston and decided to head west. It was a rough trip. L'Amour was running out of money and wanted to have enough to get home where he could find a job. He was put off the train with some other hobos. They gathered around a fire in the hobo jungle waiting for the next train. The men talked around the fire. L'Amour mainly listened. Some men were traveling great distances for jobs. He crossed his fingers hoping that the job would really be there for them. Some were boxers and talked about their triumphs in the ring.

L'Amour tried to learn as much about the any country, city and town he blew into. It was just a natural curiosity that he had but it would one day enrich his writing. There were so many stories that people missed because they were focused on their destination instead of on the road leading to it. Missing a train, L'Amour was picked up by a driver who was heading to Phoenix. L'Amour told him he hated to leave New Mexico without seeing Doubtful Canyon. The man, who had been a Texas Ranger, was intrigued. He took L'Amour to breakfast and listened to the story that L'Amour heard from an old man whom he worked with about Apache Indians attacking a stage coach in the canyon. The

man claimed to have witnessed it and claimed that he, a white man, had been raised by the Apaches.





# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 5, at sixteen, L'Amour was working with an old man in the panhandle of West Texas. Their job was to skin cattle that had been killed by the drought. It was a job that required a strong stomach. An old trapper named Peterson had hired them. Peterson told L'Amour that when he was seven, Apaches raided his family's homestead and were about to kill him until one Apache spoke up and ordered the others to take him. Peterson was raised as an Apache. He was treated better by the Indians than he was by his family. Peterson was just a young boy when a stage coach entered Doubtful Canyon. He watched the fight from behind the rocks. The heat was blistering as the stage coach was stopped in the canyon, surrounded by attacking Indians. The stage coach protected the men from arrows but not from bullets. The boy didn't know the exact number of Indians but both Cochise and Mangas Colorado had brought in warriors.

The third day of fighting dawned and things were desperate for the white men - three days in the blistering heat with no water. The battle soon ended with seven white men and between 130 and 150 Apaches dead.

L'Amour heard many tales of conflicts and battles between Indians and pony soldiers. Some of these tales wound up in some of his stories. In every town he wandered into, "there was at least one former outlaw or gunfighter, an old Indian scout or a wagon master," (p. 37) and each man had a story.

After L'Amour completed the awful job of skinning the cattle, he traveled to Phoenix where he worked in a citrus grove. Next he took a job as a caretaker of a mine.

In Chapter 6, the mine was at the bottom of a sloping road. The mine shaft was filled with water. There was a hoisting engine and a compressor, both in working order. There was a nearby bunkhouse, some barking dogs and a about sixty chickens. L'Amour was left off at the mine and was totally alone. L'Amour cleaned the room he decided to sleep in. He discovered a large box of books that a teacher who only lasted a few weeks had the job before him and left behind. L'Amour's boss told him that there was an old Indiana who lived in the region and may have spooked him.

L'Amour did all his jobs and read the teacher's books and other books left behind by miners. L'Amour became acquainted with the Indian and went on walks with him. The Indian, who was ninety, had only one eye—the other eye was gone, leaving just the dried up socket. He showed L'Amour the plants his people used for remedies. L'Amour panned the river and got \$300 worth of gold. He left the mine and bought some new clothes with the money he got from the gold. He took a bus and headed toward the sea for another voyage. The bus stopped at a diner. When he returned, his suitcase with his new clothes was gone.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 7, other bags were missing off the bus. The driver spotted a car speeding away, probably carrying the stolen items. Everything was gone. L'Amour learned that there was mine assessment work available in Barstow, California, and headed there. Once in Barstow, L'Amour was taken to the Owl's Head Mountains by the old man who owned the claims which were for manganese ore. The old man pointed out where the location of a fresh water source was and warned L'Amour that the place was crawling with rattlers.

The old man and L'Amour drove over seventy miles to the claim. If the old man wasn't back in five days, he told L'Amour to wind up the old Model T that was sitting in front of the mine and drive back. After the old man left, L'Amour looked around and found cooking utensils and a ring of fire where he could build a fire. Under a makeshift awning was L'Amour's bed for the next five days—a hammock. At least he wouldn't wake up next to a rattlesnake. He did have to shake a scorpion out of his boot one morning.

L'Amour wanted to write and knew that the only way to learn to write was to write and write a lot. But there had to be a structure and design behind good writing just as there was with any other art. L'Amour completed his assessment work by the fourth day. On the fifth day, he cranked up the Model T and it started right away. The trouble would come a short time later.

In Chapter 8, as soon as he took off, L'Amour ran over a big rock and broke the axle. The car wouldn't move. He started off on foot with only a can of pears. He headed to the water source the old man had pointed out, about four miles south. He walked along the road so the old man would see him. It was early and conditions were bearable but by mid-day the temperature could reach over 100 degrees.

He found the water source before noon. He drank and drank and splashed water on himself. He had no vessel to carry any water with him. He decided to nap until later when it cooled off. After two more hours of walking, the path he was on intersected with the road. He built a fire from some discarded wood he found. The dessert was hot in the day but very cold at night. He opened his can of pears and made them last as long as he could. He saved the can so he could fill it with water when he found some.

The next day, he resumed walking until it became too hot. After he scared a rattler away, he slept until dusk and started walking again. Amazingly, he had walked through Death Valley and made it to Barstow. The old man was sick in bed, apologized for not coming for him and paid him \$150. L'Amour took off. His next stop was Los Angeles and then the harbor at San Pedro and a job on a ship.

# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 9, once in Los Angeles, L'Amour rented a room near a library and a second-hand bookstore and split his time between the two places. He looked for work but there was nothing available. He read every book he could get his hands on, especially some about exploring the world on the high seas. At the end of a week, he gathered his gear and headed for the port. In San Pedro, he registered at the Marine Service Bureau for a ship. He learned that it could be three months before his number came up. There were some 700 men waiting for a ship.

Many of the men stayed at the Seaman's Church Institute which provided a place to shower and sleep. There was a lot of stress and friction among the sailors because everyone was waiting for a ship. Arguments and fights broke out frequently. The Seaman's Church was an education in itself. There were a lot of fascinating characters and incidents that showed up later in L'Amour's stories. Finally, L'Amour shipped off on a freighter headed for the Far East.

In Chapter 10, the approach to modern teaching is flawed. We expect the child to creep along, not run. Children have an innate logic that should be encouraged. People are not educated to think but to have certain opinions. Although L'Amour wouldn't recommend his style of education to anyone, it worked for him. He didn't have to strive for grades or certificates. All his degrees were honorary. He studied purely for the love of learning.

Like most wandering men, L'Amour loved poetry. It was something he could easily remember and that could pass the time. While looking out on the vast sea, he would often repeat his favorite poems to himself. Life is not a spectator sport. It is for learning and discovering. The best gift one person can give another is the desire to know. One of L'Amour's favorite books was given to him by a panhandler. He read the book *Lord Jim* at least several times.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 11, those who have learned the most are the only ones who understand how much they don't know. L'Amour has known real hunger but the hunger to learn was more compelling. In his knock-about days, L'Amour considered a career in the boxing ring. In his travels, he had earned some money from boxing bouts. In preparation for such a career, he never smoked and drank very little. But in his travels, he never lost his hunger to learn everything he could. He even hired student translators in Asia to translate books for him that were not published in English.

One question a writer is often asked where he gets his ideas. The simple answer is that ideas are everywhere. A writer has to remember that he's writing about people so the stories must include emotion. There are only a certain amount of plots. Good writers can take the same plot and come up with different stories. A plot is a normal human situation that arises again and again. It is not necessary to travel to gather material to write about. It is necessary to understand and reveal. L'Amour worked in big timber for a short while but couldn't stand to see the big trees fall. It was a turning point in his life. If he was ever to get an education beyond his own reading, it was then.

In Chapter 12, L'Amour found a job in a veneer plant in Portland, Oregon. He got a room near a library to have access to books. He would often stay in the library from morning until night. His reading followed no pattern. He read philosophy, fiction and plays. He also worked out in a gym hoping to pick up some work boxing or sparring. One night walking back from the plant to his room, he was held up. Being a boxer, his first instinct was to punch the guy. The guy fell back and his gun went flying. L'Amour took the gun and ran on to his room. He was able to sell the gun for \$6.00.

When he wasn't working or reading, he tried his hand at a little writing. His first attempts were not successful. But he learned that the more he wrote the better he got. He read a lot of diaries and journals about the west - by people who actually lived and traveled there. He later relied on the knowledge he gained on this material for the many western stories he later wrote. Stories of the West were complicated. The writer needed to have accurate knowledge to write stories more than any other type of writing expect perhaps science fiction.



# Chapters 13 and 14

## Chapters 13 and 14 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 13, army officers who served in the West were often educated and intelligent. They fought the Indians but many of them had an avid interest in Indian culture. The nation owes a debt of gratitude to these men who kept journals and thus preserved a great deal of history about the American Indians. General George Custer, in his book, "My Life on the Plains," complained about the mistreatment of Indians. The Battle of Little Big Horn has often been misrepresented as has Custer's character. One big misunderstanding about Indians was that the chief of a tribe did not have authority to sign a peace treaty for the entire tribe, only for himself. Military tactics were always of interest to L'Amour from the American Indians to the Roman legions to T. E. Lawrence and the Battle of Tafilah. Those who write about history had a responsibility to present it as accurately as possible.

L'Amour's reading broadened to encompass more subjects. In addition to fiction, he read about psychiatry and the American Revolution. He kept track of what he read and in 1930, he read 115 books and plays. In his travels, he never failed to listen to the stories of men, especially old men who had many tales to tell. Writers should dismiss the concept of writer's block - they should just write and it will come.

In Chapter 14, L'Amour traveled with his elderly parents from Oregon to Oklahoma. He was leaving the Oregon region and he and his brother Parker agreed that their parents should come to Oklahoma to live with him. They'd stop along the way and tour the old Indian country. Few people see themselves belonging to cultures that will someday cease to exist. Rarely do people consider themselves in a historical perspective. History is a delicate, fragile thing. Of the hundreds of plays written by Euripides, Aristophanes and Sophocles, only a few remain. How many books, plays, journals and dairies have been destroyed over the ages and lost pieces of history in that destruction?

They stopped to visit some acquaintances of L'Amour's one evening. The people lived on a horse ranch and L'Amour's father, a veterinarian, fixed the teeth of a couple of horses. The friend mentioned that Butch Cassidy had been through a few days before. It had been reported that he was killed in South America but plenty of people had sighted him in America. Nobody was ever killed during a holdup in which Cassidy was involved. After the others went to bed, L'Amour read by a kerosene lamp until all hours.

