Los Angeles has a tantalizing hold on the American imagination. Its self-magnifying myths encompass Hollywood glamour, Arcadian landscapes, and endless summer, but also the apocalyptic undertow of riots, environmental depredation, and natural disaster. This Companion traces the evolution of Los Angeles as the most public staging of the American Dream – and American nightmares. The expert contributors make exciting, innovative connections among the authors and texts inspired by the city, covering the early Spanish settlers, African-American writers, the British and German expatriates of the 1930s and 1940s, Latino and Asian LA literature. The genres discussed include crime novels, science fiction, Hollywood novels, literary responses to urban rebellion, the poetry scene, nature writing, and the most influential non-fiction accounts of the region. Diverse, vibrant, and challenging as the city itself, this Companion is the definitive guide to Los Angeles in literature.

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CHRONOLOGY

1769  Spanish explorers discover the Los Angeles River.

1781  September 4. Settlers from the San Gabriel Mission found the city as El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Río de Porciúncula (the Village of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels of the Porciúncula River).

1784  Rancho period begins with grant of three land concessions.

1804  First local orange grove, six acres and 400 trees, planted on the grounds of the San Gabriel Mission.

1820  Population of the Pueblo of Los Angeles is 650.

1821  Diary of Captain Luis Antonio Argüello: The Last Spanish Expedition in California, October 17–November 17, 1820. Mexico achieves independence at conclusion of armed conflict that began in 1810.

1832  Hugo Reid arrives in California.

1833  First printing press in California.

1834  Disestablishment (secularization) of the missions.

1836  First official census records a population of 2,228 in Los Angeles and its environs, including 603 men, 421 women, 651 children, and 553 Indians, 29 Americans among them.

1841  The Workman–Rowland party, the first transcontinental wagon train, arrives in Southern California. William Wolfskill plants first commercial orange groves near Los Angeles.

1845  Los Angeles becomes the new capital of California.
Chronology

July 29. The USS *Cyane* sails into San Diego Bay, soldiers plant American flag in the Plaza. After their departure, local citizens restore the Mexican flag.
September. Counter-revolt in Los Angeles. California retaken by the Mexicans.

1847 January 13. Treaty of Cahuenga calls for Californios to surrender their artillery, and provides that all Mexican and American prisoners be immediately freed.

1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo cedes 525,000 square miles of Mexican territory, including California, to the United States.

1850 California admitted to the United States.
April 4. City of Los Angeles incorporated.
Federal census records Los Angeles population of 1,610. LA County population is 3,530.

1851 *Los Angeles Star/Estrella* begins publishing (suspends 1864–8 and ceases in 1879).

1854 John Rollin Ridge (“Yellow Bird”), *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit.*

1860 Population: City 4,385; County 11,333.

1870 Population: City 5,728; County 15,309.

1870s Land boom follows completion of rail lines to Long Beach, Riverside, Pasadena, and Pomona.

1871 First bookstore in Los Angeles opens.
Vigilantes kill nineteen Chinese (“coolie riots”).

Los Angeles Public Library Association founded; library established 1878.
## Chronology

1876 Southern Pacific completes its railroad line to Los Angeles from San Francisco.

1877 William Mulholland, an Irish immigrant, rides into Los Angeles on horseback.

1880 University of Southern California founded.

1881 Southern Pacific link to the East completed.

1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prohibits Chinese laborers from entering the United States and makes reentry for Chinese who leave the US and return more difficult.

1884 Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona.*

1885 María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don.*

1887 Peak year of the 1880s boom brings 120,000 visitors to Los Angeles. Boom collapses the next year. The boom is fictionalized in Theodore Strong Van Dyke’s *Millionaires of a Day: An Inside Story of the Great Southern California “Boom”* (1890). First electric streetcar lines in Los Angeles.

1888 Scott Act prohibits Chinese from reentering the United States if they leave.

1890 Tournament of Roses founded in Pasadena to promote the mild climate; it is patterned on the Battle of the Flowers in Nice, France.

