



## The Old Gringo: A Novel (FSG Classics)

By Carlos Fuentes

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**The Old Gringo: A Novel (FSG Classics)** By Carlos Fuentes

One of Carlos Fuentes's greatest works, *The Old Gringo* tells the story of Ambrose Bierce, the American writer, soldier, and journalist, and of his last mysterious days in Mexico living among Pancho Villa's soldiers, particularly his encounter with General Tomas Arroyo. In the end, the incompatibility of the two countries (or, paradoxically, their intimacy) claims both men, in a novel that is, most of all, about the tragic history of two cultures in conflict.

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## The Old Gringo: A Novel (FSG Classics) By Carlos Fuentes Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Fuentes, Mexico's leading novelist (author of *Terra Nostra*), invents here a lyrical and philosophical tale about the times of Pancho Villa and the Revolution in Mexico. The old gringo of the title is Ambrose Bierce, the American journalist and writer who disappeared in the Mexican dust. Bierce went to Mexico to die, Fuentes speculates, because he could not bear to reflect on the pain and sacrifices his sanctimonious moral rectitude had caused his family. He joins the troops of the young revolutionary Tomas Arroyo, one of Villa's generals, who, as a "child of misfortune" ("bastard" in the servant quarters) was trapped in the hacienda and is now trapped by the revolution. Both the old gringo and the young revolutionary fall in love with Harriet Winslow, an American who had come to Mexico as teacher for the children on a hacienda which no longer exists, having been burned by the revolutionaries. Fuentes examines the borders between men and women, dreams and reality, Mexico and the U.S. ("a scar" rather than a border). Doomed never to understand each other, the two men inevitably die as they cross the frontier of their differences: the old gringo killed by Arroyo (whom he provoked by burning the papers of the history of Mexico) and Arroyo, in his turn, shot by Villa for overstepping his boundaries of power. In this fine short novel, Fuentes remains, as usual, wisely suspicious of both American politics and those of the Revolution. The problem here is that the author's posturing, his dramatic flourishes, never let us forget that this is all fakean invention, a meditation.

November

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From Library Journal

Clues scattered through this brief but intense novel gradually reveal the identity of the title character, an aging American writer who disappeared in revolutionary Mexico in 1913. Fuentes has made clever fictional use of an actual literary mystery, but his more remarkable achievement here is the portrait of the writer as a father figure to an American governess and to a general in Pancho Villa's army, each of whom has been betrayed by a real father. The tempestuous intimacy between governess and general and the complex relationship each has with the old gringo reflect the links and contradictions between Mexican and American cultures. This is a novel to be savored; it deserves more than a single reading. L.M. Lewis, Social Science Dept., Eastern Kentucky Univ., Richmond

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Review

"A dazzling novel that possesses the weight and resonance of myth [and] the fierce magic of a remembered dream." ?Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"A perfect little gemstone, faceted by a master craftsman." ?Charles Larsen, *Chicago Tribune Book World*

"The fate of Bierce has intrigued Americans since 1914, when he vanished . . . Fuentes has spun an opalescent around the mystery." ?Evan S. Connell, *Los Angeles Times*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Patricia Gross:**

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