After arriving at the Oklahoma property and getting his parents settled, L'Amour planned to leave for New Orleans and the sea. But it was not to be, L'Amour had become a writer. He had a few things such as poems and articles published by then. He also had a volume of rejection slips. He stayed on the farm with his parents for the time being to write.



# Chapters 15 and 16

## Chapters 15 and 16 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 15, some of the first poetry L'Amour was composed while he walked along and hunted for rabbits. He didn't really "hunt" for them, but if he saw one he'd shoot at it. He became friendly with a neighbor farmer, Gillespie, who was an avid reader himself. They'd often get together to discuss books, history and writers. L'Amour borrowed many books from Gillespie over the next several months.

People in the area gossiped about L'Amour, saying he should have a proper job and not just stay in the house all the time. There was a group of ruffians who smirked at him when he was in town. Some boys in the town heard that L'Amour had been a boxer and asked if he wanted to have a bout with another local fighter. The other kid was nice and had some talent but needed more training. L'Amour offered to train him and L'Amour wound up developing a Golden Gloves boxing team of eight boys. Three of the team won championships in their divisions.

L'Amour studied the writing of great writers and compared it with his writing. He had to figure out why he was getting so many rejections. L'Amour's fortunes began to change after that. The very next thing he submitted - a hobo story for a magazine - was accepted. In 1935, he sold his first short story, "Anything for a Pal," for cash—\$6.54. Many of his first stories were about the Far East. Soon after, he began writing stories about the West because that's what he knew and where he lived.

In Chapter 16, history provides few explanations of how things were done. One exception were the Egyptians who left drawings and artifacts about how they functioned. Sometimes writers give narrow pictures of society, using the lifestyle of one group as an example of an entire nation. Writing varies between individuals. Some write slow like Gustave Flaubert others are fast like Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. Some are prolific and some are not. Writing is not easy and many hesitate to begin a new work. Many think writers need quiet but some of the best writing is done in a noisy newsroom.

At the time that L'Amour settled down to write, short stories were in demand. Many were published in magazines. There were three categories of magazines: the quality publications like the New Yorker and Esquire; the "slicks" like Ladies Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post; and the pulps like Adventure and Blue Book. Of the many contemporaries of his time who pursued writing careers, only one other person achieved success. Necessity compelled L'Amour. Since he only wrote and had no other income, he had to work hard and write a lot. L'Amour attributed his success in large part to the wealth of information and inspiration from the many books he read and the plethora of tales he heard.



# Chapters 17 and 18

## Chapters 17 and 18 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 17, as he pursued a writing career, L'Amour had been reading approximately 100 books a year. He found that there was a scarcity of books about Asia and Africa. He relied on students to give him translations or retell the stories to him. He had students relate the contents of the works of Confucius, Mencius and other philosophers and poets of Asia. He especially enjoyed the fiction of China. America will soon need to expand its focus beyond Europe to China, India, Pakistan and Southeast Asia. Understanding these cultures and their history will benefit the nation. Schools typically have a narrow focus that does not include study of these cultures.

The country needs leaders who see beyond the next election and beyond their narrow special interests. The potential of space travel must be given serious consideration—even the habitation of other planets. L'Amour was making inroads into foreign literature and finding great rewards.

In Chapter 18, L'Amour carefully studied the structure of the short story. Many years after L'Amour was an established writer, there was criticism about the lack of sex in his writing. Before World War I, sex was confined to bedrooms and whorehouses. L'Amour wanted to write about settling the wild west. He felt that modern writers focus too much on sex as if it were a new discovery. Although he wrote about the American west a lot, he was really a writer of "frontiers." A frontier is anything beyond that which man had previously traveled including outer space and advanced knowledge.

L'Amour was doing well in his writing career and then World War II came. With his knowledge of Asia, he thought he would be most useful working for Naval Intelligence. But without a college degree, he was rejected. L'Amour's basic training was in the Infantry at Camp Robinson and then later to Officers' Candidate School at Camp Hood, Texas. L'Amour was chosen to be an instructor in winter survival and was sent to northern Michigan. Eventually, because of his experience at sea, he was sent to San Francisco as a cargo control officer.

L'Amour was a man of action so he requested Tank Destroyer school. He was originally scheduled to be sent to the Pacific theater but instead was shipped off to Europe where he earned four Bronze Stars. There wasn't time to read or write during his time in the war but he could think and observe. There were plenty of stories to be told.



# Chapter 19 and 20

## Chapter 19 and 20 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 19, when the war ended, L'Amour was sent home on the USS Boise, a light cruising vessel. Those aboard were ecstatic because the Boise was swift and they knew they should be able to make the crossing from Europe to America in under five days and would make it home for Christmas 1945. But a terrible storm blew up causing their crossing to take sixteen days.

As soon as L'Amour was back in the states, he contacted a publisher he knew who told him to write westerns and he'd buy them. Although he saved a little money during his service, it wouldn't last long and it was imperative that he begin writing and earning money. Writing westerns would be something he knew about and a subject that was supported by volumes of historical data.

