



## Dakota

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Kathleen Norris' transcendent nonfiction work opens with a quotation taken from the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset: "Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are." In *DAKOTA: A SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY* (1993), Norris does just that, describing for the reader her starkly beautiful Dakota plains home—the physical world—as a means of revealing her own inner landscape, the topography of her very soul. In clear, richly imagistic prose, Norris presents disparate bits of information—weather reports, geographic and historical facts, quotations, lines of poetry, religious references—and skillfully weaves a story from the resulting mix; not only a story of one place and one life, Norris' own life in her adopted home of Lemmon, South Dakota, but also the more universal tale of how each and every one of us comes to call a certain place "home."

The story of how Norris comes to call the Great Plains her own is nothing short of remarkable. Norris writes of her life in Dakota as one of destiny: "This is my spiritual geography, the place where I've wrestled my story out of circumstances of landscape and inheritance." Norris and her husband both left successful careers in New York City in the 1970's to take over Norris' ancestral home. Working a series of odd jobs, they remain in Dakota, learning to love a land that can be by turns both forbidding and full of an expansive natural beauty. Norris writes of the seasons, plains animals and inhabitants, and the minutia of prairie existence with equal success, and it is from these close examinations of the natural world, a church of air and light, that Norris is inspired to rediscover her spiritual roots. *DAKOTA* is a testament to what is possible in the world.

## Sources for Further Study

*America*. CLXIX, August 14, 1993, p.23.

*Belles Lettres*. VIII, Summer, 1993, p.37.

*Chicago Tribune*. January 10, 1993, XIV, p.3.

*The Christian Science Monitor*. April 27, 1993, p.11.

Klinkenborg, Verlyn. "The Prairie as an Act of Devotion." Review of *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, by Kathleen Norris. *The New York Times Book Review*, February 14, 1993, 8.

*Los Angeles Times*. December 31, 1992, p. E8.

*New Yorker, The*. Review of *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, by Kathleen Norris. March 15, 1993, 123.

*Publishers Weekly*. CCXXXIX, December 7, 1992, p.52.

*Utne Reader*. May, 1993, p.113.

*The Washington Post Book World*. XXIII, January 24, 1993, p.3.

*Women's Review of Books*. X, May, 1993, p.20.

**Copyright Notice**

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:  
<http://www.enotes.com/dakota-salem>