

# **Erdrich, Louise (1954-) Encyclopedia Article**

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## Erdrich, Louise (1954—)

Of mixed Chippewa and German-American ancestry, Louise Erdrich addresses the concerns of modern Native Americans in a way that appeals equally, if somewhat differently, to Native American and mainstream readers alike. "Indianness" matters in her work, but Erdrich is far more interested in affirming important aspects of Native American experience—attitudes toward sexuality and nature, women's power, and communal ethics and aesthetics in particular—than in accusing Euro-American culture (and readers) of past wrongs. Her Faulknerian preoccupation with place has led her to create a sprawling, loosely connected multi-novel saga that deals mainly, but not exclusively, with Native American life in the latter half of the twentieth century. Her fiction (she also writes poetry and essays) weaves together realism and fantasy, sensuality and lyricism, short story and novel, oral and written traditions, comic sensibility and tragic awareness. The popular and critical success of her National Book Award-winning first novel, *Love Medicine* (1984), and the physical attractiveness that led *People Magazine* to include her in its list of "most beautiful" people have helped make her one of the most recognizable and influential Native American writers of her generation.

### Further Reading:

Chavkin, Allan, and Nancy Feyl Chavkin, editors. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris*. Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1994.

Chavkin, Allan, editor. *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1999.