

Description of Place Essay

Prompt:

Choose a place in the American West that has some connection and meaning for you. Describe this place, why it is significant, and provide enough detail that we can see how it contributes to an understanding of what it means to live in the American West.

Guidelines: 2 pages, typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman, MLA format.

- Introduction
- Well-developed paragraphs
- Conclusion
- You may use the 1st person
- You may include 2-3 quotations to , but they must be properly cited in-text and you must have a Works Cited page in MLA format.
- You may include a picture to support your essay.

Example: The following is a short excerpt of travel description from the novel *Blue Highways* (Little Brown Press). Note how the author, Least Heat-Moon, evokes a sense of place for Deming, New Mexico by talking about food, history and people.

Excerpt:

Floors, walls, employees' uniforms--everything but the faces--were white at the Manhattan Cafe in Deming (NM.) From some place I recognized the beauty of the waitress, but I couldn't recall where. Later I realized she had the severe priestess beauty of high-bridged nose, full lips, and oblique eyes that one might see on a Mayan temple wall at Palenque.

She served a stack of unheated flour tortillas, butter and a bowl of green watery fire that would have put a light in the eyes of Quetzalcoatl. Texans can talk, but nowhere is there an American chili hot sauce, green or red like the New Mexican versions, with no two recipes the same except for the pyrotechnical display they blow off under the nose. New Mexican *salsa* are mouth-watering, eye watering, nose-watering; they clean the pipes, ducts, tracts, tubes; and like spider venom, they can turn innards to liquid.

I'd finished the tortillas when she set down *huevos rancheros* with chopped *nopales* (prickly pear), rice and a gringo glass of milk to extinguish the combustibles. Solid cafe food without pretense. Maybe the time is coming but as yet the great variety and subtlety of fine Mexican cuisine have not much reached the United States. Ten thousand taco stands peddle concoctions cooked by some guy who pronounces the l's in tortilla, and in the Southwest, cafes like the Manhattan serve a good but basic fare; yet only a few places turn out the dishes that put a *cocinero* in a class with the chef: squash blossom *enchilada*, chicken in green pumpkin-seed sauce, tortilla soup, drunken octopus, sweet *tamales*, shrimp marinated in *jalapenos*, lime soup, chicken breast pudding, chicken-in-a-shirt.

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AWC Written Communication Assessment Rubric

	5	4	3	2	1
Thesis	Provides clear, specific thesis and audience awareness	Provides specific thesis and audience awareness	Provides thesis	Thesis is unclear	No thesis present
Analytical content	Demonstrates original thinking and depth of analysis	Demonstrates analytical ability	Demonstrates partial ability to analyze	Demonstrates little or no analytical ability	Demonstrates no ability to analyze the material
Organization/paragraph development	Uses organization & development of controlling idea with specifics and transitions	Uses organization in most paragraphs, some specifics and transitions.	Uses limited organization, somewhat inconsistent specifics and transitions.	Uses insufficient organization, few specifics, little or no unity or transitions	Uses no visible organization, significant examples or unity within & between paragraphs
Voice & Style	Diction is appropriately academic and writer's voice is not obscured by excessive quoting.	Diction and is generally appropriate; writer's voice is easily heard.	Diction shows overly formal or informal tone; writer relies too heavily upon quoted or paraphrased material.	Diction is generally not academic; little sense of writer's voice present.	Diction is overly simplified; no sense of writer's voice present in paper.
Mechanics & syntax	Possesses high proficiency in grammar usage, spelling, punctuation, sentence variety and clarity	Possesses adequate grammatical proficiency, accuracy in mechanics & some variety in sentence structure	Shows grammatical inconsistency, poor spelling, punctuation & moderate use of sentence variety.	Lacks proficiency in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Rare use of sentence variety; poor clarity.	Persistently lacks accuracy in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. No sentence variety; poor clarity.
Format	Format (MLA) is used consistently and correctly	Format (MLA) is mostly used consistently and correctly.	Format (MLA) is moderately used consistently and correctly	Format (MLA) is rarely used consistently or correctly	Format (MLA) is used inconsistently, incorrectly or not at all.

Developing a Sense of Place in the American West

A project by the students in

ENG 180: *Literature of the American West*

Spring 2013

What follows is a collection of essays and haiku that recollect places, spaces, landscapes, and experiences that come together to help inform a sense of what it means to live in this place we call the American West. In our readings and discussions we have wrestled with that term, its implications geographically, historically, culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically and while we have not reached any definitive conclusions, it has been a most engaging conversation.

Sugar Loaf Peak

by Amy Bir

Sugar Loaf Peak, with its surrounding rugged mountains and valley washes of varying heights, colors and sizes, is a desert environment that holds many memories for me. Some of those memories are mixed with bubbly, sugar coated childhood ideals. Then there are also those that leave my mouth devoid of moisture with a slight reminiscent thought of old hiking adventures. My connection to the American West runs a tad deeper than most, with five years of my childhood spent on a 700 acre claim in the Arizona Laguna Mountain range.

My parents decided when I was in the third grade to relocate the family. We moved out to the claims where my father liked to do his amateur gold mining on the odd weekends. Now, when I say relocate, what my father actually did was build two large rooms out of two by fours, plywood, and screen, on a plateau next to the highest peak in that range. Against these lovely, symmetrical wood rooms with a 360 degree view of the sparsely vegetated desert landscape, was parked a fifth wheel mobile home. The fifth wheel was the heart of the home, the only room that



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had a semblance of plumbing and electricity. Unfortunately, we never had enough power for air conditioning; that's right folks, five years in the Sonoran Desert without AC! The lack of cool air had my siblings and I begging for a swimming trip when the temperature would reach over 110 degrees. It would be so hot that the air would shimmer like waves on a lake, the desert heat bringing a mocking mirage to moisture deprived eyes.

Sugar Loaf Peak was a favorite of mine to hike for several reasons. One of the reasons being, once to the top of the old extinct volcano cone, you would be blessed with a view of the winding canal and inlets feed from Mittry Lake; which was not far from the base of Sugar Loaf. The canal and inlets were the ones we would frolic in for hours, if we were successful in our pleading for a rescuing swim from the summer heat.

The view from the top of Sugar Loaf offered conflicting views of the desert valley below. Sugar Loaf helped to create this landscape, millions of years ago, through volcanic eruptions.



The eruptions allowed for natural water catches to develop in the folds, and waves, of old lava flows that cascaded down Sugars valleys; providing rich material for soil where the desert wildlife seems to flourish in the shadow of the cone. The views of the desert water ways,

surrounded by Salt cedars and cattails on the one side of Sugar, differ from the other side. The other view is more of a stark, less densely vegetated, desert beauty.

What I call the “deeper desert”, away from the rugged jutting, burnt brown sugar colored peaks of Sugar loaf, dwells a side of the desert that I have always viewed as beautiful. Unlike the desert that most people see from the side of a roadway, with struggling desert sage and a spattering of small desert plants; this desert, my childhood playground, holds a cornucopia of desert life, plant and animal.

