

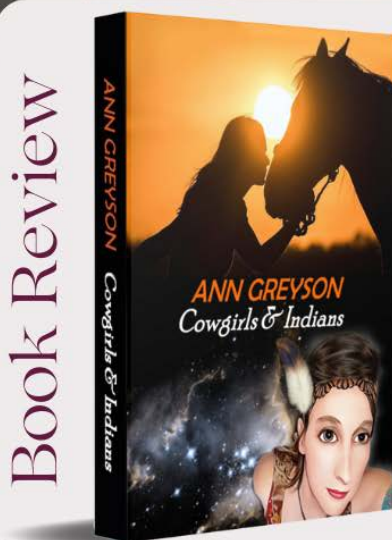


Purple Shelf Club

Stories can take you anywhere

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Cowgirls & Indians by Ann Greyson

*Travel back to Tombstone, Arizona in 1881,
where the simpler times may not have been
that simple*

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Cowgirls & Indians Book Review

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Go on a journey with me to the wild and tumultuous era of the late 1800s. Set in and around the bustling, crime-stricken town of Tombstone, *Cowgirls & Indians* brings you a richly detailed portrayal of the American West through the eyes of a newly widowed Cherokee woman, three vengeance seeking cowgirls, and a town teeming with outlaws, gamblers, and the poor busy souls tasked with upholding the law.

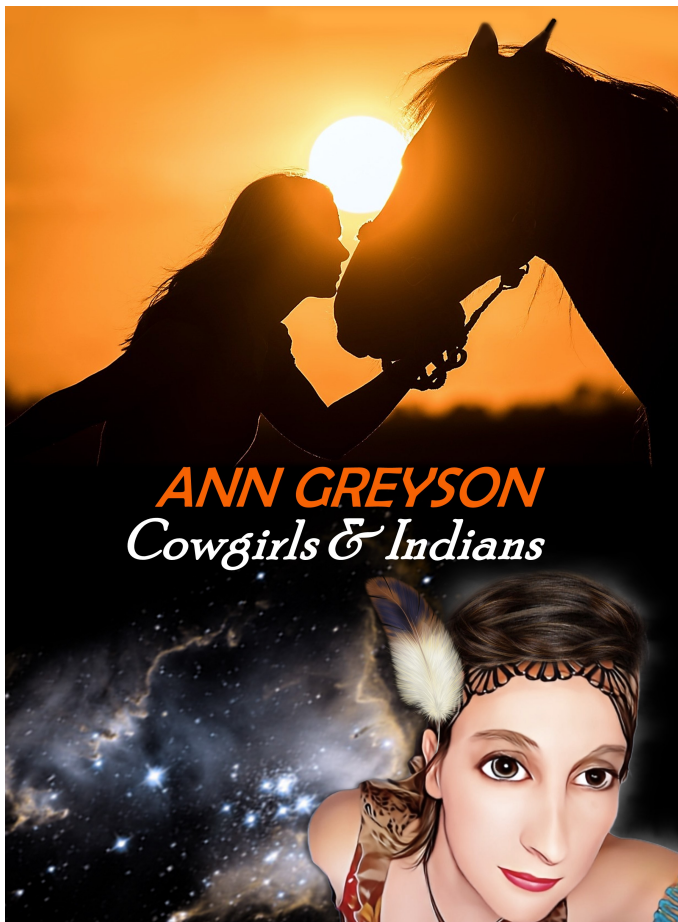
Readers can dive into a world of conflict, adventure, and the struggles between settlers and Native Americans with this novel, recently released on September 24, 2023.

If you're a fan of historical fiction or have an interest in the wild west, then saddle up because you're about to find out if *Cowgirls & Indians* is your next read.

I received a copy of this book from the author to review. The opinions expressed are my own, are honest, and are based on my observations while reading this novel.

