



Texas Rifles

Elmer Kelton

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The new Confederacy, facing into the Union cannon, had too much on its hands to send troops to the Texas frontier to hold back the Indians. Instead, it authorized the State of Texas to raise its own troops.

Many kinds of men drifted into the Texas Mounted Rifles. Some thought it might be safer than fighting in far off Virginia. Many were merely young men a-thirst for adventure. Some were settlers who saw this as the best way to protect their families and homes against the murderous thrusts of the Comanche. And some were men who still loved the Union, who had lived too long under that gallant flag to turn their guns against it now. Such a man was Scout Sam Houston Cloud...

Texas Rifles Details

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Author : Elmer Kelton

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From Reader Review Texas Rifles for online ebook

Craig Anderson says

Kelton is becoming a favorite western novelist of mine. A nice plot, character development and social commentary for this genre.

Patricia says

This book was racist.

Exanimis says

I haven't read many westerns but of those I have read I have noticed something, westerns are, in a way, romance novels for men. I find this to be truly amazing and have to admit that I am enjoying them a lot. We read this story from the point of Sam Houston Cloud who joins a confederate troop called the Texas Rifles, not to fight the union but to fight the Comanche who are raiding and killing throughout west Texas. We meet a wide variety of people along the way with their own opinions, likes and dislikes that don't always blend. Riding with the Rifles, Cloud believes he is ready for anything that comes along, anything that is until he meets Easter.

Westerns are pure fun to me, they are a break from the hardness and violence of so many novels. Sure there is violence but it seems to be something that can't be avoided not the main purpose for every action.

Nathan Beck says

Kelton has become my favorite western writer. This is one of his early works and written in 1960 it definitely has a 50's feel to it, but truly a good saga.

Adam says

When I was in high school and reading a lot of Louis L'Amour novels, I heard somewhere that Elmer Kelton was an even better western writer.

After (finally) reading one of his books, the jury's still out, but there's no question that he's a fine storyteller and a good prose stylist.

Texas Rifles takes place in 1861. The Texas Mounted Rifles, which are a precursor to the Texas Rangers, are making the frontier safe for settlers by warring against the Comanche. Or at least they're trying. They're a small outfit, led by a hard, unbending captain named Barcroft. They're also an uneasy mix of Unionists, Confederate loyalists, and Texans with no interest in fighting in the War Between the States.

Cloud is a member of this last group. He dislikes Barcroft, but knows he doesn't have another choice, and

figures serving with the Rifles and fighting the Comanches is better than serving in the Confederacy and fighting the Yankees.

However, when the Rifles discover a white woman named Easter who was kidnapped by the Comanches as a young girl and forced to take a husband, Barcroft takes her back with them, but forces her to leave her half-Comanche baby behind.

This inhuman action sickens Cloud, but there's little he can do.

Like all good storytellers, though, Kelton adds layers to Barcroft's character as the novel goes on, and while he never becomes fully likable, he does grow to be sympathetic.

Texas Rifles is a bloody novel, but never gratuitous. Kelton writes good dialogue, well-crafted prose, and is able to describe the west lovingly without ever lapsing into Zane Grey-style hysterics.

Texas Rifles isn't a great novel, but it's a good one, and the next time I feel like reading a western I'll probably pick up one by Kelton.

Melody says

There was some swearing, but overall my family really enjoyed it!

Heath Lowrance says

Sam Houston Cloud wants no part of the War Between the States, and so joins up instead with the Texas Rifles, fighting Comanches in the wide open scrub prairies of North Texas. Serving under a captain made bitter by the loss of his daughter to Indian raiders, Cloud makes new friends, battles for his life against Comanches and a hostile land, and falls in love with a white woman raised as an Indian.

There's a lot to like about this novel. The characters are finely drawn and there's just enough realism to keep you invested in the story. The action sequences are excellent. To a modern reader, the attitudes about Indians can be jarring; the savagery of the Comanche is highlighted and the white settlers are portrayed as innocent souls merely protecting their homes. The reality, of course, is far more complicated. But to Kelton's credit, he presents in TEXAS RIFLES characters who behave and think in ways that are consistent with their time and place. If you can accept that, you'll no doubt enjoy the hell out of this book.

Jeff says

Texas Rifles (1960) This is a strong (can't say I've read a truly weak one) Elmer Kelton western novel about the Texas Mounted Rifles in the Comanche wars in 1861. He distinguishes here between the Rifles and the Rangers and, elsewhere, the State Police. But the difference between the Rifles and the Rangers seems negligible. The same tension between secessionists, Unionists, and non-interventionists he describes in his Texas Ranger trilogy is at play here, as is the reality of the frontline between Texan pioneers and Comanches. He seems to strive for realism and objectivity and seems to pull it off. Sam Houston Cloud is a young scout for the Rifle here and as such is on the front line. The ending battle with Comanches is vividly

and heartbreakingly rendered, and the denouement has an emotional punch that shouldn't have surprised me but certainly surprisingly affected me. This is still within the formula western but way more realistic than most genre pieces manage to get.