If one takes the time to stop, smell, be still, and look around at the collage of plant and animal life, they would never be able to associate the words bleak, uninhabitable, colorless and ugly again with the desert. Palo Verde and Ironwood trees, with their different shades of green leaves and needles, are scattered over the desert hills and valleys. They offer shade and covering to the multitude of creatures that reside in their welcoming branches. Amongst these trees, one can find Desert Mocking birds chattering and chasing away other birds of muted brown tones, and any other beings they consider to be trespassers. Desert chipmunks race to and fro between creosols and desert sage bushes, sometimes playing among the spiny branches of the Ocotillo. If the desert spirits are in a truly sharing mood, one is allowed a fleeting glimpse of a doe and her fawns, braving an afternoon siesta in the enveloping shade of an ancient Mesquite tree.

The desert life I have mentioned is only the very tip of the mountain peak of life that survives and thrives in the desert I know and love. It is a place of grave beauty and danger. I was taught never to take it for granted, or abuse. Sugar Loaf is a place of beauty and serenity, where I still venture and hike her desert countryside; to let the inner child that still feels home in her plateaus, washes, plays and rests, in old childhood clay forts.

Haiku

The desert landscape
Beauty often overlooked
Can be hot or cold

A Rare Rain in the Sonoran Desert

by Kellsey Borrud

Mid-September, monsoons, warm weather, sand and rocks, mountains and me. I step out of my car into the light rain drops falling down from the stormy sky, cool on my skin. My Adidas Kanadia Trail shoes are ready for this hike. I decide to take a different path rather than my usual, today. I take a path that has not been walked by thousands of people. I take a path that is ridden with rocks and cacti, where there is no specific walkway. I begin walking and go in the direction that my heart directs.

The cool rain continues to drip down on me and I continue to hike up the rocky mountain alone with spirit (the spirit of the mountains, rocks, rain, and the spirit inside me). The rocks are slippery and I know that to continue hiking is dangerous; I hear thunder nearby and see lightning in the distance. But I feel so at peace here in this moment towards the base of this mountain and I imagine the bliss I will feel atop this mountain, so close to the clouds and the rain falling down.

The rain falls harder as I make my way up the bare mountain. The rain is a refreshing complement to the early autumn heat of the Sonoran Desert. Then the rain slows and I stop for a moment, not to rest my body but to embrace the beauty of the landscape that I find myself in. As I stand there allowing my spirit to absorb all of the wonderful energy that surrounds me, I glance to the ground and there, on a rock, is a gecko. He is trying to soak up what little he can of the sparse sun shining through the stormy clouds. I name this gecko Bartholomew and he will forever be my friend and in my thoughts. After photographing my new friend, whose spirit will forever be with me, I continue my climb.

Finally at the top, I feel as though I can almost touch the clouds. I so enjoy being here with the rain and clouds because it is so seldom that they come visit us here in the desert of the most southwestern part of Arizona. I sit on the ground and not only do I see the beauty

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surrounding me, but I feel it in my heart and soul. I feel so connected with nature and all the positive energy emanating from the earth below me, the rain above me, and the air around me.

There is a tall white cross posted in the ground a few feet from where I sit and I wonder who left it here, why it is here and what its purpose is. The rain becomes heavier and is falling quicker. Now I must leave my place of enchantment for I know the longer I wait, the more difficult the climb down will be. I decide to walk down the other side of the mountain to explore new areas. As I am walking down I find a small overhang which has created a five-foot by five-foot shallow rock shelter. I sit and rest in the dry protection and I contemplate the people from the past who must have used this small overhang for temporary shelter from the harsh elements of the Arizona desert. I think about the Native Americans who once roamed these areas and wonder if any of them sat in this spot where I now find myself, hiding from the rain.

After pondering and day dreaming for a few moments I stand and continue my hike down the dangerous mountain in the middle of a rare downpour in the Sonoran Desert.



Desert Rain

Today rain is here
Tomorrow Earth will be dry
“Monsoons” they call it

The Western Kingdom

by Taylor Brown

Purple and gold. Two colors that in the American West represent not just a jersey but royalty, not just a franchise but a dynasty, and represent not just a town but a kingdom. That kingdom goes by the name of Los Angeles and in the heart of that kingdom is its crown jewel, the Staples Center which is home to the Los Angeles Lakers. This castle-like building is even equipped with statues of bronze that immortalize the greatest men to ever roam its halls, almost as if they are its eternal knights ready to defend its glory till the end of time. Staples Center in my mind is a place in the American West fit for a king.

The arena is significant in itself for its sheer size and magnitude but the most significant thing about it is what it represents. It represents the Hollywood mindset and the glitz and the glamour that is associated with Southern California. So many people are drawn to this city to become famous in front of the camera or singing into a microphone under the hot lights of an enormous stage. Well in sports there is no bigger name than the Lakers. Heck, the Lakers themselves have even been nicknamed “Showtime” throughout the years. Los Angeles is where people go to become famous and there is no sports franchise more famous in the history of the American West than the Lakers.

One of the greatest honors Staples Center has is that it is home to one of the most intense rivalries in all of sports. The Boston Celtics vs. The Los Angeles Lakers goes beyond what happens on the court. It has transformed itself into a no holds barred brawl between the East Coast and West Coast. It’s Boston against L.A., it’s the movie stars and singers against the blue collar workers, its bragging rights for the victors’ side of the map, and to so many fans this isn’t just a rivalry but a way of life.

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I am one of those people and some may call me a sports fanatic or just flat out crazy but I know no other way. Those purple and gold colors rush through my veins and just seeing the Staples Center fills my chest with pride because I know that inside that building, hanging from the rafters, are 16 championship banners that wave there silently throughout the days and nights but still send a resounding message throughout the NBA: The Lakers **are** the heart of Western American sports. Staples Center may not mean something to everyone who lives in the American West, but to me personally it contributes greatly to the person I've grown to be today.

Haiku

I once was a star
Then a woman stole my heart
Now I'm broke and alone

Family Roots

by Gregory Champagne

The Hassayamapa wash, located near Wickenburg, Arizona is a relic of the American West. With its slow and gentle stream working its way through the canyons one can't help but be intrigued by its natural beauty. Every year around October my dad and I make a trip up to Wickenburg just to ride dirt bikes in the wash. It's a beautiful wash and canyon and one that my ancestors traveled down 110 years ago.

After following the dusty single lane dirt road down the side of the mountain you reach the wash which transforms the desert scenery into something much more luscious and green. With the sun shining down between the canyon walls, the water becomes pleasantly warm and whatever water splashes up from the motorcycle feels refreshingly comfortable. The deafening sound of my Yamaha Yz250F dirt bike echoes down the walls of the canyon making it nearly impossible to hear the creeks gentle flow. The crystal clear water brings green trees and bushes that make it hard to believe you are still in the desert. The green moss staining the sides of the walls is there from the rains that flow down from the top ridge and slowly leave their mark.

You see the remarkable thing is that 110 years earlier my great great uncle, Stanley Sykes and his family trekked from Flagstaff to Wickenburg, Arizona and went through this same exact canyon with a horse and buggy. Stanley Sykes and his brother wrote their autobiography in 1944 titled [A Westerly Trend](#), which stands as a classic of Western literature. He was truly an amazing western figure as he and his brother engineered and built the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. Fittingly, he made the

circular roof open with bicycle tires mounted on a track; He and his brother Godfrey owned a bicycle shop in Flagstaff called Makers and Menders.