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About *Cowgirls & Indians*



Book Title: *Cowgirls & Indians*

Book Type: Stand-Alone Novel

Author: Ann Greyson

Genre: Historical and Western Fiction

Publisher: Kindle Direct Publishing

Release Date: September 24, 2023

Format: Paperback, eBook, Kindle

Page Count: 342 Pages

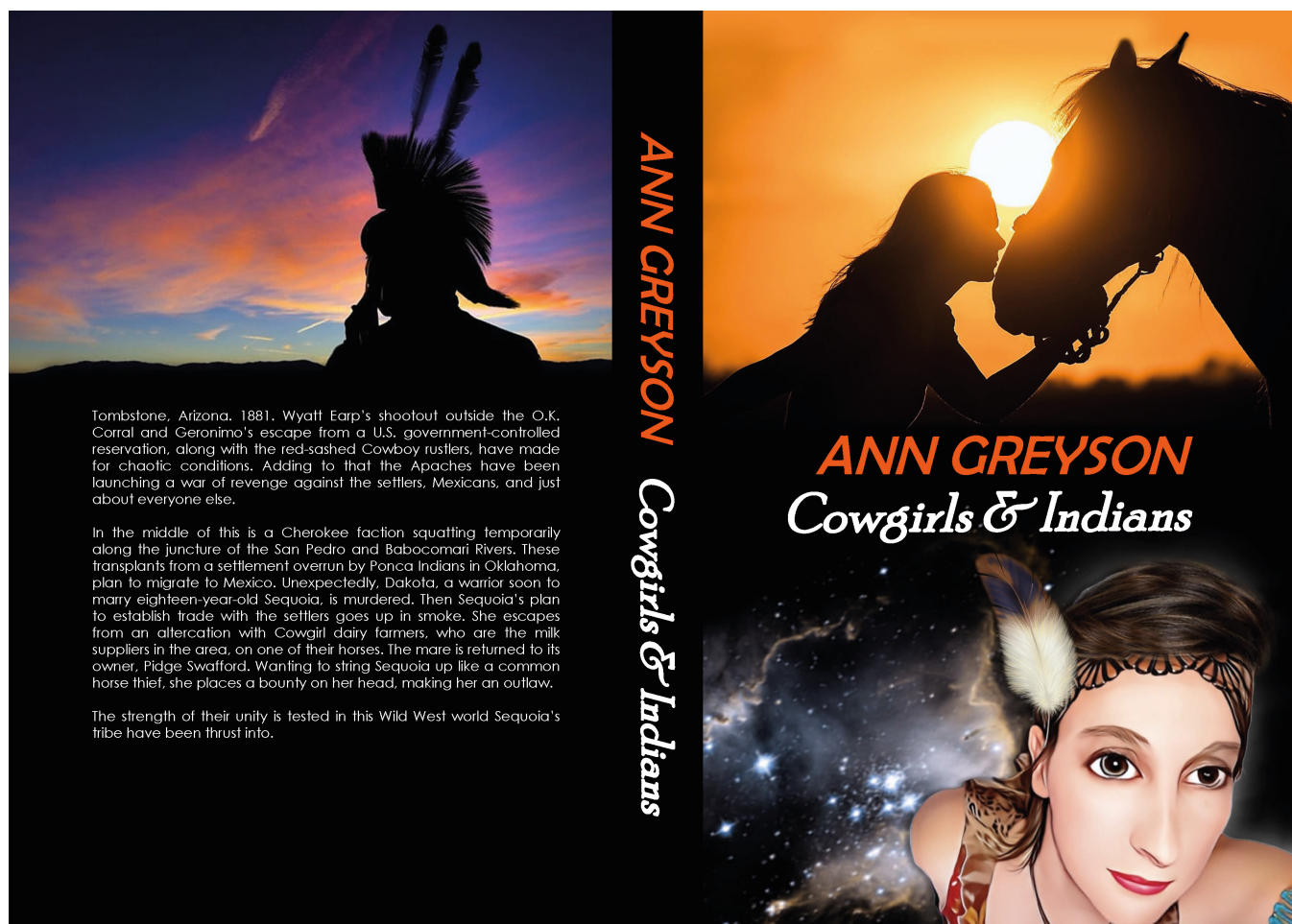
Available on: [Amazon](#) | [Barnes & Noble](#) | [Goodreads](#)

When the Ponca Indians encroach upon the Oklahoma settlement of the Cherokees, in 1881, a faction of the Cherokees leave for Mexico for a better life in the pine-oak forests of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range. Passing through Arizona, the tribe stumbles into the middle of a conflict between hostile Apaches and the settlers.

