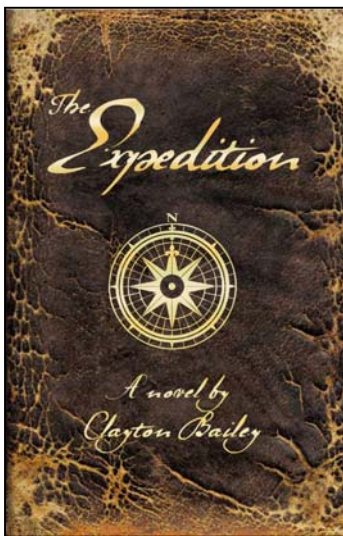


## Book Club Guide



### *The Expedition*

*a novel by Clayton Bailey*

1858. Joanna Reid, a young daguerreotypist, disguises herself as a man and sets off to explore her raw new country. She finds work in a frontier town as a portrait photographer, and when a railway survey party passes through town, is asked to join their cross country expedition.

Mastering the manly skills of peeing standing up, spitting from horseback and not washing for days on end, she quickly gains the confidence of her stout-hearted companions.

They struggle toward the continental divide until her secret is discovered by Captain Masse, the leader of the expedition. He begins to fall in love with her, but before he can act upon his feelings, disaster strikes and the party is lost. With her equipment reduced to only a lens and some emulsion, Joanna seeks salvation through art, and with the aid of her Aboriginal rescuers, arrives at a spectacular revelation.

*The Expedition* is an epic tale of loss and the recovery of magic, and the eternal capacity of nature to expose the intricacies of the human soul.

**Finalist for the 2003 Amazon.ca/Books in Canada First Novel Award**

### *Critical Praise*

“Wow, this is a book worth reading. It has everything a novel is supposed to have and more: romance, conflict, historical views, scientific information and great personal growth of the main characters.” - *Lethbridge Herald*

“...an epic adventure tale, full of love beyond sex and tribe, extravagant descriptions of nature, and exhilarating rides.” - *Quill & Quire*

“...the writing is lush in its lyricism, which only adds to the wonder of a tale that encompasses exploration, technology, colonialism and gender.” - *Uptown Magazine*

“Bailey is at his best when he writes about photography. The novel is packed with details about the early photographic process. Although she initially sets out to capture landscapes, Reid’s focus shifts to human subjects and human emotion. Reid learns that the successful portrait photographer must understand, ‘the process of becoming one’s pray, if only for an instant, before shutting the shutter.’” - *Montreal Mirror*

## *About Clayton Bailey*

Originally from Marquette, Manitoba, Clayton Bailey has traveled the world as a photographer and filmographer. He wrote the television program “Movements of the Tao” and the independent films “Waiting for the Messiah” and “The Right to Refuse,” which won the Blue Ribbon Award at the New York Film Festival. His short fiction has appeared in the anthology *Frontier: Custom & Archetype*, *IRON* and *The Indiana Review*. His feature articles have appeared in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. He currently teaches 16mm film production at Université de Montréal.



## *In His Own Words...*

“The planet successfully explored, our fascination with disastrous expeditions of the past increases; Franklin, Scott and Shackleton. Drawing on experiences in survey camps across Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and my background as a professional photographer shooting in locales as varied as New York and the Himalayas, I’ve used historical fiction to explore what’s seldom found in expedition journals – affairs of the heart.

“The novel deals with what Pablo Neruda felt was the fundamental dilemma of the peoples who have invaded and settled the “New World” – the problem of identification. Everyone in this book - natives, travelers and invaders – is struggling to identify either themselves, where they are or who others are. The photographic act is so much a part of this process.”

—Clayton Bailey

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## *Discussion Questions*

1. *The Expedition* is written in the form of a journal and includes excerpts from both Joanna’s and Cpt. Masse’s travel journals. How does the introspective and revealing nature of journal writing serve as a form of narration in the novel? How does this form of narration compare to the traditional third person narrative?
2. Considering the biases inherent in the writing of a journal, how trustworthy are journals as historical accounts of the past?
3. Joanna transforms her gender from female to male in the novel, a task which is physically fairly easy, but is emotionally trying for her as time wears on. How much of our preconceptions about gender identity is based on physical attributes? How much on emotional attributes?

4. How do you define gender?
5. Joanna goes to extreme lengths to hide her gender in order to pursue a career in a male-dominated profession. What role does gender play in today's workplace? How about in the arts?
6. Exploration, of both the land and the self, is a major theme in the novel. In the twenty-first century, with most of the planet already explored, do you think frontiers still exist? If so, what are they?
7. Photography spread around the world from Paris to San Francisco to Shanghai in just 10 years from 1840 to 1850. What purpose did early photography serve? What role does photography play today? What is its future as an art form?
8. How do the tools of an artist affect the artist's ability to create? Does art advance as technology advances? Is the artistic vision limited by the tools of the trade?
9. The author purposefully does not provide any specific geographic references in the text. Do you feel this ambiguity adds or detracts from the story?
10. Unusually, Clayton Bailey provides occasional descriptions from the point of view of animals encountered by the expedition. How does this affect the reader's appreciation of nature in the novel?

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### **The Expedition**

by Clayton Bailey

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