Stanley, his wife Beatrice and their two boys, Harold and Guy often traveled in the winter down from their home in Flagstaff to lower, warmer locations to pan for gold and generally see the countryside. The story, as told in a family journal explains that they shot and killed doves, rabbits, quail and ducks for meals along the journey: “A great flock of geese flew over our camp this morning. A lot of people have come here to hunt and we can hear banging from all directions.”

They camped in the bottom of the Hassayampa gulch, the same streambed I rode my dirt bike through. However, great, great aunt Beatrice and her two sons walked through this canyon; she and the boys made quite a procession. “Harold carried his toy trains and sucked a long stick of candy while I followed with my rifle in its case. Little Guy clung to my skirts with one little fat hand and in the other he carried his toy train.”

While I enjoy my time riding in this still remote area, I marvel at the determination and persistence that my ancestors showed in their travels. Our 3 hour trip from Yuma in the air conditioned, stereo enhanced comforts of our 4 wheel drive truck are a century apart from their month long, often dangerous, journey to the same destination. We were both hoping to enjoy a relaxing family time surrounded by the natural beauty of the American West. I suppose in our own ways, we each found what we desired.

A City Home to Many
by Andria Grosch

Here in Yuma, Arizona there is a large diversity of cultures throughout our town. People tend to migrate from the states around us such as California, New Mexico, and Texas, which brings many new influences to our city. New comers introduce us to other types of food, different styles of clothing, and also different genres of music. Somehow we find a way to mesh everything together to give Yuma the unique character it has today.

Most of our population is made up of a Hispanic community whose influences come from Mexico itself, which borders the southern part of the city. Since Mexico is so close there are many people who migrate and eventually introduce us to their styles and ways of life. Homemade goods such as tortillas and tamales have become some of the favorite foods. People all around town have carne asadas with their loved ones and even with their closest friends. Foods like these are so popular that there are Mexican restaurants and taco stands throughout corners of the busier streets. Citizens in our town have learned to love the new flavors and different tastes from those around them. It seems like this town can't get enough of the Hispanic cuisine.

Another thing that makes the Mexican culture stand out is the different features we are born with. Most of us have nice tan skin and those pretty brown eyes. Hispanics have a very distinct look and have a particular style which was created many years ago. Women dress in vibrant skirts of all colors and are always looking their best. Some women also wear beautiful flowers in their hair and might even wear jewelry to make themselves look just right. These outfits are so popular that some Mexican restaurants make their employees dress up in them. Doing this shows that there is more to the Hispanic culture than just the wide varieties of food.

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Yuma is so important to me because this is the place where my family's roots began. Everything my ancestors have done in the past has helped create the person I am today. My family made sure that I was raised as best as I could be and also made sure I remembered where we came from. But even if I could I wouldn't be able to forget. Everything in this town constantly reminds me of the importance of my heritage. I couldn't imagine being anyone else but me.

Yuma, Arizona, My Home
by Cyrena Jackson

I am the fourth generation in my maternal family living in Yuma, Arizona. I was born in Yuma and have lived here all of my life. I definitely consider Yuma my home because I have been to many other places and nowhere feels quite the same to me. Being in other places I feel out of place. In Yuma I know my surroundings and I know I am home.

Living in Yuma for nineteen years, I have come to know about my town. Yuma was originally inhabited by the Colorado River Indian tribes; the Quechan and the Cocopah. In the 1700's, the Spanish came and settled near Indian Hill in Yuma, Arizona. The Indians then massacred the Spanish settlers whom remained gone for some time. In the early 1800's, Mexicans resettled in the area alongside the native peoples. In the mid 1800's, white settlers came into the area. The U.S. Army established Fort Yuma around the time of the California Gold Rush. In the late 1800's, farming developed in Yuma. At the turn of the century irrigation was developed.

I drive around blasting my country music and get weird looks for it but I do not care because that is who I am. I love driving down county roads and avoiding crazy traffic. I do not like big cities because I despise all of the traffic. I also love the smell of the dust in the air when I drive down a dirt road which most people do not. I can drive just out of town and see nothing but desert land and cacti, which I love.

A dominating feature of the west is its aridness, particularly Yuma because it is in the Sonoran desert. Being in the desert, Yuma always has beautiful weather. I can always tell when it is going to rain just by looking at the sky and the smell in the air. It does not rain much in

Yuma, but when it does it is amazingly beautiful. After it rains, when I go outside, it is beautiful and one of my favorite smells.

It gets very hot in the summer but I do not mind because I love to swim. Swimming is good exercise and relaxes me. It makes me feel as if I am weightless. Winter, on the other hand, is a completely different story. I get cold very easily because I am small, but everyone else always exclaims how beautiful Yuma is in the winter. I complain I am cold, but Yuma winters are beautiful compared to most other places.

I have even lived in a different house in Yuma, and despised it. I love my current residence, and I do not think I could live anywhere else. No other place in the world could ever take the place of my home. It is the only one that I remember. My current house is my home and always will be.

For me, home is not just where you live. Home is where you can go and have no worries in the world. I can go anywhere else in the world, but Yuma will always be my home. Like Judy Garland said, "There is no place like home." I am a firm believer in this quote because I know, first hand, it is true.

Haiku

Yuma, Arizona
For so long I have
Lived in the Desert to see
The beauty in it

Indio: The City of Festivals

by Juan Levya

Indio, California, the city I spend most of my childhood and a dear place of mine. I am going to be describing Indio as how I remember it being and how this city shows how it contributed to the American West. First, I will be explaining the history of the city and its topography. After that, I will talk about the population and the annual festivals. Hopefully with the descriptions I give, you'll get a feel of the city and draw a mental picture in your mind.

The wonderful city of Indio was a waypoint for the South Pacific Railroad that traveled from Yuma, AZ to Los Angeles, CA. This Waypoint was created because the train's engines needed to be checked and cleaned in order for the train to make it to Los Angeles in good condition. Knowing that this place was going to need lots of engineers and Railroad workers, the South Pacific Railroad decided to make homes and make the place livable for the workers to go and to stay there. They contracted many Mexican Immigrants to work with the railroads and needed them to be available wherever they were needed. After the railroad was made in 1876, the waypoint started looking more like a city. Indio (Indian Wells at that time) started growing Onions, Cotton, Grapes, Citrus and Dates. With the agriculture booming and the stores and restaurants that were made by South Pacific, Indio became a city and not just a waypoint.

Indio is in the center of the Coachella Valley and is surrounded by different desert cities. This is where I was born and spend most of my childhood at. Every time I talk about Indio I feel the Sonoran Desert heat. I remember not ever wanting to go get the mail in summer because as soon as I open the door from my house, I felt that I entered to fires of hell and was bombarded by intense heat. It only took me two minutes to go and get the mail, but when I return to the house I was sweating like if I ran a marathon. The summer temperature where almost always above 110

degrees, but always caught a break in winter, when the temperature was whopping low of 90 degrees. One thing I miss is seeing Date Tree's everywhere I went. I always enjoyed eating those sweet, delicious Dates and never having to really worry about not being available year round since Indio is pretty much the capital of Dates in the U.S. Another thing that is pretty cool is how close all the desert cities are to each other. I remember my dad use to drive us to the grocery store in Coachella that was 2 miles away and to buy clothing in La Quinta that was like 5 miles away. The background landscape of my old city had three massive mountain ranges that pretty much surround Indio and the desert cities. That's what made Indio very hot year round. Even though there is intense heat and in the middle of the desert, it has not stop people from living there.