The White Chief finds unoccupied land for his tribe to refuge along the confluence of the San Pedro and Babocomari Rivers, ten miles north of Tombstone. Wyatt Earp's gunfight with the Clanton gang outside the O.K. Corral, Geronimo's escape from the U.S. government-controlled San Carlos Apache Reservation, and the red-sashed Cowboys rustling activities happens during the time they are there.

Misfortunes befall them beginning with the senseless murder of Dakota, a warrior promised in marriage to eighteen-year-old Sequoia. Desiring a new purpose in life, Sequoia plans to trade almond milk with the settlers to develop a rapport with the Indians.

But the three women dairy farmers providing the precious commodity of milk in the territory, aren't having it. Sequoia escapes from an altercation with these Cowgirls on one of their horses. Even though the white mare Maybelline is returned safely to its owner, Pidge Swafford, sadly enough, Sequoia faces discrimination against her that will inevitably turn her into a notorious frontier outlaw.



Now I also wanted to share this image that shows the front and back cover of the book because the author was kind enough to share it with me. The back cover in particular is just phenomenal to me. It's colorful, matches well with the mood and feel of the story, plus I thought you might like to read the back cover summary of the book, which is probably easier to read than the picture above:

Tombstone, Arizona. 1881. Wyatt Earp's shootout outside the O.K. Corral and Geronimo's escape from

U.S. government-controlled reservation, along with the red-sashed Cowboy rustlers, have made for chaotic conditions. Adding to that the Apaches have been launching a war of revenge against the settlers, Mexicans, and just about everyone else.

In the middle of this is a Cherokee faction squatting temporarily along the juncture of the San Pedro and Babocomari Rivers. These transplants from a settlement overrun by Ponca Indians in Oklahoma, plan to migrate to Mexico. Unexpectedly, Dakota, a warrior soon to marry eighteen-year-old Sequoia, is murdered. Then Sequoia's plan to establish trade with the settlers goes up in smoke. She escapes from an altercation with Cowgirl dairy farmers, who are the milk suppliers in the area, on one of their horses. The mare is returned to its owner, Pidge Swafford. Wanting to string Sequoia up like a common horse thief, she places a bounty on her head, making her an outlaw.

The strength of their unity is tested in this Wild West world Sequoia's tribe have been thrust into.

About the Author; Ann Greyson

Ann Greyson, a multi-award-winning author in the science fiction and horror genres, strives to make each book better than the last. She's well known for transporting her readers into her stories filled with vivid detail, complex characters, and unique genre twists.

With many dancing credits on stage, she also sings and acts. Ann Greyson has an Associate of Arts degree in English from Howard Community College. She is a member of Actors' Equity Association, SAG-AFTRA and the Alpha Alpha Sigma chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. She has the honor of receiving the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award from Marquis Who's Who in 2017.

Follow along as Ann infuses comedy into her intense, binge-worthy stories filled with characters you won't soon forget.

[Website](#) | [Follow on Amazon](#)



The Good and Not-so-good

With every novel there are parts that just feel phenomenal, and other parts that fall off the wagon shall we say. To be fair, I'd like to point out what each of those are for *Cowgirls & Indians*.

The Good

The Not-so-good

Several standout characters

The Not-so-good

Narration Style

Plenty of room to convey characters emotions

Deep History

Deputy and undersheriff were underdeveloped at first

Short chapters

Left wanting more scenes with certain characters

Slow burn tension

Overuse of certain technical aspects of the book

Explored difficult or controversial themes through various character perspectives

Classic western-themed scenes like bar scenes, fight scenes, raids and a standoff

The Good

Section Summary

The story is easy to follow, with a blend of plot and sub-plots that flow well together. The short chapters make it enjoyable for readers with short attention spans or those easing back into reading.

The slow-burn tension and immersive narration style create a captivating atmosphere. The portrayal of Native American tribes and their interactions with settlers adds depth and showcases both sides' perspectives.

The historical aspects are well-researched, with interesting details about the Wild West and Victorian era. The characters are diverse and unique, each bringing something different to the story.

