J A M E S N I C H O L A S W A D E

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Professional Summary

James Wade is the youngest novelist to win two Spur Awards from the Western Writers of America, and the recipient of the MPIBA's prestigious Reading the West Award. He is the author of five novels and more than twenty short stories. His debut novel, *All Things Left Wild*, was listed as one of the most influential westerns of the 21st century by *True West Magazine* and included in *the Los Angeles Times's* 1,001 Novels: A Library of America. His newest novel, *Narrow the Road*, recently received a coveted "starred review" from *Publishers Weekly*. His nonfiction has appeared in *Texas Highways*, *Writer's Digest*, and *Porter House Review* and has been nominated for a National Magazine Award. James has been selected as the Spring 2026 Dobie Paisano Fellow by the University of Texas at Austin.

EDUCATION

M.F.A in Creative Writing (Fiction) – Texas State University – San Marcos – 2023-2026

B.A. in Communication (Journalism) – Stephen F. Austin State University – Nacogdoches – 2009-2012

NOVELS AND AWARDS

Novels

Narrow the Road – Blackstone Publishing *(2025)*
• Editor's Choice – Historical Novel Society (2025)
• Summer Reading Selection – Garden & Gun Magazine (2025)
• Starred Review – Publishers Weekly (2025)
• Summer Reading List – Texas Highways (2025)

Hollow Out the Dark – Blackstone Publishing *(2024)*
• Lariat List – Texas Library Association (2026)
• Favorite Indies List – Barnes and Noble (2024)

Beasts of the Earth – Blackstone Publishing *(2022)*
• Spur Award – Contemporary Novel– Western Writers of America (2023)
• Best Southern Books – Southern Review of Books (2022)
• Best Books Fall/Winter – Deep South Magazine (2022)

River, Sing Out – Blackstone Publishing *(2021)*
• Best Books of the Summer – Deep South Magazine (2020)
• Favorite Indies List – Barnes and Noble (2021)

All Things Left Wild – Blackstone Publishing *(2020)*
• Spur Award – Historical Fiction – Western Writers of America (2021)
• Reading the West Award – Mountains and Plains Independent Booksellers Association (2021)

• Mayor's Book Club Selection – Austin Public Libraries (2020)
• Compelling Historical Fiction List – PopSugar (2021)
• Most Influential Westerns of the 21st Century – True West Magazine (2021)

Awards, Scholarships, and Fellowships
• Dobie Paisano Fellowship – The University of Texas at Austin (Spring 2026)
• Distinguished Visiting Writer Fellowship and Workshop Director – Stephen F. Austin State University (2025)
• Fiction Workshop Director and Guest Lecturer – Larry McMurtry Literary Center (2026)
• Rose Trip Scholar – Texas State University (2024)
• CD Marshall Scholar – Texas State University (2026)
• 4 x Finalist for Best Writer in Austin – Austin Chronicle's "Best Of" (2022-2025)
• Best Historical Fiction Manuscript– Writers' League of Texas Manuscript Contest (2016)

LITERARY COMMUNITY SERVICE AND INVOLVEMENT

Thankful for Fiction
Creator/Host
Each year I choose a different independent bookstore in Texas and invite a diverse group of authors and poets to join me for a free and open discussion about literature. The event includes a roundtable conversation, audience Q&A, and gift card giveaways for the hosting bookstore. Some past participants include Sarah Bird, Lucas Schafer, Fernando Flores, Cecily Parks, and Katie Gutierrez.

Writers' League of Texas
Speaker/Instructor
Each year I join the WLT for their Texas Writes series which sends published authors to speak at rural libraries. I participate as a panelist during the WLT's Agents and Editors Conference, as well as their free Third Thursday writing series at BookPeople in Austin. I also teach online writing classes for members and nonmembers. Classes have included topics ranging from "Researching Your Novel" to "Writing Compelling Characters" to "Finding the Motivation to Create."

Western Writers of America
Board Member
As a sustaining member of the organization and an elected board member, my focus is on helping other members thrive despite the everchanging landscape of the publishing industry, and helping ensure the organization is inclusive, diverse, and invested in the success of its members.

Authors for Indies
Creator
Authors for Indies is a social media web series that highlights an author and their favorite independent bookstore to garner more attention for writers and booksellers. Past participants include Byron Lane, Jon Fram, and Corey Ryan Forrester.

Texas Library Association
Host/MC

Each Spring I host the Texas Library Association's Evening with the Authors event during the TLA's annual conference. Past featured authors include Steven Rowley, Katherine Center, Abby Jimenez, and Libba Bray.