The population of Indio area as of 2010 is over than 75,000 people. It has been growing at steady pace throughout the last century. Do to the "Traqueros"/Mexican Immigrant Workers that were brought to work at the railroad; Indio has attracted many more Hispanic to live there. More than 60% of the people of Indio are Hispanic and not just people from Mexico, but from Central America too. Indio has visitors in the winter only. The visitors like the warm temperature and enjoy the desert lifestyle. Due to the visitors, Indio has created many Casinos', Hotels, and golf Resorts which makes Indio shine bright at night. Like in Yuma, AZ, the winter visitors increase the population of Indio quite a bit and create many winter jobs. There is one thing that everybody who stays in Indio has in common and that is going to the festivals.

Just thinking about the festivals gets me all hyper and my mouth all watery. They don't called Indio "The City of Festivals" for nothing. The two most famous festivals are the National Date Festival and the Tamale Festival. I remember going in the afternoon in February to the National Date Festival. Hearing the Merchants yelling how much sweeter and better their Dates

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are than the rest. Getting free samples of Dates left and right and buying souvenirs. Hearing the live music all day till night time was amazing, but having a stomach ache due to all the Dates I ate was not. My favorite Festival still is the Tamale Festival in December. The delicious smell of all the food in the air makes any person forget about their diets. Smelling the freshly cooked beef, pork and chicken combine with the smell of rice, beans and tortillas overwhelmed the nose. I remember loving to go to the festival for the food that literally was in every corner, but also because there were rides and roller coasters too. Riding with friends and enjoying daytime and the nighttime on rides and eating is heaven for any person.

I have very vivid memories of how Indio looked and how awesome where the festivals. Now with a little research I discovered how Indio came to be and how the population grew over time. Apart from my nostalgic memories of Indio, Indio is a great example of how some of the cities of the American West became to be. Most people that think about the American west picture somewhere with intense heat and with seeing nothing but desert all around and Indio “The City of Festivals” is a great example of that image.



A picture taken in the early 1900's by the South Pacific Railroad.

A Haiku of Indio

The desert city
Intense heat and bright sun is
All I could handle

Tombstone
by Alexis Palma

Tombstone is a little town near Tucson Arizona. Today it is known for its brutal gun fights (OK Corral) and famous heroes and villains that once made their homes there. It is the most preserved Western Town left throughout the United States. Nowadays, people there have created tours that will walk you through the old town of Tombstone and make you feel like you were there one hundred and thirty years ago. The city of Tombstone was established in 1877 by Ed Schieffelin. Tombstone is significant to me because I have gained an experience of what it was like in the Old West and seeing the transformation into a modern city.

While arriving at the main entrance of Tombstone, the presence of people From the Old West sent shivers cascading down my spine. I see people dressed up like the Old West: guys wearing boots, hats, and a gun holsters on their hips, as if ready to get into a standoff. Women and their long dresses with feathers in their hair increased their attraction. The smell of dust permeates the air where I stand. Horses are pulling old wagons people used to travel on. I entered the Bird Cage Theater where they say that the girls, or women, that used to work there used to satisfy their clients. I look around and see all the historical items and artifacts that had been used back then. As I walk all over, I can hear my shoes on the wooden floor resonate. I stop and all I hear is silence. Suddenly, gun shots are echoed from the reenactment of the OK Corral gun fight. I head out of the building and see people lying on the floor as if they were dead. It's almost as if I have stepped back in time to the eighteen hundreds, yet there are certain aspects that enable Tombstone, Arizona to remain in the present.

Many things have change from the Old West to the New West. Horses are still ridden on, but mainly for sport. The way people traveled has change dramatically, from riding in horse-drawn carriages to riding in automobiles or even flying in planes. Buildings are still made out of

wood, but the architecture has changed. Communication went from snail mail to receiving it in an instant. No longer are there any authentic John Wayne folk, but people in business suits and expensive casual wear. Light bulbs are now used to illuminate the buildings and the streets, not oil lanterns. Guns today are automatic and usually concealed; when in the Old West they were worn on the hip for everyone to see. The interactions between people were much more friendly and social in the Old West then now. Everything is done over the phone and sent over text, very impersonal, when in the Old West people actually talked to each other.

Tombstone, located in southern Arizona is the epitome of what the Old West was like in its small town, its people, and its buildings that represent what life was like in the old west. From gun fights at the OK Corral to the horse drawn carriages, Tombstone is a traditional Old Western town; however it incorporates the modernization of the twenty first century. In this little town you will find telephones, cars, flat screen televisions, and indoor plumbing, alongside the simplistic realities that were the Old West. Tombstone, Arizona, combines Old Western ideologies with the modern west. Tombstone is significant in my life, because I visited it and had the smoothest blend of old and new. Tombstone is significant to me because I have gain the experience of living in the Old West and seeing the transformation to a modern city.

Haiku

Historical place
Tombstone in Arizona
Old Western village

Desert Mine
by Kyle Parsons

The best place I have ever been that felt so like a western experience would have to be the time when I was in tenth grade on a field trip to what was once a mine out in the desert outside of Yuma. It was so much fun especially since two of my closest friends were there with me. It was probably the best field trip I ever had, well, maybe beside the time I went to Sea World. But anyways, I can almost picture everything that happened on that day, the feeling, the sounds, the experiences. I am not sure where to start, so I guess I should start from the beginning.

In the early morning on the day of the field trip, I got on the bus and sat next to two of my best friends. I was actually kind of excited to go see this little town/mine. Western was my favorite era in history next to medieval and the mobster era, like in the *Godfather* movies. As both of my friends were talking to one another, I watched as the bus took off from school and off to the destination. I noticed once we left out of Yuma, there was nothing out there but sand, dead bushes (I think they were dead, but am not really sure), and mountains that looked like little tiny rocks from a faraway distance. An hour or fifty-five minutes later, our bus had made it to the little town/mine.

It looked kind of how I thought a little western town would look, the buildings were made out of woods and some bricks as well I think. We went into groups and split up looking at the buildings. My group first went to a bar, well, a kind of bar particular to the old west called a saloon. If I remember correctly, there were a couple of tables with some old-looking bottles, an old style western piano, and rooms up stairs that we could not go into. We went to another building that I believe was a barber shop, a “small” barber shop. Just like any old barber shop except, well, you know, the old western type. Then we went to jail, I got locked up in the cell, and got my picture taken while one of my friends was holding up a gun at me. It wasn’t real

though, but it was a cool picture.

There was another place we went but I can't seem to remember other than that it had western clothing like cowboy's clothes and dancer's outfits. There was also a train station. It was funny because we took a picture in front of a sign that said "3:10 to Yuma" just like the movie. And last we went to the mine and got to go inside of it. It was a small mine but pretty cool. We went in the front entrance and out on the other side of the mine. It was an awesome field trip, the best one I ever had.

