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Texas attorney and former Texas Ranger Billy Bob Holland has many secrets in his dark past. Among them is Vernon Smothers' son Lucas, a teenaged boy about whom only Vernon and Billy Bob know the truth. Lucas is really Billy Bob's illegitimate son, and when Lucas is arrested for murder, Billy Bob knows that he has no choice but to confront the past and serve as the boy's criminal attorney. During Lucas's trial, Billy Bob realizes that he will have to bring injury upon Lucas as well as himself in order to save his son. And as a result, Billy Bob creates enemies that are far more dangerous than any he had faced as a Texas Ranger.

Cimarron Rose Details

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From Reader Review Cimarron Rose for online ebook

Derek Rutherford says

Always enjoy JLB's books. There are few writers who write so beautifully whilst inhabiting the hard-boiled crime genre. I'm looking forward to the next in this series.

David says

The first thing I want to say is that Burke's writing is BEAUTIFUL. It is full of wonderful prose and imagery and you can almost smell the flora, hear the fauna, and feel the history. Even if you hate the plot or dislike the characters, I think you will be drawn in by his skilled writing.

Billy Bob Holland is an enigma. Obviously, his psyche is terribly scared by the guilt he feels over his friend, L.Q. Navarro. The author allows the reader to decide if the appearances of the long-dead L.Q. Navarro are hauntings, extreme psychological hallucinations, or simply a thought process that Holland uses by imagining what L.Q. would say about his present circumstances. Holland is doing his best to lead a non-violent life, but obviously in this series, he is unable to do so as he keeps getting drawn into. This is pretty much the same with all of Burke's heroes. They are all men who are scarred and hurt by violence.

I thoroughly enjoyed the grandfather's journal that Holland kept going back to and reading. I guess I am a bit dense because I just didn't see how it tied into Holland's present circumstances except that his grandfather felt pushed/compelled to a violent act to deal with evil men and Holland was feeling the same pressure. The one complaint is that the grandfather's prose was a perfect match for the rest of the novel and it should have differed in tone and style. Still, I would love it if Burke was to write the grandfather's journal as a stand alone novel. I mean, that was, in many ways, the best part of the novel.

And it is only after reading this that I discover it is the FIRST of the Billy Bob Holland novels..

A great deal of this novel is spent, like so many modern novels, and almost every Burke novel I have read to doate, in bluster and threats. There are a number of verbal confrontations where characters tell each other that they better watch their backs. Even the new sheriff offers threatening verbiage towards Holland. Everybody threatens everybody or warns Billy Bob about what a bad character that Moon is and how much danger he is in. I get so tired of either Billy Bob or in the other series, Dave, seeing some guy driving out to his place to mkae threats, or some strange character at the back of his property. There is such repetition of this angle in Burke's novels as to be annoying. "There's a strange man down at the fishing hole!" Or "There's some strangers sitting on the dock" -- or "I saw a figure slip under the wire on the backside of the property.. maybe he was just stealing watermelons." Those aren't real quotes, but in almost every Burke novel there are multiple incidents like that.

Even with those complaints.. Burke's ability to portray a southern culture, a southern history, a southern FEEL to his novels, is so compelling as to keep me reading them. I won't give up on Burke simply because his descriptive style is so real and the imagery is so vivid.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I've seen Burke praised for his wonderful style. I know an acquiring editor who gave Burke as an example of the best in terms of line-by-line writing, and if you look inside the covers of his books, you'll see him praised as the epitome of hard-boiled detective fiction. I think my problem with him is I really don't *like* hard-boiled fiction.

My first try was *Neon Rain*, the first Dave Robicheaux book, and I didn't like the book or the hero at all--only read about 60 pages before dropping it, because I don't find attractive the kind of testosterone-laden fic where police officers use their fists rather than their brain to get information out of suspects--Mike Hammer vigilante types do not charm me. Despite that Billy Bob Holland is possibly even worse than Robicheaux in that regard, I did find him more sympathetic, which is probably why I got further into this book. At least when Holland does get violent and takes the law into his own hands, he does so with style. *thinks of a certain scene with a horse ridden into a saloon and a bad guy lassoed* I think the other reason I liked Holland more is because the stakes are so personal. Holland is a lawyer in a small Texas town and a former Texas Ranger haunted (literally more or less) by his dead partner, L.Q. Navarro. The mystery Holland's trying to solve involves his own unacknowledged son, conceived from an adulterous relationship, Lucas Smothers, accused of rape and murder. There are even (more than one!) strong female characters.

