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This handbook offers students and researchers a compact introduction to the nineteenth-century American novel in the light of current debates, theoretical concepts, and critical methodologies. The volume turns to the nineteenth century as a formative era in American literary history, a time that saw both the rise of the novel as a genre, and the emergence of an independent, confident American culture. A broad range of concise essays by European and American scholars demonstrates how some of America's most well-known and influential novels responded to and participated in the radical transformations that characterized American culture between the early republic and the age of imperial expansion. Part I consists of 7 systematic essays on key historical and critical frameworks - including debates about race and citizenship, transnationalism, environmentalism and print culture, as well as sentimentalism, romance and the gothic, realism and naturalism. Part II provides 22 essays on individual novels, each combining an introduction to relevant cultural contexts with a fresh close reading and the discussion of critical perspectives shaped by literary and cultural theory.