Before we went back to regroup with the others, we went to a small shack that had a book with everyone's name who ever been there and visited. We all signed our names, the day's date and we wrote what was in our minds. I couldn't think of anything and just wrote down "what's up". My name is probably still there at the place to this day forward. It was finally time to pack up, get on the bus, and go home. But, before I headed on up to the bus I took one last long look around just like any other place I have ever been too. At the end of the day, I laid back, rest my head on the window, closed my eyes and took a nice long bus ride heading home.

The Sand

by Rene Robles

The sudden end of civilization and the immediate expanse of unforgiving sand is enough to startle even the most bewildered and rugged of man. Or so my mind tells me. Despite the many years of growing up among this ever-expanding city in the West this view of creeping sand and the flowing miasma of dust breed many feelings and awe is just one that captivates me for the time being. Arizona in particular, a place I have grown up, loathed, and loved is as familiar to me as the soil to a farmer's hands.

I am utterly alone with the sand. The only sign of a supposedly civil life is the clothes on my back and the shoes on my feet. For miles on I see the vast expanse of what a pessimist may call empty space. Such an absurd notion. This place is far from empty. Beneath my shoes I can feel the heated coils of tightly bound sand that have taken my shoes into them. It's hard to gauge the reaction to the leather invader and for a moment I toy with the idea of how I would get a response. But my mother didn't raise a rude man so I turn my gaze up. Like mountains that are far too small the sand stands proudly, or perhaps in vain, and they stretch on and up, creating deep valleys in my sight and themselves. However, to climb these mountains would bring no praise, only the confused and bewildered stares of people who only see a person standing oddly triumphant against the backdrop of the blue sky and scorching sun. Damn pessimists.

I take a drink of water. The sun beats down on me like the whipping of an angry tail from an annoyed feline. Somehow gentle but the long strokes have become short and my skin grows increasingly irritated. But there's simply no walking away and I know that if I ran the sun would maul me long before exhaustion would. The thought brings an odd smirk to my face and I trek on. There's a faint wind here but it makes a difference. Unlike the immediate area, the gust is cool and welcoming but at the same time it drags small flecks of sand against my skin. The

sensation isn't painful, I find. Something akin to having someone lightly drag the back of their nails along your skin. Such a strange feeling but not at all intimidating or something to be fearful of. It's nice. Odd but nice. I take a brief break but the sun urges me on and as much as I enjoy the cool wind it fades far too quick. And so I move on.

There is only one source of shade in the expanse of the West. The sun isn't too high to cast shadows from the sand dunes. These are welcome pockets of brief reprieve. Comparable to a micro-paradise, this shade becomes the sanctuary that many seek but never truly appreciate. The West offers many things to every walk of life but few stop long enough to appreciate that shade until they are too far gone in their own world. Stop and smell the roses is a comparable expression and like a rose, this shade withers and fades too quickly. Some would say that dictates true beauty and I agree, to a point. This shade and the fragrance of a rose are different but still enjoyed, a reminder that no clock or work dictates a true break in this world.

Moving on requires more effort as the sun has risen above my head and casts nearly no shadow and the wind is too weak to do much but stir up the occasional dancer. These are known as 'dust devils' but I find them enjoyable to watch. A free form of life among the dunes, the dust devils twirl about in one direction for a while but then quickly reverses itself. Almost belligerently, as if to say 'I am free to do as I please' to nobody in particular. This simple but sure movement defines the West. An intangible but rough thing that are unable to be studied but at its very core changes and becomes something else at every turn and twist, like a living being. As soon as it has come, the dancer fades away and I imagine it called away to some other desert wanderer. I hope they appreciate it as much as myself.

The sun now casts a dim orange and brilliant red across the dunes. There's this quiet subtlety of movement as the various desert inhabitants make their way home. I am among these

creatures. Insects, birds, and grounded rodents tug at my vision and serve as a reminder that even this supposedly barren, unforgiving land of sand and sweat. Something in particular catches my eyes and draws me down. Huddled in the mass of my shadow is an unexpected, eight-legged visitor. Large and lean, this spider lurks in my shadow, as if a new home has been found. I'm not sure how to feel about this intrusion on my shadow space. The many beady eyes glare out at the expanse of red stained sand and creeping darkness. He's hunkered down though, content with this spot he's claimed as his own. I'm no fan of his kind but I know that bringing my foot down on him would only agitate him, the ground beneath would give way and he would be pushed into it only to scramble away or even toward me to seek revenge. His kind are strong and I imagine that they would need to be to survive the West. We spend a bit longer in stillness and as my shadow joins the others, my guest is off once more. I know we'll never cross paths and I'm both fine and oddly sad at the thought. I can't think much longer on this as the sun continues to set, the cold begins to settle and unlike my guest, I cannot burrow into the sand for warmth. So I keep moving.

Vivid colors peek lazily across the sky, a peaceful scene of serenity if ever I saw one. Coupled with the intense silence though, the scene is haunting. Bone white sand and long pools of empty shadows play a grim scene in my weary mind. Faces and hands stretch from the dune-cast shadows and return to nothing as I focus on them. My skin crawls and I focus up. Streaks of red and bright orange attempt to defy the onslaught of dark blue, black and sea of stars. Defiant to even the natural rotation of the World around it, the West battles the darkness. Unfortunately, the West loses but not without a valiant effort. The sky is dark and the ground is a pale reflection of the moon. Haunting but beautiful. I've made my way to my vehicle by now and the shadow denizens have taken refuge from the bright headlights. Perhaps they are shy,

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perhaps they are full of malice. Doesn't really matter, for they are gone as I pull away. I am on a journey home despite my strong want to stay. I know I'll come back to a changed desert, for nothing stays the same for long around here. I'm both saddened and excited by the prospect.

The West is indeed the sand, the dunes, the wild and free life that crawls among an encroaching, supposedly civil and free, World. Never fully gone but a strong and strange reminder that we are alone but never to be abandoned.

My City, My Home
by Diana San Juan

Bright lights, busy streets, and a fast pace are all things you would not normally think of when you think of the American West. Well, all of these words describe San Jose, CA to the tee. When I think of the West, I picture lots of dirt, abandoned businesses and cars on main roads, and old plastic bags drifting through the wind. Though that is probably what most of us think of, it is not always the case.

Growing up in a city like San Jose was the best. I woke up to the bright sky peaking through the blinds in my room in the summer and spring, or the sound of rain during the winter. It was never too hot or too cold, it was perfection. Walking to the cherry tree on the corner of Rocky Mountain Drive with my grandfather; running through the sprinklers on those hot afternoons with my cousins; and having lunch outside of our classrooms when the weather was nice is what makes up some of my most precious childhood memories.

As I grew up, I started realizing how much San Jose meant to me. Sure I knew I liked where I lived as a kid, but I never took much time to soak all of it in. I became a teenager and along with that came hope, disappointment, happiness, sadness, and big dreams with even bigger doubts. One day I loved my city, the other I wanted to run as fast as I could until I reached a new destination. I realized things that as a kid I didn't. I started becoming angry when I found myself sitting through hours of traffic every day. I started becoming angry when the sun peaking through my blinds woke me up every Saturday morning. I started becoming angry when the rain would ruin my hair and makeup. I started becoming angry when I found myself almost hating that place.