However, I don't intend to keep this book on my bookshelf or try more James Lee Burke after this. I think it's that, given I don't care for the grittiness of noir, you really, really have to charm me to keep me reading. Dennis Lehane does that with his Patrick Kenzie series despite it also falling into the hard-boiled genre. Kenzie is such a wise ass, I enjoy the journey, the actual narration, and I love the chemistry between him and his partner Angie. Because of that, I can take the sordidness, the cynicism of the corrupt, violent world they navigate. Holland doesn't have as engaging a voice so that I want to follow him further, and more than once he struck me as too-stupid-to-live. That, and testosterone poisoning, is a deal breaker for me. This is a better than average mystery in terms of its prose writing, but it doesn't have the turns of plot or engaging characters to push it to really memorable for me.

Jim says

Anyone who reads Burke's Robicheaux series will immediately recognize the numerous similarities in style, dialogue, and plot. There are so many elements reincarnated, right down to phrases that are plucked from one series and plopped down in this book. "Take the okra out of your mouth", for instance; how many times have you heard that in a Burke book, usually as mashed potatoes or marbles. I have commented on Burke's proclivity to do this, so I won't beat it to death. But he also repeatedly included information on certain details (the morgue Beau, the car in river), as if he thinks his readership is not bright enough to remember his having mentioned it already. Does that mean I hate this book? Goodness no. Burke's storytelling is above average and thoroughly enjoyable, even for nitpickers such as myself. I like his characters, even if I already know how they will react in certain situations. One character, Pete, gets it right when he asserts he already knows what Billy Bob is going to say. And those who know me, already know I'll be reading the second book in this series despite myself.

Paul Nelson says

"Sometimes you've got to set people's perspective straight."

Cimarron Rose introduces another member of the Holland clan in Billy Bob Holland, a former Texas Ranger and state prosecutor turned defense lawyer. Billy Bob as with all James Lee Burke characters comes with an honesty tainted with darkness that makes these brooding irresistible forces incredibly powerful and intriguing.

My favourite method of storytelling is by far first person point of view, when done right it puts you in the character, you feel and think what they feel and think and Burke is one of the best exponents on the market. His descriptive prose is both palpable and epic, his heroes touched at times with a heaviness that weighs on the conscience like a relentless shadow or a dishonourable moral judgement

I always highlight a vast amount of quotes when reading Burkes work and I'll leave some dotted through my review as always.

'I could almost see the knotted thoughts in his eyes as he looked for the trap he always found in other people's words.'

Ok to the story, Billy Bob is asked to represent his illegitimate teenage son accused of raping and beating a girlfriend to death, young Lucas remembers nothing and was found in an alcohol fuelled unconscious state in his truck with his pants down.

'The yard seemed filled with shadows that leaped and broke apart and reformed themselves in the wind.'

During his delving our protagonist has to deal with a crazed serial killer with links to his father, a DEA investigation, a crooked Mexican narc and the rich and powerful Vanzandt family whose son is a mixed bag of drugs and trouble. And the ghost of his dead partner, a frequent test on his sanity.

'The resentment in her voice was like a child's, muted, turned inward, resonant with fear.'

Within the story Billy Bob reads from the journal of his great grandfather Sam, a book within a book in which Sam is quite taken with a Native American woman named Jennie, which is the Christian name of the Rose of Cimarron an outlaw legend.

'Her smile was attenuated, wan, a victorious recognition of the assent she had extracted from me. Then I saw it in her eyes. She had already revised him and placed him in the past, assigning him qualities he never had, as the roles of widow and proprietress melded together in her new life.'

Don't get me wrong I thoroughly enjoyed this, I love James Lee Burkes style of writing, seeing through the very soul of your protagonist is exhilarating but I had a few minor issues with the Cimarron Rose. Firstly I couldn't see what the journal of his great grandfather actually added to the story, seemed a bit of an excuse to name drop a few infamous outlaws from the West and the ghost of his partner engaging in conversations and offering advice didn't really do it for me. Finally I don't think Billy Bob Is a defense lawyer, the court room stuff didn't fit in with his persona he's certainly more of a rough and ready law man type.

Still even my least favourite of JLB's so far is easily worth 4 stars.

Also posted at <http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/...>

Lorin Cary says

This is not your typical legal thriller although a trial is at the center of the story. Burke divulges the past of Texas attorney Billy Bob Holland, his protagonist, in snippets. Memories of his past actions dance with excerpts from his grandfather's diary. A love story sub plot blends with several others and provide tension. You'll have to read the book to see what I mean.

Kate says

I believe this to be one of James Lee Burke's best and it is one of my favourites.

Billy Bob Holland, a former Texas Ranger and now an attorney defines what a father will sacrifice to save his son.

A tale of class warfare and the dismissive arrogance of wealth and power interwoven with murder and the diary of Billy Bob's Grandfather, Sam Morgan Holland, that tells of Sam's love for a woman that saves his soul.

A book of great violence and very great beauty.

