

# RAPPORT

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★★★★

C.W. Smith

## Understanding Women

TCU Press. \$24.95

**Reminiscent of** J.D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye*, Smith's novel is a brutally honest portrayal of a young man's coming of age, that never fails to provoke the mind and pull at the heart strings.

Jimbo Proctor is a headstrong sixteen-year-old who despite having to step up to the plate of maturity in the stodgy year of 1956, surveys the times and events around him with an educated clarity that sets him aside from everyone else and singles him out as being the voice of reason as well as hope for this book.

Leaving his parent's home and going to New Mexico to work on his Uncle's oil patch for the Summer, it provides the perfect setting for Jimbo to hurl himself into the company of men to which he has never been exposed and who, he hopes, will give him insight on the mysterious world of adulthood and women.

At one point in the story, Jimbo questions his new found manhood when told by his co-workers about the supposed aphrodisiac "Spanish fly." He finds it to be cruel to the women involved instead of sexy like he imagined.

Throughout the story we follow Jimbo through his gain of muscles, his loss of virginity, his protest against censorship and the witness of an abortion performed with a crochet needle, and find that aside from forming a severe bond with this character we come to agree with his final decision that if rushed, adulthood can be more traumatic than necessary.

**Understanding Women** is a beautifully written novel which can be read quickly but leaves a lingering respect for our own rites of passage into the confusing role of adults. K.M.

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