Though it seemed like San Jose had become almost a burden every day, it would only take one day, one moment, to completely erase my negative thoughts of that place. One city light, one city art mural, one smile from a stranger walking the same streets as me, one moment, that's all it would take.

They say you never know how much home means to you until you are not there anymore. After high school, I decided to move away from my parents, my siblings, my friends, and my city. I moved to Yuma, Arizona, where most would describe as boring, deserted, and hot. I described it as my escape. The first couple of weeks were great. No traffic, no rain, no crowded streets. I thought to myself, "I can definitely get used to this." There was no more rain, no more traffic, and no more of that fast pace. My days seemed longer, I got to places quicker, and instead of worrying about the rain messing my makeup up, it was the sweat that ran down my freckled face.

Though Arizona is great, I can't help but miss the traffic, the lights, the rain, the everything. Going home to visit reassured me that I am a big city kind of gal. Scratch that, I am a San Jose, CA kind of gal. I missed the moments of reflection when my car stood still for minutes due to traffic, I missed the lights, I missed the sun peaking through my window, and I missed the rain. No matter where life takes me, I will forever be connected to the place that made me who I am. San Jose is my city, it is my home.

Home sweet home
Busy busy bee
Stuck in traffic every day
Where she wants to be

Heaven in the West

by Joslyn Van Wey

The smell of freshly made beans and the sounds of drums in the air, the beauty of seeing the sun rise in the mountain and seeing it set with all of its glorious colors that captivate the human eye. This is the place in the American West that has connection to me more than anywhere else I have ever been or read about. This is the land of the proudest people I know, and is full of history that one cannot ever stop learning. This is my home, The Kwat'san Tribe Reservation; this is my heaven in the West.

As I drive down Picacho Road, I can see the last remains of the old west. There are mud houses that the people of my tribe made to stay cool in the hot summers. When I think of the American West, automatically I think of desert, and that means heat. It is extremely hot and the people that live on my reservation have lived with the heat for generations. The mud house is a perfect example of how they have adapted and survived. As I look closer at the house I noticed that there inside the mud were boards made from wood. An elder once told me that if you ever saw boards on a mud house, that those whom live there are traitors. The story is that whenever the United States Army went looking for a tribal member that they would give people wooden planks if they helped in the capture of the person. It is a sad story that a neighbor would turn against a neighbor, but one from the American West.

Indian Hill is where my people and I go when we need to do business or need to go to the doctor. The buildings that they use have been there for over a century and a half. They have been used by soldiers and were once used as a school for my people. The American West means to me as a land full of history, though it might not be as known as the history on the east coast. A land that has seen its own sadness and heartbreak, yet was supposed to bring fortune and fame. It is sad to see that the West is not as wild as it used to be, however we are able to spot it on occasion.

The land I live on, from the dirt that blows in the wind, to the fields that produce crops that the farmers grow, and all the way to Picacho Peak, has a lot to tell us. How it was conquered by those that have changed history, or how it was covered in tears by those whom wept for lost ones in wars.

As a child growing in Northern Wisconsin, my friends would ask me how going out west was like and they were so full of questions. I would describe my home, I also would describe how a river runs so close, and at the end my friends would ask me to take them whenever I would go back next. The Colorado River is important to my people because they used it to survive in the past and use it for recreational use now. The American West was tamed by the ingenuity of the people who conquered it by making a living using the river. My people used to help transport people and items across for a small price.

Finally, when I think of the American West I cannot help but think of all the people who fought to keep their lands. As I lightly touched on the topic of Indian hill earlier, on that same hill there is a Catholic church located there and in front of it is a statue of priest with who was trying to make peace but sadly was beaten to death on that same spot after a war broke out between the Spaniards and my people. Though they knew that they were losing land, at least they received a good piece of land near what is now the city of Yuma. You can feel the stories of all my ancestors in the blowing of the wind as you stand here in the desert. That is what the American West is about; the stories that have been passed on by our elders and the making of our own.

My native land is my own version of the American West. Having to survive in the heat and yet being able to freeze in the winters, is what makes this the West. There are moments that connect the entire West with the Kwat'san Reservation. Those moments could include the never

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ending beauty that surrounds us, from the graceful roadrunner that crosses the road, to the never-ending sky, and to those lonely cacti that stand alone in the untamed desert. If we just only take the time to notice them.

Haiku

Gourd music of the people,
Spirit of ancestors land,
Ancient and tranquil.

El Camino Del Diablo

by Matthew Williams

If there is any place in the American West that I have a connection with it would be El Camino Del Diablo, The Devil's Highway. The highway started as a foot path first traversed by Native Americans leading them from water hole to water hole across a vast dry desert. Later, the first Spaniards used this trail to come across the desert to California in search of wealth. The highway was introduced to me by my father when I was a teenager. The part of El Camino Del Diablo I know is from Yuma, Arizona to Lukeville south of Ajo, Arizona, but there is more to the highway than this. The best time to travel it is in the spring. Winter can get below freezing. Fall you don't know if it will or won't rain and the summer is too bugging hot to be out there.

The trip all starts with somebody saying how long has it been since we were out there? Too long is the answer I would give. This isn't something you wake up one morning and go do, it takes time and preparation. First you have to decide on a date. Then you have to contact the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge field office in Ajo and MCAS Yuma to obtain permission to be out on the Berry M. Goldwater bombing range. This is an active bombing range. Therefore, coordination is needed if you don't want to be shot or blown up! If both of these entities say yes you're on to the next step. This is putting together a list of supplies: a four wheel drive vehicle, gas, food and lots and lots of water. Now you're ready to go.

Leaving out of Yuma, off the interstate you go straight south till you hit a dirt road. This isn't the original route, but with so much traffic over the years all you have to do is pick one trail and stay on it following the mountains. I like to head over to Fortuna Mine right off. This is the first of many places to get out and explore. I haven't found any gold here but I have heard of others having done so. You can see where some of the buildings were laid out and placed next to one another by the remnants of small pieces of wall and foundations. While there, I would go

over to an old vent shaft that was dug for the mine and toss rocks down it to count the cars that are in it. You might ask yourself how do you count cars by tossing rocks? It's pretty simple: you see if you toss the rock just right you can hear it bang and clank off all the cars in the hole. As the rock falls there a spaces between the sounds and that's what you count. I've counted up to six cars in the past. I have heard that the vent was used for a body dumping in the past, it maybe even today. I can remember when I was a teenager reading in the paper that the sheriff's department sent some men down to look for a body. When they got in there, they were not prepared for what they found, the body they were looking for plus a dozen or so more skeletons.

From the mine you leave out through a canyon that opens into to a big wash covered brush and trees. Some people would say that there really isn't much to see. If you look close enough you spot a collard lizard sitting on a rock sun bathing, cocking its head as it watches you go by. The red tailed hawk flying over head watches a jack rabbit running ahead of you from bush to bush looking forward to its next meal. Off to one side is a burrowing owl popping its head out to see what all the commotion is all about.