Marti says

This was the last James Lee Burke book in our nearby library, so now we'll have to look for more in book sales, or hope that he writes more as well. I think that addiction to books is certainly a better one than addiction to drugs, or smoking. This one from 1997 is from the Billy Bob Holland series, where he lives near Deaf Smith, Texas and is an attorney. He likes to read the diary of his grandfather, and the title refers to the woman friend of the grandfather. Billy Bob himself fathered an illegitimate son, whom he ends up defending in a murder trial, the boy being railroaded. There is another love interest besides Temple Carrol, and the usual sex and violence.

Cathy DuPont says

Just discovering James Lee Burke more than a year ago, I was elated to see there were so many books to read. He's been writing since the 1980's. Fortunately I don't mind discovering a writer who has so many books written which I haven't read because it gives me a list, sometimes as in this case, a long list of books to read. And read I have, beginning with *The Neon Rain*; I was hooked from there with the Dave Robicheaux series.

Cimarron Rose introduces a new character, Billy Bob Holland and I am so glad to get to know this troubled

but sincere man.

There have been many comparisons between the two protagonists but I choose to look at them as individuals which they are. There are some similarities, of course, the biggest being a struggle to live a good life and doing the right thing after having so many personal misfortunes. However, there are many people we know throughout our lives, friends and relatives who have suffered setbacks so these two characters having similar misfortunes does not bother me at all.

Burke's writing is not for everyone. If you enjoy light, breezy dialogue with little intrigue, skip Burke's books. However, if you enjoy words that dance off the page, scenes described with words that bring the surroundings to life and allows you to breathe in the smell of the land, Burke's writing is for you.

I found myself re-reading some paragraphs because I wanted to make sure that I got every nuance of his writing. I wanted to make sure that I understood completely what was going on in each and every scene which seemed to fill a page or page and a half chocked full of descriptive language. There was action from beginning to end. That's my kind of book.

So many reviews have been written about the multiple storylines that another one is simply not needed. However, let it be said that Burke has a strong opinion about the 'haves and have nots' and is willing for his characters to stake their reputation on giving the underdogs a chance at having a good life, doing whatever is needed.

I feel that I have learned so much about living right from reading Burke. He's become much more than simply time spent reading, entertainment to me. While Burke's writing has indeed entertained, his lessons about living without being preachy, are woven throughout his writing. I find the ability of a writer to use the English language so beautifully, even lyrically with creativity, just simply amazing.

Very glad there are so many more Burke novels for me to devour page by page, slowly like drinking a fine wine. This book will be right up there as one of my all time favorites. No doubt.

Mr.B says

I'm a big fan of James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux novels. I consider him among the best prose stylists in American literature. But this novel just didn't grab me like his other series. I don't know, maybe too much cowboy in it. A small-town Texas lawyer, formerly a Texas Ranger, with a haunted past and a confused set of relationships, is called upon to defend his "secret" son, the child of his adulterous affair with the defendant's mother. He is visited regularly and often by the ghost of his former Texas Ranger partner, who dishes out homespun advice and commentary on events and people like a Greek chorus. The plot is about as twisted as any Burke has ever produced; the characters as creepy and as violent as ever. But I just didn't really care. Perhaps the main character's own super-violent nature, rising up in outbursts of Old West vigilantism, is what turned me off. The local constabulary is powerless against the wealthy social gadflies who control the criminal element in the community, and then a homicidal sociopath is unleashed on the town, bringing his own brand of retribution for what he suffered in the community decades earlier. The novel has plenty of sub-plots, including the journal of the main character's great-grandfather, to which the main character turns for regular reading material when his partner's ghost isn't around to engage his attention. Add a going-nowhere romance interest or two and the involvement of federal agencies and a Mexican agent as well, and you've got a town that is about as hyperactive as New York City--with faithful horses besides. Go

back to Dave Robicheaux, James.

Steve says

James Lee Burke is a favorite author and this was one of his best books. His main character always has inner devils that he must deal with and Billy Bob Holland certainly does in this book. There is romance, coming to grips with one's self, action, and a great story line. Burke almost always has his hero go up against the unjust/evil powers that be. In some cases it is crooked people in the justice system, criminals, and/or people with money. He has all in this book.

Worth the read.

Michael Robotham says

Poetic as always although the plot creaked at times. James Lee is always a pleasure to read.

Jennifer says

I purchased this book on the recommendation of a co-worker when I worked for Barnes and Noble. It was his favorite mystery writer and since I was new to the genre and was assigned to pick a mystery book and do a book report on it for the class - I was grateful for the recommendation.

My memories of this book are tied up in the presentation I had to give. It was a tough book to explain! There was a lot going on and trying to explain things like the dead partner of the main character visiting him and getting it across that it DID fit in with the book was a challenge.

It was a good book and I was happy to read it - but I have not read another James Lee Burke since then. Maybe I fear if I read another I will have to stand in front of a classroom and give a 5 minute presentation on it?