Mountains and Plains Independent Booksellers Spring Conference
Host/MC
For the past three years (2023-2025) I have hosted the MPIBA's Author Speed Round during their annual Spring Conference in San Antonio, Texas. Past featured authors include Leif Enger, Elizabeth Crook, and Amanda Churchill.

New Braunfels Public Library Fundraising Luncheon
Host/MC
For the past three years (2023-2025) I have hosted and assisted with the NBPL's annual fundraiser.

One Page Salon
Featured reader/Guest Host
I've been a featured reader six times and twice guest-hosted this reading series, called "the best literary evening in town" by the Austin American-Statesman.

Select Featured Appearances
Texas Book Festival:
Debut Novelists panel – 2020
Grit-Lit and Neo-Western panel – 2022
Texas Tales panel – 2025

Library Journal's Day of Dialogue – Historical Fiction panel - 2020

Southern Festival of Books – Southern Odysseys panel - 2025

San Antonio Book Festival – Texas Past and Future panel - 2025

South Dakota Festival of Books – Guest lecturer on craft - 2025

Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Conference – Guest author - 2022

Louisiana Book Festival – Southern Gothic panel - 2025

Dallas Literary Festival – Naturalism in Fiction panel - 2022

Mountains and Plains Independent Bookseller Association Conference – Guest author and host - 2020, '22, '23, '24, '25

South Texas Book Festival:
Light and Dark in literature panel – 2023
Keynote Speaker - 2024

Boerne Book Festival – 2022, '23, '24, '25

Writers' League of Texas Conference:
Historical fiction panel - 2022
Building Literary Community - 2024

Western Writers of America Convention – Purple Prose panel - 2023

Broad Leaf Writers Conference – Guest author - 2024

Texas Library Association Conference – Host and guest author - 2024, '25

Hillsboro Public Library Author Luncheon – Reading and lecture - 2024

New Braunfels Public Library Fundraiser – Host and guest author - 2023, '24, '25

Ursa Branch Reading Series – Reading and lecture - 2023, '24, '25

Blanco Public Library – Reading and lecture - 2024

Tye Preston Memorial Library – Reading and lecture - 2023

Guest Judge
Texas Book Prize (Literary Fiction) – 2023
Spur Award (Traditional Novel) – 2024, '25

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Select Nonfiction Publications
Writer's Digest – "Where I'm Writing From: How experience shapes everything in Fiction" – September 2025

Writer's Digest - "Writing Joy: Or why we write in the first place" – October 2022

Texas Highways – "The Gospel of Change: Traveling in an RV empowers a seeker to make peace with an ever-evolving world" – May 2025 (nominated for a National Magazine Award)

Southern Literary Review – "Cormac McCarthy: The Great Optimist of American Literature" – June 2023

Porter House Review – "The One Thing That Won't Leave You: a conversation with Amanda Churchill" – October 2023

Editorial Work
Southwestern American Literature (fiction editor) – Spring 2025

Texas Books in Review (submission editor) – Spring 2025

Porter House Review (fiction reader) – Fall 2023 and Spring 2026

Select Short Fiction Publications
"The Lone and Level Sands" – *Well Read Magazine* – October 2024 (nominated for a Pushcart Prize)

"My Daughter with the Blonde Hair" – *Bitter Oleander* - Issue 22, Autumn 2016

"Jonah and the Frog" - *Five on the Fifth* - February 2018

"The Things That Watch" - *Potluck Magazine* - October 2015

"Eligible" - *Bartleby Snopes Literary Magazine* - November 2015 (Honorable Mention in the Texas Observer 2015 Short Story Contest)

"Victim" - *Yellow Chair Review* - November 2015

"Return to Righteousness" - *Through the Gaps* - November 2015

"1868 (Savages)" - *After the Pause Journal* - December 2015

"Angels Playing Poker" - *The J.J. Outre Review* - January 2016

"Wasting Water" - *Typehouse Magazine* - January 2016

"Flying the Coop" - *Potluck Magazine* - February 2016

"Such Things as Hope" - *Skylark Review* – January 2016

"At Old Ball Game" - *Jersey Devil Press* - April 2016

"Hunting Ghosts" - *Down in the Dirt Magazine* - June 2016

"The Girl on the Hill With Death" - *Dime Show Review* - July 2016

"My Own Boss" - *Intrinsick Magazine* - August 2016

"Distractions" - *Eunoia Review* - January 2017

PRAISE AND REVIEWS

Select Critical Praise
"This odyssey of the West is tough to shake." – ***Publishers Weekly*** **(starred review)**

"Wade writes skillfully about the brutality and bloody history of the West, and of the United States… This anything but escapist fare, and some of the players might remind you of current leaders." – ***Library Journal***

