

## Readers' Guide

# *Inlandia: A Literary Journey through California's Inland Empire*

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### Timeline

This outline of notable events will help you understand the voices and events depicted in *Inlandia* in their historical contexts.

- 6000–2000 BCE: The first inhabitants of the inland area are believed to be of the Pinto civilization. They inhabited the area that is now Joshua Tree National Park.
- 200 CE: Wide-ranging migrations occur due to continental drought. The Tongva, or Gabrielinos, come from the Mojave and settle in the Los Angeles basin. From the years 200 to 500 CE, an estimated forty to sixty indigenous villages are established from San Bernardino to Santa Monica.
- 1772: Pedro Fages, Military Commander of California, is the first European man to explore the San Bernardino Valley.
- 1776: Juan Bautista de Anza passes through much of Riverside County in his quest for an overland route from Sonora to Los Angeles.
- 1780s-1790s: In the late eighteenth century, the Spanish mission fathers of San Gabriel, San Juan Capistrano, and San Luis Rey begin colonizing Southern California. The interior valley is used primarily for raising grain and cattle.
- 1803: Members of the San Gabriel Mission cultivate an orange grove, one of the first in the state.
- 1830: Kit Carson traverses the Cajon Pass with his group of trappers, bringing more explorers through the inland region and developing paths for future settlers.
- 1834: Newly independent from Spain, Mexico controls the California territory. The Mexican government deeds land grants to “Californios,” Mexican citizens within this territory.
- 1842: The Lugo family is granted the entire San Bernardino Valley, land spanning roughly 37,700 acres. The Lugos remain at the center of numerous legal battles as disputes

- over land rights and feuding Californios and Americans become common themes in the area.
- 1846: The United States invades Mexico from the east, starting the Mexican-American War. The war ends in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, deeding Alta California, Texas, and New Mexico to the United States in return for \$15 million.
- 1850-90: Land disputes constantly arise between Native Americans and new settlers. Originally told they would be able to keep their land, Native Americans are systematically stripped of their property through a series of “treaties.”
- 1851: Mormons settle inland area as Americans. San Bernardino is formed as a strict temperance settlement but fast becomes a tough town after Brigham Young recalls his Mormon following to Salt Lake City in 1857.
- 1853: San Bernardino County is formed, cut from parts of Los Angeles, San Diego, and Mariposa Counties. The county of San Bernardino is the largest in California, spanning 23,476 square miles, none of which is coastal.
- 1854: The first stagecoaches connect Los Angeles to the San Bernardino Valley.
- 1860: Gold is discovered in Holcomb and Bear valleys, and within a decade, silver will be mined at Ivanpah, initiating the Inland Empire’s very own gold rush. The area’s population and economy boom.
- 1866: A massacre of the Serrano tribe, native to the region, occurs at the hands of the San Bernardino militia. With the 1891 passage of the Act for Relief for Mission Indians, the San Manuel reservation was established and its tribal members recognized as sovereign by the U.S. government.
- 1870: Eliza Tibbets of Riverside, California, plants the first navel orange tree in her backyard; by 1882 there are almost a half million orange trees in the area.
- 1883: Helen Hunt Jackson comes to the San Jacinto Valley to gather material on the Sobobas, a group of Mission Indians living on the east side of the San Jacinto River. Their struggles motivate her to write *Ramona* and *A Century of Dishonor*, exposing the plight of Native Americans in the West.
- 1892: Perris Indian High School, the first off-reservation Indian Boarding School in California, is established. Due to inadequate water supply, the school moves to Riverside in 1902 and is renamed Sherman Indian High School.
- 1893: Riverside County is formed. Split from San Bernardino County, it is one of the wealthiest cities per capita, largely due to the economic success of orange growing in the region.