Robert French says

Cimarron Rose is the second book by James Lee Burke I have read. I have much to look forward to as I am new to his novels. Wayfaring Stranger was the first book I read, so I am starting to read his books after James Lee Burke has become a very accomplished and polished author. By my count, he has written at least 30 books. I can expect the next two or three years to be very entertaining. Burke's use of language and descriptive turn of phrase is impressive. Sometimes plot matters little as you become so caught up in his writing style and character development.

Other reviewers have commented that the Burke's style can be considered western noir and very dark. When I first started reading Cimarron Rose, my first thoughts were this is not the ranching and oil patch world I know. Obviously the confluence of Mexico and Texas, the corruption and the violence of the drug war is a

different world.

I grew up in the northwest and had uncles that were farmers and ranchers. I also spent a large part of my life in ranching and oil country in northern Alberta. As a young man, even though I was a teacher in a small rural school, I developed a large circle of friends my age who were young ranchers. The roundups and rodeos, the country dances and the large ranch dinners of 15 or 20 cowboys (and the teacher) are some of my best and most precious memories. Soon after I married in Cowtown (Calgary) my wife and I moved north to a small oil patch town. So ranching and the oil patch have definitely been part of my life. As a side comment, my only sibling lives in Dallas, so I have spent time in Texas. That is enough about my background which won't be repeated in the next review of Burke's writing.

I believe I am going to seriously enjoy reading the books of James Lee Burke. The Neon Rain is on order. I have the advantage of starting from the beginning with all his series.

Benjamin Thomas says

Ahhh...the dreaded 3 star rating. For me that is a literal translation of the Goodreads rating system, meaning... "I liked it". I didn't love it and I didn't dislike it, so there you are.

This was my first book by Mr. Burke and I will say, absolutely, I am impressed with his ability to write a scene. Every scene here simply drips with authenticity and style. And his characterization is superb, especially with the protagonist Billy Bob Holland. Talk about a troubled soul. So I have no beef with the author's writing ability; students should sit up and take notes from this guy. So what's my problem? Well, the plot didn't really grab me and the mystery seemed pretty cut and dried. I know when I have a real keeper on my hands...I make excuses to find more time to read it (stay up way too late, call in sick to work, tell my brother I can't be his best man after all, etc.). But with this one I found just the opposite...struggling to keep on reading and not start a different book (actually I did that with three different books before I finished this one). But I kept on trucking because I did want to know how it would come out, and I have a very good Goodreads friend who describes it as the best book he's ever read so I wanted to give it a solid effort. I guess it just goes to show that not all books are meant for all people.

But as my rating suggests, in the end I did "like" it so I haven't given up on the author. I may try his more recognized Dave Robichaux series at some point.

Kathy says

Despite the fact that the hero of this book was a half-crazy and violent man, who fathered at least one illegitimate child & murdered his best friend, I liked this book! Seriously, James Lee Burke has considerable talent in characterization, and his book was filled with people who - unfortunately - seem only too real. The rural youth he depicts not only talk & act like their real-life counterparts, but the small town in which they live is timeless & universal. I was not only sucked into this world, but just as easily into the world of the protagonist's great-grandfather, whom we came to know through his journals.

If I had to find one flaw with the book (as I always feel compelled to do in my reviews!) it would be with the

imagery. Certainly there were some beautiful word-pictures and some very apt comparisons, yet I had the feeling that it was just a bit formulaic; like Burkes editor required him to "mention each of the 5 senses every time, now" I could have been happier with a few "lapses" & a bit more variety!

Overall, however, it was an evocative and intriguing crime mystery. And Burke never let the setting take over he story.

Michael Brown says

Again we have a character with lots of flaws and some negative aspects. But unlike the New Orleans loser series, this one comes across as a better read as we are presented with a much more tolerable back story and character personality development.

Cathrine ?? says

James Lee Burke can make a compelling case for vigilante justice with his stories and there's something about a man named Billy Bob. Images immediately spring to mind, especially when he says things like **"Sometimes you've got to set people's perspective straight"** and then the people he hangs with say things like **"Damn, Billy Bob, every time I talk with you I feel like a bird dog sticking his nose down a porcupine hole."**

Classic Burke start to finish. One of these reading days I'm going to come up with a line like that to describe one of his books I've stuck my nose into.

Poppy Fields says

Great book with a stong lead character and plenty of action. It kept me guessing until the end has James Lee Burkes fantastic imagery through out the tale. I will definitely read the next in the series.

Connie says

1st in Bill Bob Holland series. This had L Q Navarro visiting Billy Bob when things were not going to well. He is a dead Texas Ranger and used to be Billy Bob's partner. Billy Bob is an attorney and trying to clear his sons name because he is accused of killing a girl. It is a very dark book, but I really like it because it appears to be so true.