“Wade delivers a gripping and honest tale of a young boy confronting the evils of the world around him...If you enjoyed Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* or Daniel Woodrell's *Winter's Bone*, this is likely the book for you.” – ***San Francisco Book Review***

"This is the kind of novel readers can spend weeks discussing -- the philosophical and moral nature of it as well as its fatalistic sense of justice ... For a long time to come, *All Things Left Wild* will linger in the memory of all who read it -- the tragedy, the hope, and the irony of it all." – ***New York Journal of Books***

"*Beasts of the Earth* is a leanly structured western, stripping the genre only to its most basic elements. This allows Wade’s prose and philosophical ideas room to shine...a powerful ode to dreaming, beauty and human goodness." – ***Deep South Magazine***

“Wade, whose striking debut, *All Things Left Wild* (2020), traveled back a century in Texas history, uses an unlikely friendship to explore an equally wild present-day landscape...A haunting fable of an impossible relationship fueled by elemental need and despair.” – ***Kirkus Reviews***

"Wade's pitch-perfect, personality-driven dialogue sings in the voice of life, and his ability to meld existential thought, situational metaphor, and cinematic setting is a full-bodied experience...A soul-deep exploration of a wounded man in crisis, James Wade's *Beasts of the Earth*...secures his position as an author of extraordinary merit." – ***New York Journal of Books***

"A fast-paced, thrilling trip through the West you won't want to put down." – ***PopSugar***

"Transfixing ...The author takes a classic western setup and refreshes it with sharp writing, strong characterizations, a vivid evocation of place, and a body count to rival The Wild Bunch. Fans of *All the Pretty Horses* will want to saddle up for this literary ride." – ***Publishers Weekly***

What lifts *River Sing Out* far beyond the ordinary is its exquisite, elegant writing which concisely confronts the ugly truth of rural poverty in American society… Yet ultimately this is a celebration of the strength of the human spirit. It is relentless at times and it should be shocking, but *River Sing Out* also illustrates the strength of quiet conviction with poetic grace and understated compassion. – ***Murder, Mayhem & More***

"This is some kind of literary lightning, this first novel of James Wade's. And now we wait for it to strike again." – ***Austin Chronicle***

"Written with elegant prose that might remind a reader of Cormac McCarthy, Wade's novel announces the coming of an astonishing young talent, a fictioneer for the Western genre's best future." – ***True West Magazine***

"This is artful fiction drawn with a deft, patient hand. The writing style is an ideal mashup of Larry McMurtry's burnish and Cormac McCarthy's grit ... Wade's writerly skill is topnotch and white hot in the visual, visceral quality of his description that breathes the landscape to life as a major character in the story." – ***Lone Star Literary Life***

"The story brilliantly weaves together an ephemeral whodunnit with a transcendental puzzle about god and death… Wade's prose is lyrical, telling a story with a three-part harmony of action, metaphor and imagery. All of Wade's language in *Beasts of the Earth* is melodious, playing on each page a song that grips a reader's heart and soul... Few modern novelists have Wade's literary agility, and *Beasts of the Earth* will certainly delight sophisticated readers." – ***Midwest Book Review***

Select Blurbs

"Stunning in its language and so moving in its effect. Read *Hollow Out the Dark* and prepare to be amazed." – **William Kent Krueger, NYT bestselling author**

"Mythic and sweeping yet intimate and humble… James Wade summons a storm of words and emotions and masters it like a prophet in the eye of his own hurricane. One of America's greatest storytellers, he has delivered yet another memorable masterpiece." **– Rudy Ruiz, author of *The Border Between Us***

"James Wade has established himself as one of the Lone Star States best young novelists…" **– Taylor Brown, Southern Book Prize Winner, author of *Rednecks***

"James Wade is one of, if not *the* finest novelist in Texas." **– Reavis Wortham, author of The Texas Red River Mysteries**

"A debut full of atmosphere and awe. Wade gives emotional depth to his dust-covered characters and creates an image of the American West that is harsh and unforgiving, but -- like *All Things Left Wild* -- not without hope." -- **Sarah Bird, author of *Daughter of a Daughter of a Queen***

"Wade has delivered a McCarthy-esque odyssey with an Elmore Leonard ear for dialogue. *All Things Left Wild* moves like a coyote across this cracked-earth landscape -- relentlessly paced and ambitiously hungry." -- **David Joy, author of *When These Mountains Burn***

"An intense and lyrical journey through the borderzone of the American Southwest in a time before walls, infused with the real feeling of the land, and of the violence its conquest engenders." **--Christopher Brown, Campbell and World Fantasy Award-nominated author of *Tropic of Kansas* and *Rule of Capture***