L'Amour wanted to be successful and his definition of success meant two things: making a good life for your family and earning enough money to buy books. He had ceased to wander physically but he still needed to explore with his mind. As always, L'Amour was careful with his research and his writing because it was his firm belief and promise to his readers that he would always produce a story that was as authentic as possible while at the same time be entertaining and compelling. To that end, he once again relied heavily on journals and diaries that were available—to read the words of real people who had participated in the taming of the wild west.

In Chapter 20, most people have never left the security of their cities and familiar relationships to venture into the fringe elements of the world. There were always ways to pass borders and exist in a life away from officialdom. In this shadowy world, men sold weapons and munitions others smuggled goods or even people. Others were escaping from their pasts.

Based on what he learned from a man named Oriental Slim in San Pedro, L'Amour knew where to find those who lived on the fringe in locales such as Shanghai and Hong Kong. L'Amour sought out people in these areas to learn what was taking place outside the eyes of governments and authorities. In Shanghai he met a sister and brother who lived in that world. They were aspiring writers and introduced L'Amour to a group of writers and artists in the underworld. His experience proved to him that the love of writing and telling stories existed even in unknown segments of the world. When L'Amour wrote of some of his ventures, he did not have to revisit those locales - they were entrenched in his memory.

L'Amour relocated to Los Angeles and spent some time at the Brown Derby in Hollywood. He was making contacts and more importantly, he was writing stories that would sell. His first motion picture was entitled, "East of Sumatra." He was disappointed that his good story was turned into a sex and jungle epic.



In his continuing quest to learn more about America, L'Amour went beyond the typical history books and delved down into lesser-known books, local histories and memoirs. As usual, he also listened to the tales of others who had lived the experience or who had learned of events from stories passed down in families.



# Chapter 21 and 22

## Chapter 21 and 22 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 21, L'Amour ran across a rare book entitled, "The Life of Billy Dixon." It was the story of how twenty-eight buffalo hunters and one woman fought off 700 to 1,000 Comanche and Kiowa warriors. Whenever possible, L'Amour sought out this type of book. He relished stories that told of little known incidents in vivid detail. He read first-hand stories about Wyatt Earp and Buffalo Bill Cody. Trying to earn desperately needed money, L'Amour rented a typewriter so he could increase his volume of writing. One month he didn't have enough money to pay the rent on the typewriter and sent a note to the owner. The owner never claimed the typewriter and it became L'Amour's most prized possession. It seemed as though the fates were interceding. He was never eligible for any writing grants and won no prizes, but he was gifted, in a sense, with a typewriter!

A popular form of entertainment in the West was boxing and it was something that L'Amour had plenty of first-hand knowledge about. Fighters for bouts usually hailed from the ghettos or the mean streets. Money was hard to come by and if a boy could get himself in a match, he could win some money and have the potential of developing a lucrative career.

L'Amour never curbed his appetite for reading. For many years, he did not have a permanent home, per se, so he was unable to accumulate his books. He didn't have space so he was forced to give them away. When he married, he did create a library and kept his books from that point on. But there was a volume of books he had given away before that. L'Amour was not a narrow-minded person as evidenced by his religious reading choices—the Bible, the writings of Josephus and the Koran.

Always up to a challenge, L'Amour was compelled to start speaking publicly. He had two reasons to do so: he hated it and he watched a fellow writer fumble and stutter when he gave a lecture. He'd never want to be in that spot so he put the word around that he was available for lectures. He figured he'd make a fool out of himself but he did better than he expected to. Eventually, he became a polished speaker and even had occasion to be on the same platform with the President of a US president and a Supreme Court Justice.

In Chapter 22, another event that entertained Americans was the court trial. Many attorneys were great speakers and debaters. Blackstone was the guide for much of the western law and in some cases was the only legal authority. Most attorneys in the old west had studied Blackstone and "Greenleaf on Evidence." Naturally, since L'Amour was writing about the west he read these legal resources as well.

After his debut, L'Amour gave speeches and lectures as often as possible. Just as with his writing, he became better at speaking the more he did it. In his lectures, he



encouraged everyone to read and learn. If people expected to have the best leaders, he told his audiences, they needed to be knowledgeable themselves in order to know who to vote for. To survive, America must be a nation of participants not passive observers.

L'Amour had read most of what Ernest Hemingway had written at the time. He was of the opinion that Hemingway's short stories were better than his novels. L'Amour had known self-involved people like the characters in Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises," but to him they were not interesting and not worth writing about. L'Amour never collaborated with anyone in writing a book and never had anyone do his research. The research was the fun part. Once editors started asking him for work, he felt freer to write what he wanted, as long as he didn't forget what people were really interested in reading. After achieving success, L'Amour never let up on his reading. He especially enjoyed reading the histories of Asia and India.



# Chapters 23 and 24

## Chapters 23 and 24 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 23, it is L'Amour's belief that man can achieve anything and has no limits. Everyone is capable of creativity and inventiveness. Man has never lived up to his true potential. Even though individuals who do not actively seek information, receive more knowledge than they realize. The subconscious mind absorbs information like a sponge. The subconscious is powerful. Man must learn how to capture that power and channel it for good and for mankind's advancement.

L'Amour settled down and stopped wandering but never stopped reading. He filled his library with books, not just the so-called great books, but books that provided a peak into times past. The beauty of educating oneself is that there is no curriculum and no limits as to what one can learn.