Overall, the book offers opportunities for engaging book club discussions and is a testament to the author's creativity and growth in storytelling.

The story itself is easy to follow plot-wise and even sub-plot wise. It all blends together and nothing feels

as if it's coming out of left field and honestly there are no dry or boring moments to get through that would've been better left out.

This could be attributed, in part, to the short chapters which I personally love. I'm almost positive that all the chapters stayed under 10 pages. If you have a short attention-span or need something to ease back into reading, Ann's short chapter, immersive storytelling novels are the way to go. This novel is no exception to that.

I found myself reading mostly at night and even occasionally wanting to pour myself a glass of whiskey from my slowly growing collection. After pondering why that was, I have to give credit to the slow burn tension that seemed to be a large focus of this novel and to the narration style.

Rather than throwing you into the deep end with the conflict the way fantasy novels tend to do, this novel showcases the problem and slowly ramps it up with scenes that build on each other and utilize the atmosphere, tension, and fear surrounding the white settlers and the Native American people in the 1800s.

The author took the time to show both sides of the story from the perspective of several characters. She didn't shy away from showing the good and bad characteristics of both sides either. Reading this novel, you could see clearly why the settlers weren't fond of the Indians and vice versa. In fact, depending on what was happening in the book, I found myself sympathetic to both parties.

This could be a great book club discussion on the black and white nature we all too often attribute to which side is good and which side is bad.

The narration also played a part in this slow-burn tension. I found myself "hearing" two voices depending on what I was reading. In the scenes that focused on the cowboys, cowgirls, and settlers, I heard that typical deep, rough, male voice as the narrator. When the scenes were more focused on the Indians and Sequoia, I heard smooth, female voice as the narrator.

Both however, remained consistent in that the narration was rather conversational, almost as if talking to the reader. It was like hearing two people tell a story together to a group. For anyone who reads this book, I'd love to know if you had the same experience.

As a historical fiction lover, I also enjoyed the little factoids sprinkled throughout the book. The author noticeably took the time to learn about Tombstone, the real events and people, and the more nuanced aspects like clothing and weapons for both the settlers and Indians in that time period.

Perhaps those who read more western fiction could speak more to this. But, as a newbie to the wild west, I quite enjoyed learning about some people I've never heard of while also having the classic wild west features you often see in films like the standoff, the bar atmosphere, and sometimes just outright

obnoxiousness in the best way possible.

This book takes place primarily in 1881-1882 which, while the wild west was very much alive, so too was the Victorian era. Brownie points must go to the fact that corsets weren't demonized by the female characters (in fact I'm certain they were mentioned only once).

This is a stereotype often put in historical fiction, and especially so in movies and shows that take place anywhere within the Victorian era. Corsets were not torturous devices. They were a manner of support, structure, and shape. They balanced the line of use case and fashion quite well if you read up on it.

But now I'm getting off topic. Back to the book itself.

One note of fashion I noticed was that when it came to clothing, it was most prevalently brought up in the scenes with the cowgirls. Particularly with Pidge and Shirley who are the more self-centered of the bunch. In this time, adornments were highly used; lace being one such decorator. So it was no surprise to me that a woman like Pidge seemed to be keeping up with the times even though she was a cowgirl.

By the way if you ever feel like going down this particular rabbit hole, there is a woman on [Youtube named Bernadette Banner](#) who I've been subscribed to for oh so many years now. Aside from her linguistically rich vocabulary, she is capable of putting together mini cinematic masterpieces showcasing her sewing and fashion history knowledge, particularly in the Victorian era realm.

Alright, there's still a lot to unpack here so let's keep going.



The characters are never a point of concern for me now when I read Ann's books. I've read all of her books except for her second, *The Lonely Vampire* (I'm just not a vampire fan). Her novel *Birdwatcher*, which will be at least a 2-part series as far as I'm aware at the time of writing this, is by far her best work in my opinion. A 5-star all the way work of art. And with each novel, I noticed that Ann tests her creative abilities and tries new things all the time.