"A breathtaking debut! Wade has managed to craft a novel that is both a lyrical pilgrimage and a thrilling, page-turning adventure." --**Owen Egerton, PEN Southwest Book Award winning author of *Hollow***

"Here we have a novel that blends realism with existentialist philosophy to redefine contemporary Southern fiction. Don't miss this tour de force of modern literature." **-- David Heska Wanbli Weiden, Spur and Anthony Award-winning author of *Winter Counts***

"Like Flannery O'Connor, James Wade explores what it means to be human--our capacity for good rivaled only by our capacity for evil, our weakness alongside our urge for redemption and grace--with gloriously complex characters and gorgeous prose. *Beasts of the Earth* is a beautiful gut-punch of a novel." **-- Stacey Swann, author of *Olympus, Texas***

"Wade is a craftsman. His books should be read slowly, to luxuriate in his word choices, his sentence structure, his character revelation. That is why he is a joy to read." **-- James L. Haley, Spur Award-winning author of the *Bliven Putnam Naval Adventures***

“If you read one novel this year, make it this one. James Wade's *River, Sing Out* is an instant classic filled with characters that will break your heart, lyrical prose as haunted as the river it evokes, and a Southern Noir undertow that wholly sucks you in and keeps you turning the pages until its searing, masterful conclusion.” **-- May Cobb, author of *The Hunting Wives***

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Collegiate

Distinguished Visiting Writer Workshop – Stephen F. Austin State University – Spring 2025
• Taught a week-long, advanced fiction workshop to a selected group of graduate and undergraduate students.

College Writing I – Texas State University – Fall 2025
• Taught two sections of College Writing to undergraduate students, focusing on rhetoric, close reading, and analysis.

College Writing II – Texas State University – Spring 2026
• Taught two sections of College Writing to undergraduate students, focusing on rhetoric, close reading, and analysis.

Guest Lectures

Naturalism in Fiction – Texas Writes Series – June 2024

Practical Pedagogical Strategies – Texas State University – August 2025

Fake History: Subverting Racist Tropes in Western Writing – College of San Mateo – May 2024

The Bigger Picture: How to Entertain Readers While Writing Something Meaningful – Black Hills State University – October 2025 (guest lecture in conjunction with the South Dakota Festival of Books)

Online Teaching Experience
Structure as Strategy: Building Pace in Historical Narratives – Writer's Digest – December 2025

What It Felt Like: Setting and Tone and Imagery – Writer's Digest – December 2024

Researching Your Novel – Writers' League of Texas – November 2025

Staying Motivated – Writers' League of Texas – January 2024

The Craft of Fiction – Writers' League of Texas – November 2023

Writing an Effective Query Letter – Happy Writer – June 2021

Prose Toolbox: Lyrical and Spare – Happy Writer – January 2022

Agents and Queries – DabbleU – February 2025

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Averitt and Associates • Austin, Texas • 2016 - 2017
Lobbyist/Data Analyst – Water Conservation
Job responsibilities included: writing and editing detailed reports that quantified water conservation efforts for more than 200 water utility providers in Texas. Encouraging the use of water-saving measures, strategies, and appliances. Reporting findings to help ensure the most efficient and impactful methods of conservation were prioritized.

Texas Department of Transportation • Austin, Texas • 2014 - 2016
Spokesperson/Media Relations
Job responsibilities included: writing and editing press releases and other material to be distributed to the media; handling media inquiries and interviews (radio, television, and print); creating and implementing communication campaigns and strategies. Played a key role in securing future transportation funding.

Texas House of Representatives • Austin, Texas • 2013 - 2014
Legislative Director/Press Secretary
Job responsibilities included: writing a weekly column for all district media outlets; writing press releases highlighting legislative achievements; bill and policy analysis; advising in areas of public education, county government, transportation, and natural resources. Worked closely with representatives to set up funding and infrastructure to meet our state's future water needs.

Lufkin Daily News • Lufkin, Texas • 2007-2012
Reporter

Job responsibilities included: seeking out newsworthy stories in the community; writing and editing stories; building relationships with local leaders; working on daily, and sometimes hourly, deadlines; keeping up with national, state and local events and issues; informing the community of those issues and how it impacts the city/county

REFERENCES

Doug Dorst – Novelist - Professor, MFA Program - Texas State University
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Dr. John McDermott – Novelist - Director, Creative Writing – Stephen F. Austin State University
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Dr. Lucy Griffith – Poet – Land Conservationist, Master Naturalist – Rusty Bend Ranch
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