In Chapter 24, no matter what else he read or studied and no matter what culture he researched, L'Amour never neglected his education about the American west. He spent much time crisscrossing the country and finding old-timers who had tales to tell. He visited water holes and sites of old battles always looking for artifacts. His stories of cowboys and Indians and taming the old west were authentic. If a character in one of his stories was wounded, he learned exactly how he would have cared for his wound or what plants he would have used to help heal his wound.

He learned through his travels and studies that many of the buffalo hunters disliked the killing but it was how they made a living. Sadly, to make way for modern America, the buffalo had to go or else there would not be hospitals and universities standing in their places. L'Amour read the stories of those who traveled through the West like "Travels in America" by John Davis and John Bradbury's "Travels in the Interior of America." L'Amour also drew upon his own experiences as a young knockabout and seasonal worker in the West. One of L'Amour's favorite haunts were the old cliff dwellings in the Anzai ruins in Colorado. He often went there to see and learn and stay quiet. In the silent night, he'd hear noises. Was it the wind or animals or was it spirits from another time?

# Chapters 25 and 26

## Chapters 25 and 26 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 25, L'Amour relished his studies about Africa, especially North Africa, the Sahara Desert, Libya and Morocco which was largely inhabited by Arabs and white people known as Berbers. He learned about the influence of the Greek and Roman cultures on the settlement of the African coast. He read about the black empires of the Niger region. He read "Travels in Ethiopia" by David Buxton and "The Ancient Kinds of the Nile" by Brian Fagan among many others.

During the time he worked the mines, he encountered several old miners who had worked the mines in Virginia City, Nevada. During its heyday, Virginia City was an exciting boom town. L'Amour wrote about the Comstock lode that was found there. It was one of the richest mineral finds ever made and made several men millionaires. L'Amour himself participated in the last gold rush that took place in Weepah, Nevada.

L'Amour laments that the short story has lost popularity. So many beautiful short stories have been written that have been shoved to the back of shelves and forgotten. In addition to his library, L'Amour's ranch was important to him in that it was part of the West and what he wrote about. Walking about his property, he renewed his feeling for the country which stimulated his creativity.

In Chapter 26, books help advance civilization in that they help men learn from mistakes of the past. If there was no written record of historic events, man would only have knowledge from the narrow view of the present. Figures like Julius Caesar, Cleopatra and even George Washington and Abraham Lincoln would have been unknowns. When the Saxons landed in England and found ruins they assumed it was the work of giants. There was no book to explain what the structures were and how they were built. Maps also help bring perspective to areas controlled by tribes and powers in the past.

Each book that L'Amour wrote was an adventure. He wrote to tell stories not to make money. He loved to share what he gained from his unusual education. When he told the stories of the struggle to settle the West, he made sure he included the role families played as opposed to just the lone, heroic figure that was often portrayed in westerns. There were many early writers that recognized the wealth of stories that could be told about the West. James Fenimore Cooper was one of the first such writers. Mayne Reid who wrote "The Rifle Rangers" and "The Lost Ranchers" began his storytelling of the West in 1883.

Western communities were more civilized than sometimes reported. There weren't just gunfights and drunken brawls. Many towns had bands that held concerts. There were sports teams and organized horse racing. Traveling lecturers spoke at churches and

schools. L'Amour did extensive reading on Alexander and drew parallels between his campaigns and the struggle to settle the West so many centuries later.



# Chapters 27 and 28

## Chapters 27 and 28 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 27, during his wandering days, L'Amour encountered a young Moslem in Sumatra who recommended that he read the "Malay Annals" which would provide him with a historical perspective of the region. He sat with the young man and discussed various topics for an entire afternoon. L'Amour learned a lot about the history of martial arts from culture to culture. He also gained knowledge on the impact of Buddhist monks who traveled to India; and, the missionary efforts of the Dharmagupta from India to China. L'Amour always found the exchange of ideas from culture to culture stimulating.

In Chapter 28, man has left behind such things as the pyramids, the great walls and beautiful temples. But the most important legacy of man is the books that have been written to record the progress of man. Everything written is, at some level, an attempt to understand man and his place in the vast universe. All men are wanderers in search of an education, seeking knowledge and information. L'Amour's life has been tinged with bitterness and struggle but what lightened his burden was that there was always a bit of romance threaded throughout his life's journey. And, there were always books.



# Characters

## Louis L'Amour

Louis L'Amour is the main character in his memoir, "Education of a Wandering Man." The story begins with sixteen-year-old L'Amour going off on a seafaring vessel heading across the Atlantic. Louis' high school class back in his hometown of Jamestown, North Dakota was preparing to graduate when he was hanging out in a bar in Singapore with a crew of rugged and seasoned sailors.

Louis had to leave school to help support himself. It was pre-Depression days, but the depression had already hit a lot of families including the L'Amours. Louis was actually happy to leave school because he had an innate sense that the education he was receiving at school was standing in the way of a real "education."

Louis worked as a Western Union messenger, seaman, cattle skinner, mine caretaker, harvester, and any odd job he could find to support himself. He was a hobo, riding the rails and finding seasonal work wherever it was available. But no matter where he was or what he was doing, Louis read. He read books from libraries, old book shops, abandoned books, dairies, journals, stories in magazines and literally anything he could get his hands on. His education was enhanced by the tales he heard mainly from old-timers about their experiences in taming the Wild West. Louis absorbed knowledge like a sponge and the world was his teacher. He learned from every experience and every tale he heard and every book he read.