1891 California Institute of Technology (Caltech) founded.

1892 Edward Doheny discovers oil in Los Angeles.

Angeles National Forest established by executive order.
chronology

1893 Bradbury Building (George H. Wyman, architect) opens.

1894 Lummis begins publishing his magazine, *Land of Sunshine*, which he renames *Out West* in 1901.

1896 Griffith J. Griffith donates the land for present-day Griffith Park to the city.

1897 December. Film crew employed by Thomas Edison’s Edison Manufacturing Company arrives.

1898 *South Spring Street, Los Angeles, California* (Frederick Blechynden), a twenty-five second “actuality” film shot on location in downtown Los Angeles.

1900 Population: City 102,479; County 170,298.

1901 Pacific Electric Railway (streetcars) incorporated by Henry E. Huntington, nephew of the Southern Pacific Railroad’s Collis P. Huntington.

1902 First Rose Bowl college football game in Pasadena; becomes an annual event in 1916.

1904 Abbot Kinney founds Venice, Calif., begins development of Venice of America as home sites along a lagoon, Grand Canal, and six smaller canals.

1905 Pleistocene fossils discovered in La Brea Tar Pits.

1907 Mary Austin, *The Ford.*

1907 Charles Fletcher Lummis establishes the Southwest Museum.

1910 Mexican Revolution increases immigration.

1911 Nestor Film Company, Hollywood’s first film studio.

Southern Pacific consolidates nearly all streetcar lines in Los Angeles region.
Chronology

Raymond Chandler returns to the US, settles in Los Angeles.

1912
First performance of John Steven McGroarty’s *Mission Play*. Hubert Eaton becomes a salesman for Forest Lawn Cemetery.

1913
Construction of the first Los Angeles Aqueduct from the Owens Valley is completed. Southwest Museum moves into permanent residence at Arroyo Seco.

1915
*Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith).

1917

1919
University of California, Los Angeles founded. October 2. Raid on Industrial Workers of the World hall as part of Los Angeles Police Department “Red scare” tactics.

1920

1921
Sabato (“Simon”) Rodia begins building the Watts Towers in his spare time; completed in 1954.

1922

1923
**chronology**

1924  
Mark Lee Luther, *The Boosters*.  
Federal Asian Exclusion Act prohibits immigration of Asian peoples; Immigration Act of 1924 limits immigration from Mexico.

1925  
Sarah Bixby Smith, *Adobe Days*.

1926  
February 18: LAPD vice squad shuts down a performance of Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire under the Elms*, arrests seventeen actors.

1927  
Horace Bell, *Reminiscences of a Ranger, or, Early Times in Southern California*.  
Upton Sinclair, *Oil!*  
Collapse of Julian Oil, a $150-million counterfeit stock and pyramid scheme. Financier Motley Flint gunned down in court by a ruined investor; C. C. Julian drinks poison in China. May 18. Grauman’s Chinese Theatre has its grand opening in Hollywood. A riot breaks out as onlookers try to see the stars entering the theater for the premiere of Cecil B. DeMille’s *King of Kings*.

1928  
March 12: St. Francis Dam (near present-day Santa Clarita) bursts; estimated death toll as high as 600.

1929  
Watts annexed to Los Angeles.

1930  
Olvera Street converted to a Mexican marketplace by Christine Sterling.  
The Production Code (Hays Code or Breen Office) governing the moral content of movies initiated; abandoned in 1968 in favor of a film-rating system that designates “appropriate” audiences and restricts admission based on age.  
Population: City 1,238,048; County 2,208,492.

1930s  
Dust Bowl drives Oklahoma and Arkansas migrants (“Okies” and “Arkies”) to California; many settle in the LA region.

1931  
Arna Bontemps, *God Sends Sunday*.  
James M. Cain arrives in Hollywood.

1932  
Los Angeles hosts the Summer Olympics.  
William Faulkner arrives in Los Angeles for first of many sojourns as screenwriter.
**Chronology**

1933  
James M. Cain’s “Paradise,” an essay about Los Angeles, published in *American Mercury.*  
Long Beach earthquake kills one hundred.

1934  
James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice.*  
Upton Sinclair runs unsuccessfully for governor as candidate of the EPIC (End Poverty in California) Party.  
Los Angeles Science Fiction Society founded.