This also comes out in her characters. No one character is ever the same (more on this in a moment). So when I read this book, I just knew I'd love the characters no matter if they were a main, side, or support character. In fact, the barkeeper, who plays a minor role in the book, is one of my favorites. He felt so real and so full of thoughts that I loved when he was in a scene. It was clear he knew a lot about the happenings of the town and it was also clear he had his own opinion on said happenings, even if he didn't readily provide them.

Of course to some degree I expect this from a barkeeper.

What I liked was that with that, came the smallest of moments that gave you insight into who he was. For example, he works in one of the most crime-ridden towns of the west. You might expect him to be brave or even have his hands in a few less than praise-worthy happenings. You might even expect a scene or two where he's tipped off for information.

But no, none of that.

In fact there is at least one scene, maybe two that I can recall where he was timid and even a little afraid of what was happening in his bar. And there was not one attempted bribery scene.

And this is just a minor support character. Just imagine what you get with all the other big player characters like the cowgirls, Sequoia, and Willard McKenna. I'll get to them in just a moment, but first I want to praise one other set of small support characters which are the many different tribal Indians.

In this book, Sequoia is Cherokee, and the "enemy" Indians are the Apache. The author also brought in characters from the Papago and Pascua Yaqui tribes. There may have been other smaller mentions as well but I can't quite remember. With this many Indian tribes in the story, we get some classic cowboy and Indian scenes and we also get to see how brutal both sides can be when they take the offensive.

In fact, that's how I believe the author showed this.

In some scenes, "the white man" went on the offensive and wreaked havoc. In other scenes the Apache went on the offensive acting in just as brutal ways. This highlighted what both sides were after, the brutality that the victims on both sides went through, and also the hunting and evasion tactics that both sides used. Plus, there were conversational scenes where the opinions of each other were shown. So we don't just get fight scenes, we get intimate conversations with insight into how we speculate people thought back then.

Again, another great book club conversation piece.

One of the bad cowboys where this was often displayed was with Willard McKenna, an ill-tempered red-sashed cowboy. If he were a cartoon, you'd probably often see his face go red and smoke coming out of his ears. However, he also had the type of charisma charm that could only work if you were attracted to him and it was your first encounter. Back in the cartoon world he'd be a cross between Yosemite Sam and Pepé Le Pew.

While he's truly not a nice guy by any means, I did like his chaotic nature and the bit of humor that he brought with him.

I could go on and on about a lot of the characters, but I stop with Sequoia. Imagine me doing this book review without talking about the main character of the novel. That would be something else.

Sequoia is the main character, but she isn't necessarily the sole main character. As I read the story, I found that she was the portal to which we could learn about the happenings of Tombstone. A fictional news centerpiece of the time the way Geronimo and Wyatt Earp were. What made her fascinating was how she became that renowned in this story.



You know that saying “this town ain’t big enough for the two of us”? Well, this story, used the milk industry believe it or not to turn that saying into “this town ain’t big enough for the four of us”. It plays off of naïveté on Sequoia’s part, jealousy and bigotry on Pidge and Shirley’s part, and insecurity on Bibb’s part.

What a cluster right? After the death of her soon to be husband, Sequoia starts off as a young, naïve woman who is uncertain about where her life’s purpose lies. Like so many, she thought she had everything figured out, her life ahead of her filled with love and purpose. And again, like so many, all of that was wiped away in an instant.

We essentially watch her fumble as she tries perhaps a little too hard to figure her life out. Throw in some cowgirl...and cowboy interference, and you’ve got a woman tripping over her toes constantly.

What I did love so much about this character, is while she felt this discombobulated, she had her mother Chenoa and Chief Nahele to help as best they could. More than anything, they offered comfort and were able to refocus her when she needed it. She wasn’t defiant, she was lost.

This is something not many receive but it worked well here to display the connection between her and her tribe.

The not-so-good

Section Summary

The story was enjoyable, especially for someone who doesn't typically read western fiction. The historical fiction elements were fascinating, and the Apache scenes were particularly memorable, however the other Indian tribes lacked differentiation.

The characters were generally well-developed but there were a couple that stuck out. The Deputy and Undersheriff played important roles, but their similar names (Clancy Barton and Burton Avery) may have played a role in not being able to distinguish between them with ease until the middle of the story.