Louis L'Amour became one of the most successful and prolific writers in American history. He had no formal education to speak of; however, his education was unique, comprehensive, and unparalleled. Had he stayed in school, his level of achievement may not have ever been what it was by being educated in the self-styled manner than propelled him to greatness.

## Peterson

When L'Amour took a temporary job skinning cattle that had died in a drought in the West Texas panhandle, one of his co-workers was an old-timer simply named Peterson. L'Amour, a very young man at the time, liked nothing better than talking to old-timers who always had tales to tell. The story that Peterson told L'Amour was a unique tale and one of the most intriguing he ever heard.

Peterson related that when he was about seven years old, his family homestead was attacked by Apache Indians. One of the Apaches had young Peterson in his grasp and was ready to scalp him when another Apache interceded and ordered him to take the boy with them. Peterson claimed that he had been raised by the Indians and that he had been treated better by the Indians than by his own people.





Peterson also related that he was the witness to a brutal attack on a stagecoach that took place in Doubtful Canyon, a remote locale in the desert of New Mexico. Peterson, still a boy at the time, hid behind rocks and watched the Apaches attack a stagecoach just as it entered the valley. The coach was surrounded by Indians who fired at them with rifles and peppered them with arrows. The white men took cover inside the coach and had thousands of rounds of ammunition. They held the Indians off for a few days but without water or food in the hot valley, they didn't have a chance. The assault and subsequent stand-off lasted three days. All seven white men on the coach died and between 130 and 150 Indians perished during the battle.

## **Gillespie**

When L'Amour lived with his parents on a ranch in Oklahoma, he became acquainted with Gillespie who lived on a nearby farm. He borrowed books from Gillespie who was an avid reader. The two men would discuss what they had read for hours.

## **Alfred Dickey**

Alfred Dickey established a library in Jamestown, North Dakota, the hometown of Louis L'Amour. Although Dickey died before L'Amour was born, he was ever grateful to him for the library.

## **Kathy L'Amour**

Kathy L'Amour was Louis' wife. After they got married, he had a library constructed in his house so he could keep his books. Before he got married, he had no permanent home and had to give his books away.

## **Parker L'Amour**

Parker L'Amour was Louis' brother. He was a writer and news reporter. When he left Oklahoma, Louis decided to move their with their parents so they wouldn't be alone in their old age.

## **Mr. & Mrs. L. C. La Moore**

Mr. & Mrs. L.C. La Moore were Louis' parents. His father was a veterinarian and a former law enforcement official. He changed the spelling of his name to a more Anglican version.



## **Petrolle Boys**

As a young teen, Louis became the sparring partner for two well-known boxers, the Petrolle brothers. Later on, Louis was able to participate in some boxing matches himself from what he learned sparring with the Petrolle boys.

## **Ernest Hemingway**

L'Amour read many of the works of Ernest Hemingway. He liked his short stories more than his novels. L'Amour had met self-centered people like the characters in "The Sun Also Rises" and didn't think they were worth writing about.

## **Butch Cassidy**

L'Amour visited an old-timer that he knew. The man told him that Butch Cassidy had just been through a few days before. The official word was the Cassidy had been killed in South America but he had been spotted numerous times in the States.



## Objects/Places

### Jamestown, North Dakota

Louis L'Amour's hometown was Jamestown, North Dakota. He lived there till he turned sixteen when he left to wander the earth.

### Books

Books were L'Amour's main companion during the years he was a wanderer of the world seeking an education.

### Singapore

When Louis L'Amour's high school class was preparing to graduate, Louis was half a world away in Singapore.

### The Liverpool Kiss

The Liverpool Kiss was a karate move that one of L'Amour's seagoing peers taught him. In the move, the opponent is caught behind the neck, his face is jerked down and meets the up coming skull. If done properly, the opponent's face is pretty much rearranged.

### The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House

The poem, "The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House," was in Kipling's "Departmental Ditties." L'Amour liked to quote from the poem.

### Doubtful Canyon

This is the location where the old-timer Peterson claimed to have witnessed a vicious attack on a stagecoach by Apache Indians.

### San Pedro

San Pedro is a port south of Los Angeles, California. L'Amour would report there to sign up for seagoing missions.



## European Theater

L'Amour wanted to work for Navy Intelligence during World War II but instead was assigned to the European Theater where he won four Bronze Stars for bravery.

## Oklahoma

L'Amour lived with his elderly parents on a ranch in rural Oklahoma. It was there that he decided to give up his life on the road and high seas, settle down, and start writing.

## L'Amour's Typewriter

L'Amour was so strapped for money that he was unable to pay the monthly fee on a typewriter that he rented from a man. He notified the man who never came to claim it. To L'Amour it was a gift and a sign that he should continue his efforts to be a writer.

# Themes

## The Importance of Being Educated

L'Amour had a great interest in current events and was a patriot with an emotional connection to his country. He felt that the best way for America to survive as a strong nation was to ensure that its youth receive the best education possible. He made the observation that if our country produces generations of fourth-rate citizens due to lack of a robust education system, our nation will suffer and we can only have ourselves to blame because we allowed it.

Teachers are paid dismal salaries to do an important and often times difficult job. Other professionals look down on the teaching profession as a low-paying task without thanks. It is no wonder therefore that the best and the brightest are not drawn to the profession. While a university provides a formal education, it is merely a framework to prepare one for life. L'Amour feared that the education that the young people of America were receiving in the public school system was not adequate to prepare them for the world and to position the country to defend its status as the most influential and powerful of the modern civilizations.

