



# 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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## **The Circle of Life**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.04.04, published September 2006  
by Jayme Holaway Hicks

This unit uses ancient artifacts of the American Indians specifically in the southeastern United States found in mounds to introduce the ideas of more complex literary devices. The story of these artifacts as well as a trip to an ancient shell midden comprise a launch for student writing, reading and analysis of Sherman Alexie's poetry and short stories. The unit culminates in a critical viewing and analysis of the 1998 feature film *Smoke Signals*.

The students will identify literary devices in a variety of texts crucial to reading comprehension. The students will participate in Socratic seminars, crafts, writing responses to text, visual art, and film. The culmination of this unit is the student's story about themselves and the things they use to create their own identity and how those things are similar to ancient artifacts used to create the identity of those who inhabited the United States many years before 1492.

The unit is designed for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade standard English/Language Arts student. It can easily be used in an honors environment by including additional American Indian authors to compare how each author uses literary devices effectively and how the author's personal experience affects their writing. The lessons are designed to be varied to accommodate a variety of learning styles.

(Developed for English and Language Arts, grade 9; recommended for English and Language Arts, grade 9)

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