- 1893: Racial tensions culminate and an arsonist sets fire to a heavily Chinese area of Riverside. Anti-immigration and anti-Chinese rallies take place in Redlands and San Bernardino.
- 1902: Frank Miller builds the Mission Inn in Riverside, California, now a national historic landmark.
- 1905: Heavy floodwaters breach the Colorado River dam, ultimately flooding the Salton Basin. The newly formed Salton Sea becomes the home for diverse avian and aquatic populations.
- 1909: A posse led by a local sheriff tracks “Willie Boy,” a Southern California Indian accused of murder and kidnapping, across Riverside and San Bernardino counties. His tale gets widespread media attention and becomes the center of heated debate, inspiring the novel *Willie Boy: A Desert Man Hunt* (1960) by Harry Lawton and the movie *Tell Them Willie Boy Was Here* (1969) starring Robert Redford. Historians James Sandos and Larry Burgess closely examine the events and subsequent interpretations of events in their *The Hunt for Willie Boy: Indian Hating and Popular Culture* (1994).
- 1915: Japanese immigrant Jukichi Harada purchases a house in Riverside under the names of his American-born children. Neighbors claim it is a violation of the California Alien Land Law, which barred aliens ineligible from citizenship from owning land, but the Supreme Court rules in favor of the Haradas in *The People of the State of California vs. Jukichi Harada*.
- 1923: The Ramona Pageant, an outdoor play adapted from Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 novel, *Ramona*, begins its run in Hemet, CA. Staged every year since inception and featuring over 400 cast members, The Ramona Pageant remains the longest-running and largest outdoor play in the United States.
- 1930s: Palm Springs becomes one of the most famous and popular resort destinations in the world, attracting celebrities like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Lucille Ball, and Greta Garbo.
- 1931–39: Droughts, coupled with poor farming practices, result in the westward migration of hundreds of thousands of people in the “Dust Bowl.”
- 1936: Joshua Tree is declared a National Monument. It became a U.S. National Park in 1994.
- 1938: Route 66 is completed in 1938, linking Chicago, IL and Los Angeles, CA. Immortalized in Steinbeck’s 1940 *The Grapes of Wrath*, the highway becomes part of California immigration history.
- 1940: President Franklin Roosevelt establishes the Mojave Anti-Aircraft Range near Barstow, California, now part of Fort Irwin, a major training area for the US Army.

- 1942: Fontana is selected as a site for Kaiser Steel, the only integrated steel complex on the Pacific Slope. Employing thousands of workers, the company's closing in 1983 devastates the city's economy.
- 1942: The U.S. and Mexican governments institute the Bracero Program, allowing Mexican laborers to work in the United States. Despite becoming the foundation of the extremely successful U.S. agricultural industry, braceros remain one of the most exploited labor groups today.
- 1943: Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, an airborne weapons testing and training range operated by the US Navy, is established in the northwestern corner of San Bernardino County.
- 1948: Richard and Maurice McDonald covert their restaurant in San Bernardino to a fast food restaurant, the first McDonald's.
- 1949: Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, now the world's largest Marine base, is established.
- 1960s: Gang violence escalates in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.
- 1963: The United Farm Workers union organizes, mobilizing farm workers of the inland area. In 1970, the UFW makes a major breakthrough when it persuades the largest Coachella valley grape grower, John Guimara Sr., to sign with the newly established union.
- 1964: The San Bernardino Freeway (the 60-mile segment of Interstate 10 from Los Angeles and San Bernardino) is formed from US 60.
- Early 1970s: Nation-wide oil shortages create need for alternative sources of energy, and there the electric windmill reemerges. Today, one of the three major "windfarms" in California is located on the eastern slope of San Geronio Pass and can be seen from I-10.
- 1994: The Northridge quake strikes the San Fernando Valley. The 6.7-magnitude earthquake produces the strongest ground motions ever instrumentally recorded in an urban setting in North America. The greater Los Angeles and inland area suffer widespread damage.
- 1994: Mojave National Preserve is established, and Joshua Tree is named a National Park.
- 1999: Over \$3 billion in water projects go under construction in the inland area.
- 2003: Wildfires in Southern California, including parts of the Inland Empire, burn through over 700,000 acres.
- 2004: The Environmental Protection Agency announces that the San Bernardino–Riverside area has the worst particulate air pollution in the United States.

2005: The population of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties swells to almost 3,500,000 and is expected to double in the next ten years.

### Questions to Discuss

1. What role does immigration play in the stories within *Inlandia*? How are immigrants, as well as their plights, depicted?
2. What passages within *Inlandia* reflect California as a whole? the Inland area specifically? How might some pieces, such as “Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream,” seem both unique to the San Bernardino Valley area and more universal?
3. Inland California is often thought of as a nothing more than a downtrodden suburb of the more glamorous Los Angeles area. How do elements of *Inlandia* contradict this? How might they reinforce it?
4. The Inland Empire is home to a vast array of landscape, from fertile orange groves to arid deserts. How do the selection of various pieces of literature reflect the different landscapes within the “Inland Empire?”
5. How does the industrial landscape compare and contrast with the natural landscape throughout the anthology? Where in the collection is industrialization seen as an opportunity for growth? an agent of decay?
6. *Inlandia* is assembled chronologically. How does the combination of historic account and contemporary writings about historic events affect a reader’s perspective on the area and its history?
7. Stories of crime and conflict run throughout *Inlandia*. How are just and moral actions depicted? How is the view of law enforcement similar or different to that of justice?
8. *Inlandia* opens with Native American stories of both worldly and regional creation. How might these Native American perspectives inform other parts of the collection? In what ways does the Native American experience appear throughout *Inlandia*?
9. How do ideas of spirituality compare to those of religion among the different texts?
10. How does Inland California age throughout the anthology? What do you think its future holds?