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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2016 Volume I: Contemporary American Indian History

Dreaming from the Margins, Living in the In-Between: Identity, Culture, and the Power of Voice

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This unit was developed for use in an Advanced Placement English Literature or Language classroom. While one may not think contemporary American Indian history belongs in an AP English classroom, if carefully crafted, it can work. The skills on which both English exams focus—the ways authors of non-fiction and of imaginative literature use language to achieve a particular end—can be taught using historical documents in conjunction with and to frame Louise Erdrich’s *The Round House* and Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the anchor texts for this unit. Students will develop close reading skills by analyzing laws, policies, and Supreme Court cases that established the unique relationship between Native nations and the federal government, and shaped policies on Native sovereignty and self-determination. They will examine how narrative voice and point of view portray identity and culture. Finally, they will explore how visual images convey voice in *Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices*. In their culminating project, students will choose one piece from *Dreaming* to “mimic” in a piece about their own sense of identity.

(Developed for AP English Literature and Composition, grades 11-12; recommended for English 3, grade 11, and English 4, grade 12)

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