Like most great cultures in the history of the world, America is only as strong as its leaders. In a democracy such as America, leaders are chosen by the people who are elected by them to represent and protect them. However, if it is an under-educated electorate that is sending candidates to the powerful positions of leadership and law-making, the best results cannot be expected. It is essential that the members of an elected official's constituency be well-informed and educated on the characteristics that are necessary to lead a state or a nation.

Many people are not informed on the current events and a large majority of the people who vote are not familiar with their own country's history or that of other countries. By being well-educated and well-informed on the success and mistakes of the past, the voter will be more discriminating when he casts that important vote.

## Dedication

In Louis L'Amour's unusual and perpetual education, his work and in his writing, there is one strong theme that emerges. No matter what L'Amour took on, he was dedicated to seeing it through to a successful conclusion. One could say that he did not see his formal education through. While that is a true statement, quitting school was something that was not in his control. At sixteen, the nation was nearing the Great Depression and families like Louis L'Amour's were already suffering. Similar to thousands of other young people, L'Amour was forced to leave school so that he could help the family by supporting himself. There was a deep sensibility within the young man that he was not getting the best education at school anyway, so his departure was not a tortured one.



The young man then set off in the world to seek his own education. Louis dedicated himself to do the best job he could whether it was as a seafaring laborer, a cattle skinner, a mine caretaker or even as a boxer. He was resolved to do his best so that he could keep his job or be re-hired at a later time. Even though he worked long hours at these jobs, he used every minute of his off hours reading and learning. It was a passion and he had made a vow to himself to read and learn as much as he could. He knew that it was up to him to support himself and that it was also up to him to educate himself. He was determined to do just that.

At the conclusion of the book, L'Amour listed the hundreds of books he read while he wandered the globe to support himself. The volume of books that he read in just a few short years far surpasses those read by most people in a lifetime. But L'Amour had a tenacious characteristic that shined through regardless of what challenge was before him. He was dedicated to improving himself and succeeding even though he missed out on a formal education. Just as Louis would never let any of his bosses down by not fulfilling his duties, Louis vowed to not let himself down by allowing the opportunity to read and learn pass him by.

## Respect for History

Louis L'Amour never met a book he didn't like. He virtually read everything. He read everything from famous classics to obscure journals to great short stories that had long been forgotten. In his preparation for the prolific writing he would one day produce about the taming of the American West, he read letters, journals and diaries written by the people who had lived and experienced the tumultuous time. L'Amour was dedicated to write about any subject he focused on with as much accuracy as was possible.

Throughout his long education which was based on his wanderings and his readings, L'Amour attributed the most importance to the history he read. He was adamant that reading history was essential for the survival of America. It was in historical accounts that man could learn how things could be accomplished, how successful battles were waged and, more importantly, how unsuccessful battles were waged. He read about the campaigns of Alexander and related his efforts to conquer worlds to the struggle of the cowboys in taming the West.

During the war was the only time L'Amour was not able to read for an extended period of time but it did not keep him from learning. He was in the military during World War II and most of the time did not have time or opportunity to read or access to books. But it didn't stop him from learning about the history of the European countries to which he was stationed. He knew that history was being made right before his eyes and he did not miss a beat. He knew that there would be much written about the war and, having been a part of it, had the deep intuition that he would be writing about his experiences in the European arena of the world war.

L'Amour's love of history was undying. Even once he became a famous and successful writer, he never ceased wanting to learn more about the world through the magnifying

glass of history. Reading about the history of all the regions of the world gave him an enriched quality in his writing. His accounts were not disconnected stories - they were part of the history of mankind.

# Style

## Perspective

"Education of a Wandering Man" is the memoir of writer Louis L'Amour. The book is narrated by the author in the first person. No one could be better suited than L'Amour to tell the story of his unusual education. Beginning at the age of sixteen, Louis worked in a variety of gritty and dangerous jobs around the world. With the Great Depression on the precipice, times were tough and money was hard to come by. To help out his family, L'Amour left school, left home, and went out on his own. He presents the stories in a bright and soft light by asserting that all of his experiences were part of his education.

Although L'Amour's lack of bitterness over having missed out on a formal education is obvious, one cannot help but think that his demeanor was perhaps not as happy-go-lucky as it was portrayed in his memoir. At sixteen as he is pretending to be a twenty-two year-old, he is hanging out in a British pub with a crew of seasoned seamen and ruffians while he thinks of his high school classmates readying themselves for graduation. At such a tender age, there had to be a tinge of regret that he wasn't with his friends. He had to feel lonely and somewhat abandoned. And such a young person who had never been away from home had to feel a little homesick being half a world away. Either L'Amour chose to omit any emotions he may have had or the fog of time may have blurred his memory about those early days.

In another incident, he walked for days through Death Valley after being stranded by his boss. He walked through the inferno with no water and encountered scorpions and rattlesnakes along the way. He miraculously made it back to civilization unharmed and was just glad he found his boss and got paid. But, surely he was a little scared, upset and angry.

L'Amour surely glossed over some emotions in the retelling of his life before he became a successful and famous, but that was understandable and he certainly had the literary license to do so more than anyone else.