There was also a desire for more exploration of Sequoia's relationship with Dakota and more development of her bond with Cholo.

In terms of technical critique, the author's use of additional descriptions in dialogue tags momentarily took me out of the story. I would have preferred keeping the dialogue tags simple or more use of "show, don't tell".

This story had many enjoyable pieces to it. And as someone who never reads western fiction, I enjoyed it very much. Going into it, I expected to like the story and the historical fiction elements the most, almost passing over the wild west side of it. Of course this would have been a mistake and a disservice to the author. So I opted to use this novel an introduction the western fiction world and was pleasantly surprised.

However with all the good, there is always some not-so-good. For me, it lies in two camps, a slight technical and very opinionated critique, and some character critique as well.

Let's start with the characters.

Of all the tribes, the Apache scenes stood out, and so too did their ferocity. They stood out though because the other Indian tribes didn't have differentiators to me other than the name of the tribe they belonged to.

The characters themselves were good. Chapter 48 comes to mind. This chapter brings in new characters and they are gone almost just as fast in Chapter 50. It's an excellent couple of chapters but there was nothing that showcased to me they were Yaqui as opposed to say Cherokee.

Then there are the Deputy and Undersheriff who play important roles in this story. These two characters really come into their own towards the middle of the story. However, because of that, I often found myself having a difficult time differentiating between the two.

Now, I admit that what I said there could be just me since their names have a similar ring to them. There is the Deputy, whose name is Clancy Barton, and there is the Undersheriff, whose name is Burton Avery. The Barton and Burton are just so similar that I would have to pause for a moment to figure out who was who.

And lastly character-wise, I found myself left wanting when it came to Sequoia's relationship with Dakota, the man she was engaged to but also the man who dies at the beginning of the book. Rightfully so, she's broken hearted and it sets off the story. But, we're left with just that. I think the novel could have been elevated all the more had there been scenes, even if only flashbacks, of the two so we could empathize even more with her predicament.

I had the same feeling when it came to Sequoia and Cholo, who is her friend and was Dakota's best friend. There are more scenes with these two than there are with her and Dakota, but he's the only character I felt was lacking in development or purpose. I could tell he cared for her and wanted to help her in any way he could, but there was not much to cement that and establish a bond between the two.

Now onto the technical opinion critique.

This critique is objectively small but still worth noting in case you're the type of reader who would notice this too. I am a visual person, it's one of the reasons I love to read. I can picture what I'm reading, and if this is done well enough, the words disappear in a way and I'm completely immersed in the world the story takes place in.

The author did overall an excellent job with this, but there was one thing that took me out of the story, even if only for a brief moment. It was the use of adding to the "he said" "she said" parts of dialogue where the author would add in things like how they felt or what they did as they said it.

A few examples from the book:

- "...she said instantly"
- "...John Clum said in a convincing manner"
- "...he said, his face completely deadpan"

I would've preferred that it was left to just "he said" for example, allowing me to determined how he said it. Or, another option would have been the classic "show, don't tell" to keep me as a reader immersed.

Favorite Quotes from Cowgirls & Indians

"These were happy times for the tribe, despite living in the bush of the hostile Arizona territory"

Preface

"Inching toward trouble, but then again, maybe it was just her habit that if she didn't run into trouble, she made her own"

Chapter 15

“Just a few days ago, the Cowgirls had celebrated Thanksgiving, but they were not interested in breaking bread with this Indian”

Chapter 21

“Now we are all being treated unfairly for all the cruelty and mistreatment done to the settlers by the Apaches”

Chapter 23

“The barkeeper started to talk, but then nodded in the direction of a man who was walking toward him, so he mumbled as he came out from behind the bar. ‘I’ll get back to you’ “

Chapter 26

“Then the Cowboy turned his head away, clenched his jaw and hunched his shoulders, unhappy with the situation he found himself in”

Chapter 28

“The only thing that is ridiculous is your reaction. Of course I’d expect you to say that. It’s common knowledge that you’re soft on Indians. I hear things...fierce things like intentionally letting cornered Apaches escape”

Chapter 36

Should you read *Cowgirls & Indians*?



