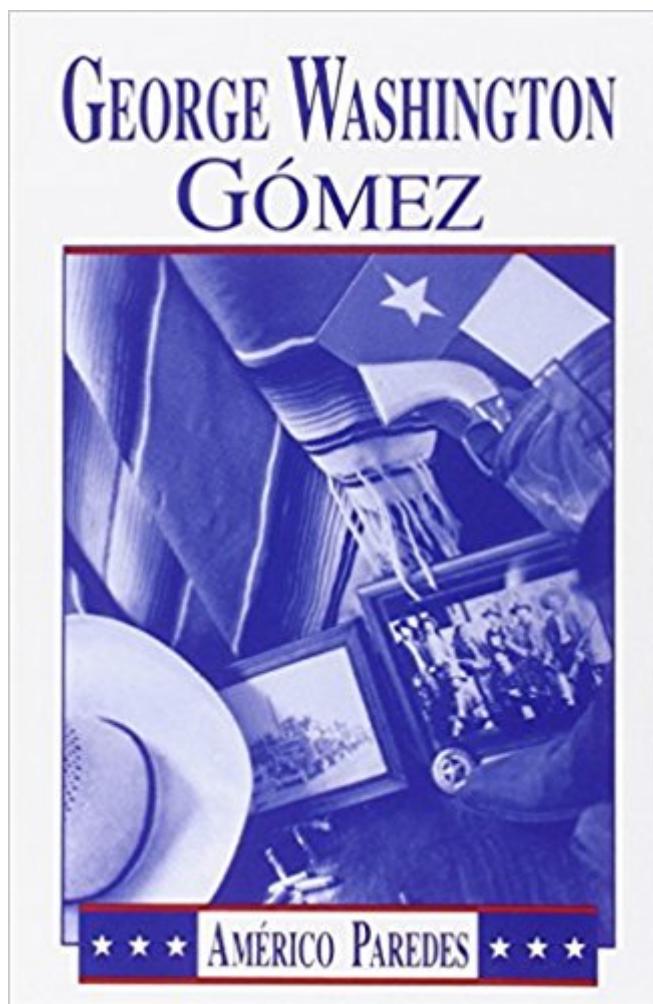


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George Washington Gomez: A Mexicotexan Novel



Synopsis

In the 1930's, Americo Paredes, the renowned folklorist, wrote a novel set to the background of the struggles by Texas Mexicans to preserve their property, culture, and identity in the face of Anglo-American migration to and growing dominance over the Rio Grande Valley. For his epic novel Paredes chose the title that is as ironic as the protagonist's development under the pressures of cultural and political clashes. Episodes of guerrilla warfare, land grabs, racism, jingoism and abuses by the Texas Rangers make this an adventure novel as well as one of reflection on the making of modern day Texas. "George Washington Gomez" is a true precursor of the modern Chicano novel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most readers know Americo Paredes as the great folklorist that he was. Because his book George Washington Gomez was not published in the late 1930's when Paredes wrote it, only a rough draft version was released shortly before he died. To me, this version of Texas historical fiction along the valley border presents a side to Mexican American settlement that few other books reveal. I find Paredes' story powerful and well worth reading. Gualinto, little George Washington Gomez, is the American born son of his illegal immigrant parents; his father is an outlaw of some notoriety. The birth name his parents give him symbolizes their hope that he will become the leader of his people in America. But their hopes take a big detour as this little boy grows up in fictional Jonesville as a spoiled only son in a matriarchal household. With his father dead, the only strong male role for Gualinto is his reformed outlaw uncle. Gualinto suffers the insults and taunts of growing up as a member of the poor and powerless society of South Texas. His family is subjected to the cruelties

of racist Anglos, including the unattractive side of El Renche, the Texas Rangers. Even in an all Mexican American school for children, Gualinto is embarrassed and punished for his lack of academic accomplishment by the spinster Mexican American teacher . Those classroom scenes remind one of the cruelties found in Tom Brown's School Days and the writings of Charles Dickens. Surrounded by love at home, treated kindly by some of the Jonesville citizenry, insulated from the cruelties exacted on his sisters who do not adhere to their mother's demands, Gualinto grows to adolescence and a time of continued social positioning that often leads to rejection.

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