1935  
Horace McCoy, *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?*  
Nathanael West settles in Los Angeles after an earlier trip in 1933.  
Griffith Observatory opens.

1936  
Jet Propulsion Laboratory founded at Caltech.

1937  
Aldous Huxley, on a speaking tour in California, decides to remain in Los Angeles.  
California’s “Anti-Okie” law provides that “Every person, firm or corporation, or officer or agent thereof that brings or assists in bringing into the State any indigent person who is not a resident of the State, knowing him to be an indigent person, is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

1938  
Ray Bradbury’s first science fiction stories published.

1939  
Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep.*  
John Fante, *Ask the Dust.*  
Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan.*  
Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust.*

1940  
Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely.*  
LA aqueduct system extended to bring water from the Mono Basin.  
Arroyo Seco Parkway (Pasadena Freeway) completed, first freeway in the West.  
Population: City 1,504,277; County 2,785,643.

1941  
Second Great Migration brings African Americans to Los Angeles in large numbers; Watts becomes predominantly African American.

1941  
James M. Cain, *Mildred Pierce.*  
Budd Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*
Bertolt Brecht, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer arrive in Los Angeles.
Colorado River Aqueduct completed.

1942
Thomas Mann moves to Pacific Palisades.
“Sleepy Lagoon Murder.” Discovery of the body of José Diaz at Sleepy Lagoon reservoir leads to arrest of more than 600 Latino youths and trial of twenty-two. Three convicted of first-degree murder, nine of second-degree murder, and five of assault; all convictions reversed on appeal.
Executive Order 9066 decrees that all Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals be evacuated from the West Coast.
Bracero Program establishes temporary worker status for Mexican laborers in the Southwestern United States.

1943
James M. Cain, Double Indemnity.
Pachuco (or Zoot Suit) Riots.
Magnuson Act repeals Chinese Exclusion Laws.
Long Beach Naval Shipyard established.

1944
Serviceman’s Readjustment Act passed, will help fuel postwar housing purchases.

1945
Chester Himes, If He Hollers Let Him Go.

1946
Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country: An Island on the Land.
Carlos Bulosan, America Is in the Heart.

1947
Hollywood Ten refuse to testify before House Committee on Un-American Affairs.
Black Dahlia murder case.
Evelyn Waugh comes to Hollywood to explore a film version of Brideshead Revisited; the film is not made, but Waugh uses the experience to write The Loved One, published the next year.
First Los Angeles television station, KTLA, goes on the air.
Federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirms Mendez v. Westminster (California) School District case that outlaws segregation of Mexican and Mexican-American students.

1948
Paramount Decision ends the studio system that enabled movie studios to control production and distribution.
Chronology

1949  Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence*.

1950  *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder).
      Mattachine Society founded in Los Angeles; oldest US homophile association.
      Population: City 1,970,358; County 4,151,687.

1950  Beat poets in Venice.

1953  Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*.
      El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Monument dedicated.

1954  *Dragnet* (Jack Webb).

      *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray).
      Disneyland opens in Anaheim.


1958  Allen Ginsberg reading hosted by the editors of *Coastlines* magazine.
      Brooklyn Dodgers’ first season in Los Angeles, where they play in the LA Coliseum.

1959  José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho*.
      *The Crimson Kimono* (Samuel Fuller).

1960  Otis Chandler becomes *Los Angeles Times* publisher and makes it a major newspaper; he will be the final publisher from the Otis-Chandler family.
      Population: City 2,479,015; County, 6,038,771.

1961  Closure of the Los Angeles–Long Beach line marks the end of electric streetcar service in Los Angeles.

1962  The Beach Boys formed.
      Opening of Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine, formerly a Mexican American barrio.
      Cesar Chavez organizes the National Farm Workers Association.

      *Beach Party* (William Asher).
December 14: Baldwin Hills dam bursts; 277 homes lost and five deaths.

1964
Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man*.
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion opens as home of Los Angeles Philharmonic; first element of the Los Angeles Music Center.
Los Angeles becomes second most populous city in the United States.
Bracero Program ends.
Urban League survey ranks Los Angeles as the most desirable city for African Americans to live in.

