



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2018 Volume III: Adaptation: Literature, Film and Society

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## **Native American Literature Adaptation: From Smoke Signals to Reading Comprehension**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 18.03.05, published September 2018  
by Irene Jones

In this unit, the students will compare/ contrast, analyze scenes, characters, and literature through rigorous instructions to achieve reading comprehension for a group of fourth grade English Learners. I will be using two reading materials: a short story, This is What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona from the book The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie, and Smoke Signals: A Screen Play, also by Alexie. The film I will be using is Smoke Signals, an adaptation of the short story by Sherman Alexie.

In my unit, the students will use anchor charts and graphic organizers to explore the themes of Native American issues (alcoholism, domestic violence, and stereotypes). Students will compare and contrast how these issues are presented in the film and the literature. Students will also analyze character traits and motivations of the characters, and how the film interprets the traits. We will discuss how the voiceovers, the landscape, soundtrack, and Indian traps helped the students understand the story.

The bottom line is that I want students to develop reading comprehension skills using visualization, points of view, and inferencing skills. I want students to make use of the new skills to achieve proficiency in reading comprehension.

(Developed for Reading and Writing, grade 4; recommended for ELA, grades 3-5)

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