



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume II: Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small

Real American: Making Literature a Means for Displacing Native American Stereotypes

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How do you view Native Americans? Do you imagine clothing made of deer skin, feathers in a traditional headdress and cooking over an open fire? Or, do you know someone who is Native American and have a completely different idea of what it means to be an American Indian?

With the use of picture books, the students will journey through three distinct regions: the Southwest, Plains (Rocky Mountain Region), and the Eastern Woodlands (Northeast United States). Here, they will learn basic facts about how Native Americans lived in the past, and we will move through time (using an interactive timeline) into the present where we will discover what life is like for a child who is Native American.

The goal of this unit is not only to introduce my students to Native American culture, traditions, storytelling, and art, but also to have discussions about what it means to be an American Indian, both past and present. We will use children's picture books to displace stereotypes, learn about traditional stories and characters, practice interpretation skills with wordless books, and participate in other activities that will give the students a feel of life as a Native American, past and present.

(Developed for Language Arts and Social Science, grade 2; recommended for Language Arts and Social Science, grades 2-3)

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