



FOPSL Book Club: April 16, 2021

Book: *Ramona*

Author: Helen Hunt Jackson

Discussion leader: Ann Coulston

Ann Coulston Gives Us *Ramona*



Helen Hunt Jackson was born in 1831 in Amherst, MA and formed a lifelong friendship with fellow author Emily Dickinson according to the presentation by Ann Coulston. Jackson's novel ***Ramona*** was published in 1884 a year before her death. It was serialized in *The Christian Union* where it was very popular. At 21 she married a West Point graduate who died in the Civil War. Her second son died as a result of diphtheria. The young widow began writing in the curative air of the Rockies. Among her writings was ***A Century of Dishonor***, a non-fiction account of life in Southern California that may have been the inspiration for *Ramona*.

Because of the popularity of the novel, many "locations" in the book have been marked and noted by local officials. Ramona High School in Riverside and the town of Ramona, CA were named after the title heroine even though those places have no direct reference in the novel. ***Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California*** (2005) by [Dydia DeLyser](#) (https://smile.amazon.com/dp/081664571X/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_8EQVM5NM6PJKKYQ74V64) explores many of the lasting cultural influences the novel had on the popularity of the region.

A few book club members were familiar with the ***Ramona Pageant***, an outdoor play that is staged in Hemet, CA. *The Ramona Pageant* is the longest running outdoor play in the United States. It ran uninterrupted except in 1933, caused by the [Great Depression](#); in 1942, when [World War II](#) occurred and in 2020 caused by [COVID-19 pandemic](#). In 1993 it was declared California's official State Outdoor Play, according to [Wikipedia](#). Follow the link (<https://youtu.be/rFp0sTxxbbY>) to see a video of pictures from the 2018 *Ramona Pageant*.

The 1936 technicolor movie, *Ramona*, starring Loretta Young and Don Ameche is available as a DVD at the Palm Springs Library (<https://palmsprings.polarislibrary.com/search/title.aspx?ctx=3.1033.0.0.1&pos=1&cn=337787>)

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Friends of the Palm Springs Library Book Club meets online

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