I decided to give this book a 4 out of 5 star rating. On one hand I love love love the historical fiction aspects of this book. As a history buff I appreciate the amount of effort that went into integrating real events and people into this fiction story.

The author sprinkled in these real events and people and even little tidbits of information on the more prop-like elements of storytelling such as the weapons and clothing. I enjoyed finding out new information to go down an internet rabbit hole search after reading the book.

I also enjoyed the feel of the atmosphere and setting. My imagination went all in and I was able to picture the town of Tombstone, the camp that Sequoia lived in, and the river her, her mother, and the White Chief frequented. I also enjoyed the way the author incorporated the weather, particularly the cold months that transpired within the story. Something as small as this added a special element to how these characters navigated the world.

I will say as a caveat that the use of mentioning dust clouds from say, the horses trotting, was slightly overused. I would have liked to see more variation in the visual aspects of people traveling by horse or wagon or even by foot.

Another huge plus to this novel was the characters. At this point I've read nearly all of Ann's books, and one thing she does exceptionally well is creating meaningful side characters to go along with the story. Even small characters like the barkeep and the shop owner where Sequoia goes to first sell her almond milk.

These small characters left an impactful mark in the sense that they felt real. It expanded the world and time that this story takes place in, making it feel full without overwhelming you with names.

What she also did well with was creating antagonist focused characters, that while I would despise them in real life, I still found them likable, or at the very least enjoyable to read about in the story.

I didn't necessarily hate them since to me they had redeeming qualities.

Take Pidge for example who is one of the three cowgirls. She is a nasty, spoiled little thing. But, she's also a hard worker and ambitious. Of course these good traits are paradoxically what turns her into an unkind, rather impulsive person.

And then you have McKenna who is an outlaw that constantly tries to get himself out of facing the consequences. It's clear that he puts himself above others, and there were scenes where I could see why that was.

He's a skillful cowboy and charismatic...on the surface. Seeing how he got himself into less than fortunate predicaments was fun because I was then curious to see how this sporadic man would attempt to get out of these situations.

On the negative side of this, I did wish that certain characters had gotten more time in the book to cement their relationships with Sequoia such as Dakota and Cholo. Then, and this could be just be, there were the characters Clancy Barton and Burton Avery who took me until the middle of the book to not mix them up.

You should read *Cowgirls & Indians* if you enjoy...

- Historical fiction, Western fiction, or both
- Military elements in books
- Slow, cozy reads
- Short chapters
- A diverse "cast" of characters
- Exploring difficult or controversial themes

You shouldn't read *Cowgirls & Indians* if you...

- Prefer non-fiction or historical-fiction that's extremely detailed and accurate as this novel blends historical events with fictional elements.
- Prefer faster-paced or action packed novels
- Enjoy more show than tell, in particular with a characters internal emotions
- Are sensitive to or dislike themes of discrimination and injustice or conflicts between different groups

With all that said, you're probably wondering if you should read this book. Well, with a 4 star rating I certainly would say it's worth the read. I do want to point out again that I'm not a huge western novel reader. But I do love historical fiction. So if you're like me, it's worth reading.

On the other hand, this book is more for people who want something to read at night before bed. It's what I would classify as a cozy read, or a slow read. There are fast paced scenes, but that isn't the majority of the novel. It also doesn't swing your emotions all over the place or get incredibly intense like some of her other stories. So if you don't like or aren't looking for a slower-paced novel, this isn't your next read.

Cowgirls & Indians takes you on a journey that shows you the simpler times may not have been that simple

Cowgirls & Indians by **Ann Greyson** is a historical and western fiction novel that blends real events and fictional elements seamlessly. The book offers an immersive storytelling experience with short chapters and a slow-burn tension that keeps readers engaged.

The author's ability to create a detailed atmosphere, small characters with interesting stories, and perfectly sprinkle historical context in, turned a simple story into an experience.

While there are some minor critiques regarding character development and technical aspects, the novel is a solid 4-star read for fans of historical fiction and western-themed stories. Whether you enjoy exploring difficult themes, appreciate military elements, or simply want a cozy read before bed, "*Cowgirls & Indians*" is worth the read.

Talk soon,

Alexis Miller