Understanding Louise Erdrich by Seema Kurup is an overview of Louise Erdrich’s work that focuses on accessing and understanding her opera of work more fully. This volume emphasizes reading her work through the lenses of both her identity as a Native American author and the colonial struggles of the Ojibwa people. As part of the Understanding Contemporary American Literature series from the University of South Carolina, ideally, this book should be useful to students and non-academic readers.

With this in mind the organization is quite pragmatic; the chapters include a general overview of Erdrich’s life and then chapters that specifically focus on her works. In this, if someone is using this book for further research the Birchbark House Series for example, they can easily find this information in Chapter 5, which focuses on that series. The Love Medicine epic novels are divided into two chapters: contemporary and historical. This does seem to work as a solid modus operandi to discuss the related themes of the series. While I have not read all of the interconnected novels, this organization seems like it would also work as a guide as to how to approach the books as well; in other words, if a student read Love Medicine and asked for further suggestions, he/she might enjoy the connected and also contemporary novels, The Bingo Palace and/or The Painted Dream. There is also a really helpful chapter on Erdrich’s poetry and nonfiction; these works are less commented on in general, but they are often easier to fit into a semester of literary curriculum than a novel. In so much, this chapter provides insight into the most anthologized of Erdrich’s other writings that would be very useful to someone teaching an American literature survey, for example. Thus, the organization works well and serves the purpose of the text.

Throughout Understanding Louise Erdrich, Kurup incorporates a lot of research and reviews, with significant endnotes, and there is also a well-complied “Selected Bibliography.” While this serves students and researchers just entering American colonial literature (obviously in the sense that the Ojibwa were colonized) or Native American literature studies, it may not have a wider audience. However, this is only a concern for the

1 Named after the bookstore she runs, these are children's literature about the Ojibwa.
series' editors as it proposes itself a series for academic and nonacademic readers alike.

As a former American literature lecturer, I considered whether or not this book would be useful to similar instructors. In the confines of a lecturer position, this book would help an instructor who wants to incorporate more Native American literature into his/her curriculum. While it fully reflects, classifies, and examines each of Erdrich's works individually and as a whole, in its discussion of her work as colonial literature and as Native American literature, *Understanding Louise Erdrich* gives ample insight into these two themes. In other words, it makes these themes accessible for instructors with a reasonable about of theory and research, and thus translates into a strong teaching tool.