Driving the twenty miles to our next stop is a good time to talk with those who are with you and to take in the surroundings. What to do? There's a fork in the road. To the left will take us through the Cipriano pass. The pass is a rugged rough road not for the light at heart traveler. This is the way I tend go, not that the other isn't any fun. I just prefer the path on the left. The views that one gets going up to and through the pass are unimaginable with the different outcroppings of granite and the valley you just came out of looking back into Mexico. Once through the pass, it's not much further to Tinajas Altas, the next stop on our journey.

What are the High Tanks, you ask? They are granite tanks in a canyon going up the mountain, carved out over the millennia. There are nine tanks in all stacked one on top another,

each roughly the size of a VW bug. When you climb up to the tanks you have to stop now and then to catch your breath as it's a pretty steep grade. This is a good time to take a good look at the surroundings down on the canyon floor. There is a large granite boulder with holes ground into it from the Indians that would frequent the location and grind what grains they had. The path up to the tanks takes you past an overhang; upon a closer look, you see petroglyphs. Who ever put them there had to be skinny and small; there isn't much room for the average size person.

From the tanks the highway doesn't have much for terrain, lots of creosote bush, cholla cactus and rabbit bush with a lonesome palo verde or mesquite tree here or there. Along the way, if you pay attention you see the graves of those who didn't complete the trip. Most of the graves don't have any identification, just prospectors seeking their fortune. There is however, one group that belongs to a family. From what I can recollect, they were coming to Yuma from Tucson and somehow missed Bates Well and had no water for them or their horses, even though it was in the fall. This is just a reminder of how harsh the desert can be. One nice thing is that for most of this portion of the trip is you can drive hands free. The highway has been rutted out deep enough that vehicles don't have to be steered, the road guides you along.

Cutting across the dessert we come to Bates Well. Today this well still has water in it, though many people are surprised to find this. Not knowing what is out here can be the difference of life or death. There is still a windmill here that even works an old steal tank and a small building. Other than that, there is not much here but a bunch of trees sucking up the water from the well. This is usually a quick stop. If one were to spend the night on this trip this would be a good place for it.

Well, were coming to the end of our trip with one last stop at the spring at Lukeville. This portion of the trip is one of the most beautiful of all. There are rugged red and green mountains

with canyons that are full of copper. Green arroyos overflow with different desert vegetation and animal life. While out here I've seen a family of javelin, Thompson gazelle, mule deer, and even the illegal person trying to stay out of the heat. Here we are at Lukeville spring, about an acre of water surrounded with cottonwoods, cat tails and lush green grass. In the past I didn't have the time to study the life around here; by the time we got to Lukeville my dad was tired and ready to go home. I just hope that I'll have the time and opportunity with my children to stay and learn about the area.

It's amazing that a place so arid, vast, and hostile could support so much life. I can see why the Spanish that came across here named it what they did and why they found a better route to take. If one had the time, you could spend a month out here and still not scratch the surface of El Camino Del Diablo.

El Camino Del Diablo: a Haiku

Blazing hot sun wow,
Hawks, lizards, and owls oh my,
No water just dirt.

The Day the Burro Sang
by Nancy Windon

It was a nice spring day, although I am not sure of the year, I do remember that it was clear and warm that day. My parents and I had taken a weekend trip to Laughlin, Nevada for Mom and I to sit and watch the wheels turn in the slot machines, while Dad would take in the sites that were offered by the city of Laughlin for those who did not enjoy dumping their money gambling and spending endless hours enthralled by the lights flashing and hoping for that lucky spin. By Saturday afternoon, my Dad informed us that he was tired of watching Mom and I play the slot machines so, despite a little protest from us, we decided to do some sight seeing.

We piled into the van and Dad told us that we were going to go to Oatman. I had never been there before and had no idea of what we were in store for, but I knew it had to be some place different, as my father is not one for choosing boring or normal sights to visit. The van headed into the desert and turned down a two lane road following the sign that led us to Oatman. It was dusty and looked like the road was traveled a great deal, so I was a little apprehensive at first. However, to my amazement, I was pleasantly surprised when we pulled into town.

As we first arrived, you could see a lot of people, but you also saw several burros walking down the roads. The sides of the roads were quite dusty, so when the burros walked down the streets, it looked as though a major wind storm was heading through town. There were several old buildings that lined the street and gave the town a look of the old west. The buildings were in need of paint, but this made it look like an old ghost town and added to the feeling of being in the old west. Of course there were a number of memorabilia shops. This was a bit of a 'tourist trap', as we had come to call little towns like this one, and we walked through a couple shops we were brought right out of the west by seeing all of the little tacky trinkets made of plastic that

were there for people to take home some memories. The shops were nice, but I was still fascinated by the burros that were walking freely up and down the road, trying to make friends with anyone that would feed them.

After we had gone through a few shops, we decided that it was time for lunch and found a place to eat that had all the looks of an old western saloon. The place was one large room with long tables made of split logs and log seats. There were horse shoes and saddles up on the walls along with rod iron sculptures that gave me the feeling I was really in the old west. In the front of the room was a stage where an entertainer could play for their guitar and even a piano leaving enough room on the floor for people to dance to the music.

When we first arrived no one was on stage, but by the time we got our huge burgers, the owner announced that Tom, a cowboy dressed in the leather vest and chaps, was going to perform and turned the stage over to him. Tom had just started his second song, "Walking the Streets of Bakersfield," when all of a sudden we heard a braying noise coming from the front door. It was one of the burros that we had seen walking down the street. She had stuck her head into the saloon and was singing along with Tom. The owner told the burro that it was Tom's turn now and Jennie, the burro, had to wait until tonight. Jennie did not seem to want to wait and sang the rest of the time that we were there. I will never forget that day and I would have to admit, it was more fun than playing the slots in the noisy casino, and made me feel like I was in the old west.

Haiku

I came in with cheese.
Then I had to eat the cheese.
I left without cheese.

About the Authors

Amy Bir I came to the Yuma valley in what was true, old west fashioned reasons, gold lust. At the age of three, my family moved to the Yuma area to lay claim to around 700 acres of mineral rights, for gold mining purposes. My family no longer holds the claims, which I am both grateful for, and at the same time, a little saddened by. I am currently a Medical Assistant, pursuing my RN degree, full time at AWC. My future education goals, involve receiving my Bachelors in Nursing from NAU of Yuma. I am a single mother of two, wonderful little boys. I find that when I start to lose my drive to continue my education, my boys can quickly revive my motivation to succeed in my dream to become an RN.

Kellsey Borrud I was born in Flagstaff, Arizona in June of 1993 into a family that already had two daughters. We moved nearly every two years on the dot, even though neither of my parents were in the military. We stayed mostly in the western part of the US but also lived in Norway for a year. When I as thirteen my mom and stepdad moved one of my sisters and I to Yuma, Arizona, where I've lived for almost seven years now. I've suffered through the freezing cold temperatures of North Dakota winters and I've suffered through the scorching temperatures of Yuma, Arizona summers; everything taken into consideration- the South West is where I belong.