1965
*Beach Blanket Bingo* (William Asher).
Los Angeles County Museum of Art opens.
Immigration Act of 1965 shifts sources of immigration to Asia and Latin America.
August 11. Watts Rebellion begins after California Highway Patrol stops Marquette Frye, an African American said to be driving erratically. As the officer questions Frye and his brother, a crowd gathers and a struggle ensues. Police arrest the Frye brothers and their mother, who is also present. The riots last for five more days.
September. Watts Writers’ Workshop founded.

1966
Alison Lurie, *The Nowhere City*.
*The Wild Angels* (Roger Corman, 1966) initiates the biker movie genre.
John Martin founds Black Sparrow Press.
Kwanzaa created in Los Angeles by Maulana (Ron) Karenga.
May 7. LAPD stop Leonard Deadwyler, a black motorist, for speeding and running stoplights as he rushes his pregnant wife to the County hospital. Police say he acted erratically during the stop and is “killed accidentally” by Patrolman Jerold Bova.

1967
Budd Schulberg, ed., *From the Ashes: Voices of Watts*.
*The Graduate* (Mike Nichols).
*The Advocate*, oldest continuing gay publication in the United States, founded as *The Los Angeles Advocate*, a newsletter edited by Dick Michaels and Bill Rand.
Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson Theater open at the Los Angeles Music Center.

1968

Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem.*

George Drury Smith begins publishing *Beyond Baroque;* Beyond Baroque’s readings series begins the next year.

June 5. Robert Kennedy assassinated in the Ambassador Hotel.

1969

Manson Family murders.

1970

Joan Didion, *Play It As It Lays.*

August 29. Chicano Moratorium.

Population: City 2,816,061; County, 7,041,980.

1971

Charles Bukowski, *Post Office.*


*Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (Melvin Van Peebles), initiates the “blaxploitation” genre.

Sylmar (San Fernando Valley) earthquake.

1972


Philip K. Dick moves to Fullerton, in Orange County; moves to Santa Ana in 1976 and dies there March 2, 1982.

1973

Oscar Zeta Acosta, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People.*

Woman’s Building opens (closes 1991).

Tom Bradley becomes Los Angeles’ first African-American mayor.

1974

*Chinatown* (Roman Polanski).

J. Paul Getty Museum opens in Malibu, in a re-creation of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum.

1975

With a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the NewComp Graphics Center at Beyond Baroque offers typesetting services for noncommercial literary publishing.

1977


1978

Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit.*

Proposition 13 passed, limits property-tax revenue, will severely hinder public service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td><em>Blade Runner</em> (Ridley Scott).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>El Norte</em> (Gregory Nava).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Friends of the Los Angeles River, nonprofit environmental group, founded.</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>N. W. A.’s <em>Straight Outta Compton</em> establishes West Coast rap.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Boyz N the Hood</em> (John Singleton). March 3. After a high-speed chase, LAPD beat Rodney King, a black motorist; the beating is captured on video by George Holliday and broadcast on local news.</td>
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Chronology

The Player (Robert Altman). April 29. Riots erupt after four white policemen are found not guilty in beating of Rodney King.


2000 Population: City 3,694,820, of which 46.5 percent are Hispanic, 11.2 percent African American, 10 percent Asian American, 29.7 percent white, and 5.2 percent two or more races. LA County population 9,519,338, of which 44.6 percent are Hispanic, 9.5 percent African American, 10 percent Asian, 31.1 percent white, 4.9 percent two or more races.

2001 *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch).

2002 San Fernando Valley residents narrowly vote to secede from Los Angeles, but citywide the measure fails two-to-one.

2003 Joan Didion, *Where I Was From*. Walt Disney Concert Hall (Frank Gehry, architect) opens in the Los Angeles Music Center as new home of the LA Philharmonic.

2004 *Crash* (Paul Haggis).

2005 Antonio Villaraigosa becomes first Latino mayor of Los Angeles since 1872.

2006 October 26. President George W. Bush signs the Secure Fence Act of 2006 to provide funding for a border fence between the United States and Mexico.