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High school: The Natalie Merchant's song Gold Rush Brides The Natalie Merchant's song Gold Rush Brides reminds us of the majesty and the beauty of the American West. Despite all the beauty at the time, the song reveals that it was only men who enjoyed the freedom and all the privileges of the Wild West. Women underwent horrendous hardship and struggle as gold rush brides and homestead wives. The song's lyrics indicate that women in the West at the time suffered from childbirth, yellow fever, loneliness, grief, the deaths of their husbands and even sometimes madness.

The lyrics further recall that the land out West was free, but they had to pay with their lives. The point that the song makes in the line is that the Old American West offered many opportunities, but the opportunities came at a very hefty price. The song emphasizes a very complex reality in which the Wild West people lived. A condition fraught with tragedy, hardship, and risk. In such situations, there were no happy endings but people still continued to press on through sheer grit.

According to Barman, 2007, the dominant cultural understanding of the Wild West portrays the vision of a land that lent itself to settlements and a simple context of Indians versus cowboys. It shows that Americans Westerns reduced all their plots line to line.

The West was for all purposes and intent an uncivilized wilderness that lacked the amenities and the comfort of the civilized East. As the song lyrics put it, the women in the West suffered through childbirth, the death of their husbands, yellow fever, and even madness. Despite the land out West being free, women had to pay for it with their lives.

### Works Cited

Barman, Jean. *The West beyond the West: a history of British Columbia*.  
University of Toronto Press, 2007.