



Ramona: A Story of Discrimination and Hardship in Southern California

Helen Hunt Jackson

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Ramona - By Helen Hunt Jackson - A Story of Discrimination and Hardship in Southern California. Ramona is an 1884 American novel written by Helen Hunt Jackson. Set in Southern California after the Mexican-American War, it portrays the life of a mixed-race Scots–Native American orphan girl, who suffers racial discrimination and hardship. Originally serialized in the Christian Union on a weekly basis, the novel became immensely popular. It has had more than 300 printings, and been adapted four times as a film. A play adaptation has been performed annually outdoors since 1923. The novel's influence on the culture and image of Southern California was considerable. Its sentimental portrayal of Mexican colonial life contributed to establishing a unique cultural identity for the region. As its publication coincided with the arrival of railroad lines in the region, countless tourists visited who wanted to see the locations of the novel. In Southern California, shortly after the Mexican-American War, a Scots-Native American orphan girl, Ramona, is raised by Senora Gonzaga Moreno, the sister of Ramona's deceased foster mother. Ramona is referred to as illegitimate in some summaries of the novel, but chapter 3 of the novel says that Ramona's parents were married by a priest in the San Gabriel Mission. Senora Moreno has raised Ramona as part of the family, giving her every luxury, but only because Ramona's foster mother had requested it as her dying wish. Because of Ramona's mixed Native American heritage, Moreno does not love her. That love is reserved for her only child, Felipe Moreno, whom she adores. Senora Moreno considers herself a Mexican, although California has recently been taken over by the United States. She hates the Americans, who have cut up her huge rancho after disputing her claim to it.

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