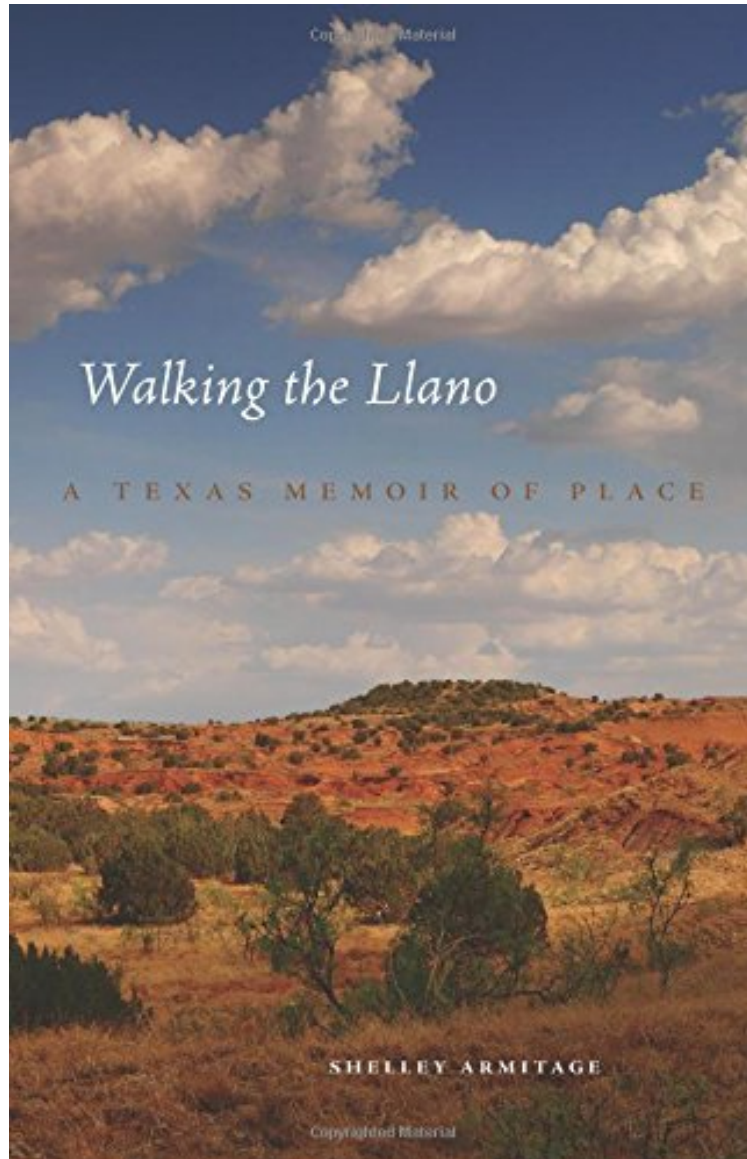


[FREE] Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place

## Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place

*Shelley Armitage*

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**Shelley Armitage : Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Walking the Llano: A Texas Memoir of Place:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Walk to RememberBy CustomerWhen you see yourself as part of a story, then youre really living, Shelley Armitage writes. The lucky reader of her Walking the Llano: A Memoir of Place experiences really living the discoveries of springs, creeks, canyons, ridges, bison trails, eagle nests, deer,

