



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2006 Volume IV: Native America: Understanding the Past through Things

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## **Let Our Things Speak True: Native American Writers Journey Back**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.04.01, published September 2006

by Barbara McDowell Dowdall

This unit is meant to be a thread woven into the junior year American Literature English core curriculum class. Throughout the year, students will consider the question: How can we uncover the authentic voice of a people, particularly the earliest peoples of the Americas? We will trace the beginnings of European contact with American Indians and their culture, identify the goals, deeds and effects of that contact, observe the myriad ways Europeans and then Euro-Americans filtered, manipulated, misstated or hid evidence of civilizations that existed prior to their arrival and listen to present-day voices for guidance in understanding the past. Using our American literature textbook as a jumping off place, we will evaluate its American Indian content, both in quantity and quality, then venture into the wider world of Indian representation, both media and literary, with a prime focus on expressions by Indians themselves. Students will develop understandings of our First Nations' history and meaning through these readings and research.

(Developed for English III and American Literature, grade 11; recommended for Language Arts, grade 8, and American Literature, grade 11)

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