

"What many of us are hopeful of now, it seems, is being able to gain—or regain—a sense of allegiance with our chosen places, and along with that a sense of affirmation with our neighbors that the place we've chosen is beautiful, subtle, profound, worthy of our lives." BARRY LOPEZ, from the Introduction

BARRY LOPEZ is the author of *Resistance, About This Life, Light Action in the Caribbean, Arctic Dreams*, for which he received the National Book Award, and nine other works of fiction and nonfiction. He has written for a wide range of magazines, including *Harper's, Granta, the Paris Review, the Georgia Review, National Geographic*, and *Outside*, and is a recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim, Lannan, and National Science Foundations.

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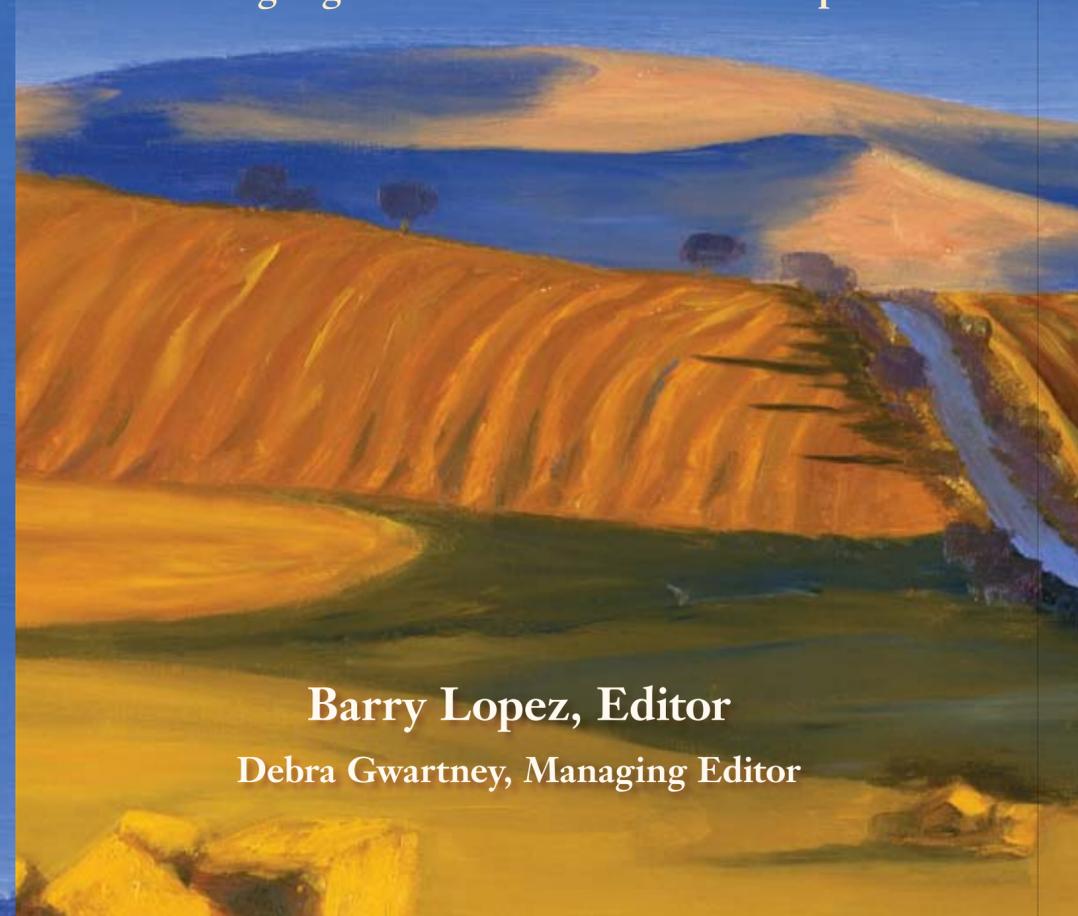
HOME GROUND  
Language for an American Landscape



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# HOME GROUND

Language for an American Landscape



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# HOME GROUND

Language for an American Landscape

Have you ever wondered how it came to be called Las Vegas? Or why it was the Natchez Trace, not the Natchez Trail? Or what the difference is between ripples and ruffles in a stream? *Home Ground* brings together, for the first time, the distinctly American vocabulary that people use to characterize the country's landscape. Forty-five writers, with backgrounds and imaginations as different as journalist Bill McKibben's and novelist Barbara Kingsolver's, have crafted more than 850 definitions for words like vega and trace. And flatiron, bayou, milk gap, and looking-glass prairie. What emerges from their work, however, is more than accurate definitions and their individual approaches to each of these words. It's more than learning that lake is also a color, and that those islands of lush growth in the midst of a new lava flow are called kipukas. It's more than learning that Peekskill, New York, probably took its name from the farm the Peek family established on a kill in that area. It's discovering, in the process, the way this unique landscape has shaped American character. When we speak of things like canyons, waterfalls, and prairies, we are talking about our history. When we use a word like gulch or monadnock, or an expression like Carolina bay or desire path, we are evoking something distinctive in our culture.

*Home Ground* is an invitation to learn American geography, to read American history, and to celebrate a deeply engaging dimension of American character.