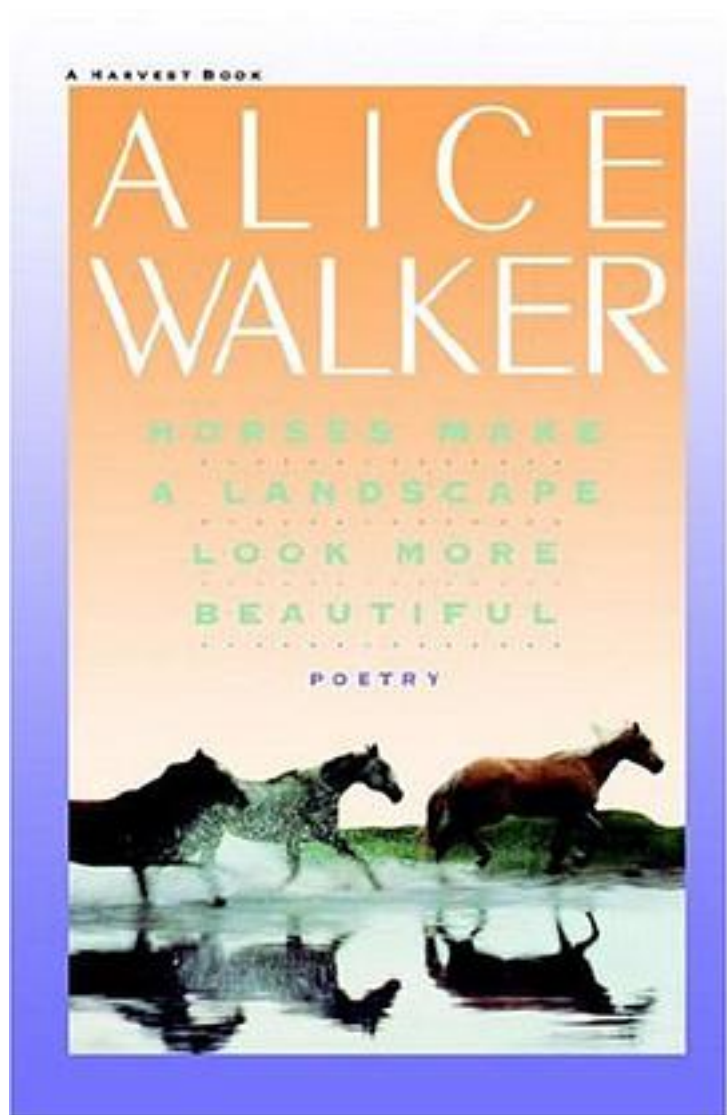


Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful



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著者:Alice Walker

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The title of the book comes from the words of Lakota holy man Lame Deer:

We had no word for the strange animal we got from the white man—the horse. So we called it unka waken, “holy dog.” For bringing us the horse we could almost forgive you for bringing us whiskey. Horses make a landscape look more beautiful.

Horses Make a Landscape More Beautiful is a slim volume of poetry written by the remarkable writer/activist Alice Walker. The work is a powerful collection of poems that are raw, honest, and celebrate the capacity to celebrate life and stand up against injustice and abuse.

Horses do indeed make the landscape more beautiful. It is a joy just to watch them grazing and in communion with the land—and with their herd. This quote is poignant because of course alcoholism has wreaked so much long-lasting devastation on the Native American people. European settlers, including my own ancestors, also brought other diseases, violence, and the forced removal of native peoples from their tribal lands. Yet, amidst this devastation, Lame Deer honors the return of the horse to the Americas, saying that it was almost worth it.

"Holy Dog" Comes Home

Curiously, we know that Eohippus, or Dawn Horse, the ancestor of the modern horse, lived some 58 million years ago. The horse is one of the few Ice Age animals still surviving today, and originated in the forests and swamplands of North America. Especially prevalent in the Great Plains, Eohippus was only about 14 inches tall. More dog-like than horse-like, E.M. Ensminger describes Eohippus as “a small graceful animal, scarcely more than a foot high with a slender face, an arched back, short neck, slender legs and a long tail, adapted for living in swamps.”

Amazing Adaptation

As swamplands dried up 18 million years ago, Eohippus adapted by developing a longer neck for grasslands, a single toe or hoof, longer legs, and eyes with almost 360 vision to detect predators. The ability to change food as tall grasses replaced the swamp habitat further enabled the horse to survive. Other large animals surviving the Ice Age and drastic climate changes died out because they were only able to eat certain foods that became unavailable.

Evidence suggests that descendants of Eohippus crossed the land bridge from the Great Plains to Europe and Asia. By 10,000 years ago, horses had disappeared from the United States. Ironically, the descendant of the horse that died out in the Americas was returned to the home of its ancestors by the conquistadors and European invasions.

Sacred Companion

The Lakota use of “Holy Dog” to refer to horses is an interesting one, especially since its ancestor Eohippus was similar in size to a dog. Holy captures the other-worldly or spiritual nature of the horse, while dog confers the special relationship of companion. The words “Holy” and “Dog,” when put together become a sacred companion.

Is Beauty Enough?

Lame Deer speaks of the beauty of horses and how they enhance the landscape. Approximately fifty years ago, horses lost their jobs in transportation, agriculture, and the military in the western world. Today it is expensive and time-consuming to care for horses that are no longer of “practical” use on the farm, for transportation, or in making warfare. Yet, more and more women are becoming owners and riders of horses. Is the beauty of the horses enough to ensure their care and survival, in a culture that values youth, productivity, and usefulness?

Hundreds of thousands of women are voting “yes” with their dollars, their time and their love of horses. Perhaps they are seeking a Holy Dog, a sacred companion to accompany them on life’s journeys.

For more information exploring the relationship between women and horses, I invite you to visit <http://www.dreamhorsewomen.com>

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作者介绍:

Walker, Alice, 1944–, African-American novelist and poet, b. Eatonton, Ga. The daughter of sharecroppers, she studied at Spelman College (1961–63) and Sarah Lawrence College (B.A., 1965). She brings her travel experience in Africa and memories of the American civil-rights movement to an examination of the experience of African Americans, mainly in the South, and of Africans. A self-described “womanist,” she has maintained a strong focus on feminist issues within African-American culture. Walker won wide recognition with her novel *The Color Purple* (1982; Pulitzer Prize; film, 1985), a dark but sometimes joyous saga of a poor black Southern woman's painful journey toward self-realization. Among her other novels are *Meridian* (1976), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1994), and *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* (2004). Her short-story collections include *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981) and the partially autobiographical *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* (2000). She has also written poetry, such as *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems* (1973), *Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems 1965–1990* (1991), and *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth* (2003). Many of her essays are collected in *Living by the Word* (1988) and *Anything We Love Can Be Saved* (1997).

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