Taylor Brown I don't know if you can consider being born in Yuma "coming west." It's more of a tragic misstep by my parents. Out of all the places in the west to be born and I got stuck in Yuma; but I digress, I'm much more proud of where my family came from to end up in Yuma especially my great-grandfather who was from Boston. When I was younger he would tell me about how he and his other military buddies would go watch Red Sox games together and as he told me these stories my heart grew fond of this big city on the east coast although I had never been there. It may not have seemed like much at the time but it has had a major impact on my future plans. Right now I am studying at AWC to become a math teacher and the plan is to soon transfer to ASU to earn my degree. After that my dream is to become a teacher in Boston. I want nothing more than to grow my career and raise a family in that place that has had a hold on me ever since I was a little boy. Pretty big dreams for a western boy who has never lived anywhere besides Yuma if you ask me. As for something unique about myself well I have an interesting life goal most people don't know about or expect to hear. I plan to be the most tattooed person in my family when I get older and as of right now I have 7. The other thing people don't expect to find out is that I'm trying to catch my mother who has 13. What can I say, like mother like son. I do however realize that tattoos may not be the most conducive idea when trying to become a teacher which is why all of mine can be covered by a dress shirt. That's just a little bit about my life story, who I am, and who I plan to become.

Gregory Champagne I was born to a Yuma couple and haven't left the sunniest city in the United States since. Being a Yuma kid it has taught me to look forward to days when the temps are only 105 degrees and that maybe 95 degrees at night is normal. After graduating high school in 2012, I enrolled in AWC to study my general education classes and look to transfer to a four year university after completing an associate's degree. Currently I'm employed with Discount Tire Company and work there part time. Sundays are my day off and are usually spent air chairing up the river in our boat in the summer or at Buttercup with my dirt bike in the winter.

Andria Grosch I was born and raised in Yuma, Arizona. My sister and I, along with my seven cousins, are the third generation in my family to be born in the United States. My mom, along with her brother and three sisters are the second generation and my grandmother is the first. My great grandparents originated from the deeper parts of Mexico and eventually made their way to the town we are living in today. My family came to the West with hopes of living better lives for not only themselves but also for generations to come.

Cyrena Jackson I was born in the West and have lived here all of my life. Being born in Yuma, Arizona I have come to admire the beauty of the West that most people can not see. For example, the desert, most people think negatively of the desert; however, I love the desert because it is my home. As for my education, I am planning on completing all of my General Education courses at Arizona Western College then transferring to Northern Arizona University in Yuma to go through the Nursing Program. Some interesting facts about me are that I am an only child and I have a mini lop rabbit named Hank.

Juan Levya I was born in Indio, California, that is only about two and half hour from here going towards Los Angeles. I spend most of my childhood there. Then I moved to Yuma, Arizona and spend most of my teen years till now. Currently I'm attending Arizona Western College to get my General Business Associates. Good thing that this is my last semester... Well if I pass all my classes. After I get out of College I will go and get my Truck Driving License/C.D.L and get a job in truck driving. Hopefully more down on the road, I will have enough experience about trucks that I will start my own trucking company. I will finally get to use my knowledge of running a business until then. Most likely I will stay in the American West. I know my way around it and I feel really comfortable here. Knowing that I was born in the West and going to spend my life here working gives me a sense of pride that I'm a Westerner.

Alexis Palma Being a Mexican/American is something I am proud of because I have both in my blood. My family came to the west from Mexico and settled here in the mid-1970s. I was born and raised in Yuma Arizona and have never lived anywhere else. I am eighteen years old, turning nineteen in May. I choose to get my education at AWC first, because it was cheaper for my family and I wanted to my associates here. My goal is to graduate within a year and a half. After I graduate from AWC with my associates in Construction Trades Management I will be attending the University of Arizona to continue my education, but this time in the field of Architecture. Something unique about me is that I play many musical instruments for example, guitar, bass guitar, drums, piano, marimba and other auxiliary instruments.

Rene Robles I was born in Phoenix Arizona on August 17th in 1989. This was essentially my 'grand' move to the West. Which was promptly followed by several smaller moves that resulted in the shifting from Phoenix to Kingman to Yuma. Not exactly what one would call the grand journey or incredible move to the West moves nonetheless. I've spent twenty-three years in Arizona alone, give or take a few summers I spent abroad. Each year feels warmer than the last and while I may gripe on and on to friends and family about the stifling of my 'Dreams of Grandeur', I know deep down that I'll miss this little town and the sand that accompanies it.

Diana San Juan I am 18 years old and I am a California native. Born and raised in San Jose, CA, I have lived my whole life in the West. I come from a huge, tight knit family; I am the fifth out of thirty-two grandchildren, and counting, and that is just my mother's side of the family. Though I loved living in San Jose, I thought it would be interesting to experience a completely different side of the West. To my parents' dismay I moved to Yuma after high school. It was the only place far away from San Jose where I had family so it was the only place my parents would be okay with me moving to. I applied to AWC months before graduating, next thing I knew, it was August 10th and I was driving my Saturn Ion all the way down to Yuma, AZ. As soon as I moved here I realized my life here would be completely different. Though I moved in with my aunt and uncle and wasn't completely on my own, I said goodbye to my life in San Jose. I have lived here for several months now and as of now, I will be going back to California in May. My plans are to go to San Jose State University where they have a very good Journalism program. Then, I will move to San Francisco, CA, a place much closer to home, to continue my career as a Journalist.

Joslyn Van Wey I am from Tomahawk, Wisconsin. I am a member of the Kwat'san Nation and my family lives on the reservation so I came here to live with them in the West. My goal at this moment is to complete and receive my Associates in Hotel and Restaurant Management, but my future goal is to finish my bachelors at Northern Arizona University. I love to travel, however, my favorite hobby is writing horror fiction in my spare time.

Matthew Williams "Who Am I"? The question is asked. I am the person that everyone sees, but is not seen. I pretty much keep to myself unless otherwise provoked. Here I am provoked by having to do this biography of how I came to be in the West and where I am going with my education. It all started with my grandfather; he was the first of all his siblings and past relatives to go west of the Mississippi River. He set out to start his own branch of our huge family tree. Things weren't as great out West as he thought they would be. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy which ironically settled him in Indio, Ca., where my father and I were born. Later, my father who worked on the railroad followed his father who also worked on the railroad to Yuma. This is how I came to be in the West. Now as for after my education, when this is done I plan on using my degree to find employment locally that I can apply it towards.

Nancy Windon Although I was born in a suburb of Los Angeles, CA, I moved to Oregon when I was two. I spent the rest of my childhood living in Oregon, most of the time in the Willamette Valley, but I also spent a year on the coast when I was in the fifth grade. After high school, I moved to Washington State and lived there a short time where I married my first husband. He was in the service, so I moved to several places, Mt. View, CA for a month and then off to El Paso, TX for a year. That is where my son was born. From Texas, I moved back to Washington for a few months. My marriage did not work out, so I moved back to Oregon, where I spent the next ten plus years. When my second marriage fell apart, I moved, once again, to Washington in 1987 and lived there until 1997, at which time I moved to Yuma, AZ and have been here ever since. So, since I have never lived any further east than El Paso, I consider myself to be a westerner throughout all of my life.