petroglyphs, colorful rural folk, and more. Armitage invites the reader to come along on her memory excursions and her present-day walks, to discover the land in a way only the most observant and most mindful walker on the earth might. The land Armitage grew up on is part of the Llano Estacado, so named by the Spanish who explored the grassy High Plains region of North America centuries ago. In literally walking the land between Vega, Texas and the Canadian River some 30 miles to the north, a walk that took place in numerous excursions over a period of time, she seamlessly weaves together an intricate pattern of histories—geological, archaeological, ancient and modern human history, wildlife, and plant life of the region, along with anecdotes of the writer's own personal experiences growing up there. Along the way readers meet the many peoples who participated in the clash of cultures on the Llano, including ancient humans, Spanish and Mexican explorers and residents, farmers with their water diversion techniques, ranchers with their fences, and oil producers—all of whom bring changes to the land. Many of those changes appear to be irreversible. All in all, this is a breathtakingly comprehensive tour of a place, its waters, the many peoples who have populated it, and of the animals and plants that have and do live within. Armitage speaks of her deep relationship with all these elements as part of a sacred mystery and of the experience of interrelationship with all. There are some nice surprises in the later portions of the book. And, as with many memoirs, the reader comes to know, respect, and like this writer, and her family and neighbors as her stories unfold. Like so many experiences, this book gets better as you move into it, through it, and with it right along with its walker/author. Reading it is an experience not to be missed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A friend recommended Shelly Armitage's *Walking the Llano* By Karen Stevenson A friend recommended Shelley Armitage's *Walking the Llano*. When it arrived, I hurried through it. Armitage writes beautifully, eloquently, and with each page, I wanted more, so I read it again, more slowly. Armitage sometimes so fully dissolves into the land's larger stories that the book becomes more than her memoir of place, it becomes a sort of field guide to living within a landscape. Her particular landscape is the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plain, where a straight-edged prairie horizon connects sky to earth and a river carved canyons and arroyos. Driving I-40, Armitage's place is outside of Vega, just west of Amarillo. My family always hurried through on our way to somewhere else, but in our hurry, we missed so much. It's a place of tribal wars and winter camps, arrowheads and grinding pits, storms and drought, oil and wind turbines, mesquites and snakes, and her family—her mother, her brother, her father—and friends. Armitage deftly weaves human and natural histories with her own experience of the place, and gives the flat lands breaks and draws new shape, depth, and life. Read it for her extraordinary prose and hope that her deep love of the land and its stories spills over onto you too. Five stars. Easy.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Walk with a Perceptive Writer By Susan A beautifully written and thoughtful description of the plains area of Texas, in the Panhandle, where the author's family owned a farm and lived. We experience Armitage's relationship with the land, the changes brought by developments such as the wind turbines that now dot the landscape, and feel regret at the "modernization". When Armitage describes her walks in the llano, we can feel as though we are walking along by her side. It's an interesting book about an area of Texas little known and worth becoming better acquainted with.

When American explorers crossed the Texas Panhandle, they dubbed it part of the Great American Desert. A sea of grass, the llano appeared empty, flat, and barely habitable. Contemporary developments—cell phone towers, oil rigs, and wind turbines—have only added to this stereotype. Yet in this lyrical ecomemoir, Shelley Armitage charts a unique rediscovery of the largely unknown land, a journey at once deeply personal and far-reaching in its exploration of the connections between memory, spirit, and place. Armitage begins her narrative with the intention to walk the llano from her family farm thirty meandering miles along the Middle Alamosa Creek to the Canadian River. Along the way, she seeks the connection between her father and one of the area's first settlers, Ysabel Gurule, who built his dugout on the banks of the Canadian. Armitage, who grew up nearby in the small town of Vega, finds this act of walking inseparable from the act of listening and writing. What does the land say to us? she asks as she witnesses human alterations to the landscape—perhaps most catastrophic the continued drainage of the land's most precious resource, the Ogallala Aquifer. Yet the llanos wonders persist: dynamic mesas and canyons, vast flora and fauna, diverse wildlife, rich histories. Armitage recovers the voices of ancient, Native, and Hispano peoples, their stories interwoven with her own: her father's legacy, her mother's decline, a brother's love. The llano holds not only the beauty of ecological surprises but a renewed realization of kinship in a world ever changing. Reminiscent of the work of Terry Tempest Williams and John McPhee, *Walking the Llano* is both a celebration of an oft-overlooked region and a soaring testimony to the power of the landscape to draw us into greater understanding of ourselves and others by experiencing a deeper connection with the places we inhabit.

In *Walking the Llano*, Shelley Armitage does for the Staked Plains what John McPhee did for the Northern Plains in *Rising from the Plains*. She carefully mines the history, character, and geology of the Llano Estacado and combines it with a compelling personal narrative to create an account that flows with lyricism, authenticity, and wisdom. A splendid and clear-eyed book. Nancy Curtis, coeditor of *Leaning into the Wind: Women Write from the Heart of the*

West