

Compare the book  
the californios by  
l'amour louis to the  
actual history of the  
ca...

[History](#)



of Lecturer 22 September, *The Californios* by Louis L'Amour and History Literature serves, in many ways, as the mirror of the society. It reflects not only the present but also the past and even the future. However, as far as reflecting real life is concerned, literature is not expected to be a photographic representation. Depending on the discretion of the author, they have the right to reflect whatever angle they are comfortable with. This is exactly what Louis L'Amour does in his novel, *The Californios*. The narrative style adopted in the novel is solely as a result of his discretion because there are a number of other ways in which the story could have been written. Taken from an aspect of the American history which particularly had to do with the discovery of gold in California and its resultant effects, *The Californios* chooses to reflect on the craze for wealth (symbolized by gold) through the eyes of a particular family, the Mulkerin. In contrast, the actual history concerns more than just one family. One of the reasons L'Amour may give in defense of the manner in which he depicts the rush for gold is perhaps his desire to reflect the incident from a perspective that is personal (using individual characters in a family), rather than general. In the same light, L'Amour creates a plot that has to do with the ownership of land and how some individuals, solely because they want to acquire material things, want to override them. History records that the period when gold was discovered in California accounts for the greatest migration in the American history. "Men do not learn from history. Each generation believes itself brighter than the last, each believes it can survive the mistakes of the older ones" L'Amour (74-75) During the period, over two hundred thousand people migrated to supposedly acquire their own portion of the newly discovered

gold and farm of the arable land. One of the other similarities between L'Amour's *The Californios* and the real story as provided by history is that as a result of the mass migration into California, the place which was just a pastoral province get transformed into an urban city. " His life in the mountains, the desert, and at sea had sharpened his senses until alertness was a way of life." (L'Amour 57). This in fact helped in the upgrade of the province into a full-fledged state. This transformation is also reflected in the novel. As expected when more people inhabit a place, there are bound to be people of different characters. This was exactly what happened during the period of the gold rush. In pursuit of fortune, rogues and hooligans found their way into the land. Ironically, the people who mainly suffered the consequence of the entrance of such people with dubious characters into the land are the original land owners. This is what the history that we all know tells us. Similarly, in *The Californios*, the readers experience the inordinate demeanors of the intruder first-hand. As espoused in the text, the character that is chief as far as inordinate ambition and cunning behavior is concerned is Zeke Wooston. As a character, Wooston had always been fraudulent. The only difference between the Wooston in Malibu and Wooston outside is that while outside Malibu, he came out straight to reveal his true character. On the other hand, in Malibu, he comes under the guise of doing a legitimate business. All these (the story told in *The Californios* and the actual story of the gold rush), as regards the migration of many people into California, reminds one of the true story of how the United States was started. United States was started mainly by crooks and people who had generally been rejected in England. The expertise that was brought to the fore of the

narration of *The Californios* deserves to be commended. It is well known that literature may also serve the purpose of documenting how things were at a particular point in history in a particular place. With the manner in which the story is narrated, if one wants to take a look into what the society looked like in the mid 19th century, *The Californios* would serve as a very useful guide. It begins initially by intimating the readers with the fact that before the discovery of gold in the land, Malibu was a rural, largely uninhabited amazing landscape with many magnificent gifts of nature. Whilst describing Malibu in a way that provides enough insight into life during the 19th century, *The Californios* also makes efforts to reflect the present state of the society. For example, after the mass immigration, one almost gets a graphic representation of how advanced the present Californian society was during the author—a reflection of the advanced and posh state it is now. Yet, after taking a close look at the novel, one would realize that L'Amour teaches more about the 19th Century California than about his own time. As a piece of literature, *The Californios*, is bound to have different interpretations. The story itself may have been influenced by the desire of L'Amour to reflect his personal interpretation of land ownership in California, particularly as capitalism had reigned supreme in the California of his days. The side one supports would largely depend on one's point of view. Whether the story told in *The Californios* is pleasing or not is dependent, for the most part, on the perspective and orientation of the person in question. From a relatively objective point of view, one may posit that besides the fact that the story told in the novel is a reflection of what an individual, the author of the novel, feel; it has been able to re-create from an incident that actually happened in

California, howbeit fictional. However, if one is, for instance, from the generation of any of the original inhabitants (original owners) of the land, one may get hurt because of the fact that one is likely to feel cheated. Generally, one is supposed to always remember, no matter what one interprets, that more than anything else, *The Californios* by L'Amour is fictional. Work Cited L'Amour, Louis. *The Californios*. New York: Random House. 1974. Print