## Tone

The memoir by Louis L'Amour entitled, "Education of a Wandering Man," is written in an informative and mainly upbeat tone. Despite a very rough beginning, there is no sign of bitterness or regret in his words. At the age of sixteen, Louis was out on his own - crossing the Atlantic on a seagoing vessel and posing as a twenty-two-year-old. While he was hanging out at a bar in Singapore with a bunch of rugged and seasoned sailors, L'Amour's high school class was preparing to graduate. But L'Amour does not place any blame on his parents for having to quit school. The times were rough and money was tight in the years leading up to the Great Depression. Louis had to quit school to help





support himself. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, Louis decided to make lemonade out of the lemon that life seemed to be handing him.

Louis tells the story of his life with pride despite his wandering years in which he worked as a seasonal worker, a hobo hopping freight trains, a seafaring laborer, and generally, a jack of all trades. It was his life and it was how he became more educated than the normal person. That he was an optimistic person who maintained a positive attitude despite some rough going shines through in his words and stories.

A specific example of his positivity took place long before he became a famous writer. It was when he took on the responsibilities of a mine caretaker in the Death Valley, where he was stranded with no way to get back other than on foot. Most people would be more than a little upset at the prospect. Instead of stewing about his situation, Louis walked more than twenty miles back to civilization through the blazing desert that was loaded with rattlers and scorpions but totally lacking in water and or any other type of sustenance. However, when he finally made his way back to his boss, he didn't complain and was just happy to get paid. He chalked it up as another experience that he could write about.

## Structure

"Education of a Wandering Man," is a memoir by famed Western writer, Louis L'Amour. It is a unique memoir since so little is included about his personal life. In this memoir, L'Amour focuses on his unique and self-styled education that spanned the globe and supplanted the necessity of a formal education.

The memoir is contained in twenty-eight medium-length chapters. The book is laid out in a mainly chronological order beginning with his first job as a seafaring man at the age of sixteen. At this beginning point of his memoir, he contrasts his life with that of his schoolmates back in Jamestown, North Dakota, who were preparing to graduate from high school at the very moment L'Amour was hanging out with seasoned and rugged sailors in a bar in Singapore.

The book contains a sixteen-page section of black and white photos depicting different times of his life from his early years in North Dakota to the years after his great success as an author. The book is concluded with several sections that are included under the main title of "Bibliography." These sections are: Books and Plays Read in 1930, 115; Books and Plays Read in 1931, 120; Books and Plays Read in 1932, 120; Books and Plays Read in 1933, 105; Books and Plays Read in 1934, 114; Books and Plays Read in 1935, 73; and Books and Plays Read in 1937, 84. He presents what he read as the foundation of his education. The sheer volume of his reading is impressive but these numbers in no way reflect the true number of books he read because he never stopped reading and his education was never concluded.



## Quotes

"This is a story of an adventure in education, pursued not under the best of conditions." (Chapter 1, p. 1).

"My life may not be great to others, but to me it has been one of steady progression, never dull, often exciting, often hungry, tired, and lonely, but always learning." (Chapter 1, p. 2).

"Do what they manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause; He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes and keeps his self-made laws." ~ Sir Richard Francis Burton (Chapter 2, p. 16).

"One was the so-called Liverpool Kiss, where you catch a man behind his neck and jerk his face down to meet your upcoming skull. Done property it can obliterate, for the time being, a man's features and make him less than anxious to pursue the argument. Education, you see, has many aspects." (Chapter 3, p. 23).

"Much is not dared because it seems hard; much seems hard only because it is not dared." ~ Prince von Kaunitz (Chapter 6, p. 48).

"A writer's brain is like a magician's hat. If you're going to get anything out of it, you have to put something in first." (Chapter 10, p. 75).

"A book is a friend that will do what no friend does—be silent when we wish to think." (Chapter 13, p. 94).

"Someday, men—or some other intelligent creatures—will stand on the sites of New York or Los Angeles and wonder if anyone ever lived there." (Chapter 14, p. 104).

"Books are precious things, but more than that, they are the strong backbone of civilization. They are the thread upon which it all hinges, and they can save us when all else is lost." (Chapter 19, p. 146).

"Unthinking people often despise politicians, but if we do not have the best people in politics, it is our own fault. Politics is the art of making civilization work." (Chapter 22, p. 169).

"Associate with the noblest people you can find; read the best books; live with the

mighty. But learn to be happy alone." ~ Professor Thomas Davidson (Chapter 22, p. 174).

"Knowledge is like money: to be of value it must circulate, and in circulating it can increase in quantity, and hopefully, in value." (Chapter 25, p. 191).

## Topics for Discussion

Describe the ways in which Louis L'Amour was educated. What formal education did he have?

What were L'Amour's views on reading? Why did he continue to read even when he became an established writer?

What warnings did Louis L'Amour make about the dangers that America could face if it does not educate its people? Why is it important that people are well-informed when they vote for their political leaders?

What predictions did L'Amour make about countries that may pose a challenge to America's position in the world? How are some of his predictions eerily on target?

How did L'Amour learn so much about the West, his favorite subject to write about? What type of writing and information did L'Amour rely upon the most in writing about the taming of the West?

In L'Amour's view, what does the writer owe his reader? What steps did he take to ensure that he kept his promise to his reader?

Why is it important for everyone to read history? What would the world be like without documented histories? How can the history of another country be relevant to America? Give examples.