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The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel presents new essays covering the one hundred and fifty year history of the African American novel. Experts in the field from the US and Europe address some of the major issues in the genre: passing, the Protest novel, the Blues novel, and womanism among others. The essays are full of fresh insights for students into the symbolic, aesthetic, and political function of canonical and non-canonical fiction. Chapters examine works by Ralph Ellison, Leon Forrest, Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, Alice Walker, John Edgar Wideman, and many others. They reflect a range of critical methods intended to prompt new and experienced readers to consider the African American novel as a cultural and literary act of extraordinary significance. This volume, including a chronology and guide to further reading, is an important resource for students and teachers alike.