



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

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

Let Our Things Speak True: Native American Writers Journey Back

Curriculum Unit 06.04.01, published September 2006

by Barbara McDowell Dowdall

Overview

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.

In recent years, a remarkable assemblage of American Indian writers — many of mixed background, some yet searching for the particularities of their origins — have emerged to raise questions about their own identities, Euro-America's impact on their multi-tribal heritage, and most challenging of all, the possibilities for a better future. Nine years ago, in the wake of Michael Dorris' tragic suicide, Dinitia Smith catalogued the new generation: Louise Erdrich, N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, Susan Power, Joy Harjo and Sherman Alexie. Her observation was that, "The new Indian writing is a reflection of these authors' complex lives, growing up walking a cultural tightrope, on the one hand hearing echoes of old tribal stories and on the other immersed in MTV" (D. Smith, 1997). Combining our study grounded in the 11th grade American literature anthology with additional resources of short biographies and fiction, poetry, film, images of things, news articles and historical monographs, we will enhance and amplify the core curriculum without neglecting or changing its direction.

Rationale

The majority of students in my school, a career path (formerly vocational-technical) high school, are African American, who until recently, with the addition of a required African American history course, might easily have traversed their K-12 years with only spotty exposure to a rich artistic and literary heritage. They can easily, I surmise, identify with the experience of American Indians whose voice, experiences and creations have in large part been rendered marginal and, in many cases, been obliterated.

Assuming, then, a sense of spiritual camaraderie, our task in investigating and ultimately appreciating the unique and myriad gifts of American's first nations will comprise a triple challenge: research obstacles, authentic understandings, and accurate writing. The challenges, however, can be transformed into thrilling adventures of exploration, reflection, new insights and skills.

Research obstacles have many manifestations. A paucity of extensive written records where oral traditions prevailed, the vast numbers of different languages spoken (600 is the most recent estimate), and adventurers who were seeking land and loot rather than literary light limited the collection and recording of verbal creations. Assumptions regarding the developmental stage of Indian civilization, in Helen Carr's words, the ". . . idea of the primitive shaped the understanding of Native American literary traditions from the first days of the United States until the modernist period. . ." (Carr, 3). Even in cases where Europeans sought to understand and gather poetic expressions of the first nations, multiple stages of translation, restating, editing, interpreting almost guaranteed a distorted result.

The hidden shoals of search engines like our beloved Google lead Edward Tenner to note that "Google displays irrelevant or mediocre sites on a par with truly expert ones." (2006) Admirably though disturbingly adept at cut-and-paste, students are often reluctant to pause-and-reflect. Nor do many young (and, we must admit, quite a few older) people today possess an extensive reading background that would arm them to discern wheat from chaff on the web or in other mass media. Found objects, whether utilitarian or artistic "things", are open to their own misinterpretation or simple lack of information. While we can appreciate their craft and beauty, we cannot be sure that we understand their place and purpose.

A plethora of standardized tests, as well as classroom experience, reveal that our students often combine below grade-level reading skills with general lack of interest in traditional academic content. Although I am occasionally tempted to blame that mass media world out there for this sorry state of affairs, my responsibility, nevertheless, is to seek to spark a connection and to help it grow to a warmth- and light-giving flame.

By way of encouragement in the consideration of meaningful questions, students will arrive at a place where, their interest having been piqued, their research skills sharpened, their comprehension honed, they will be eager to create a written record of their findings to share with others of their generation — perhaps through that heretofore perceived as pernicious mass media.

Introduction

On a hot summer day in St. Louis, Missouri, a band of middle-aged Unitarian Universalist women adventurers of European background — myself among them — our consciousness raised by a morning lecture at our denomination's annual gathering, traversed the Mississippi River by light rail, and climbed on to a municipal bus destined for the Cahokia Mounds in Collinsville, Illinois. These extensive earthworks, monumental in scope and longevity, could only be accepted by earlier explorers as possible creations of the Lost Tribes of Israel or perhaps the accomplishments of earlier Welsh adventurers. Robert Thayer, in a Unitarian Universalist Historical Society presentation referenced above reported that the Spanish explorer, Cortes reported that upon his being introduced to the Aztec monarch Montezuma, the Mesoamerican clearly said, "Welsh!" Should this have been the case, Cortes would have shown his solidarity with the theories of other Europeans who

were willing to consider innumerable other candidates for the origins of New World peoples. Charles Mann notes that candidates for origins included ". . .Phoenicians, Basques, Chinese, Scythians, Romans, Africans, 'Hindoos,' ancient Greeks, Assyrians, Egyptians, the inhabitants of Atlantis. . ." and the Welsh! (143) With the information gained by a visit to the mounds and their Interpretive Center, later to be shared with the students at A. Philip Randolph, I began to create a framework for explorations and discoveries in Philadelphia and for enriching the American literature curriculum.

Explorers or Invaders?

Mounds as Exemplars

Cahokia Mounds history might serve as a paradigm for European adventures in the New World: the mounds were actually constructed by the Mississippians (predecessors in the area to the lake Woodland culture), who had moved on before the arrival of the Cahokians. The largest of the massive earthworks is named Monks Mound in recognition of Spanish missionaries. Thus the creator society became invisible and, until recent times, remained unacknowledged and unexplained.

Average American Childhood

As a child growing up in the United States in the 1950's and 1960's, I felt quite at home playing cowboys and Indians, although in truth, I do not recall anyone insisting on taking the part of an Indian. Happy that "cowgirl" (who would want to be Dale Evans waiting back at the ranch or the forever tripping-over-a-rock damsel in distress?) was not a role anyone was expected to play, I donned my winter holiday gift cowboy outfit, slipped my toy gun into its holster and waited patiently for spring when it would be time to run up and down the block yelling "You're dead!" at my playmates. In the interim there were hours to spend watching television with Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and the Lone Ranger, the latter being in perpetuity the "man with the plan" which he imparted into Tonto's (a common Spanish epithet meaning "stupid," "wild," or "fool," although not necessarily intended as an insult by the producers*) ear. *(<http://www.endeavorcomics.com/largent/ranger/faq.html>)

Treatment of Native Americans in those black-and-white simple tales was, as I recall, rather benign. Most, except for faithful Tonto, were extras, in the background, occasionally offering assistance to the main characters, but lacking names, homes, gainful employment and families. Movie Westerns presented a much more frightening image of "Injuns," showing homesteads laid waste by raiding war parties or full-scale battles with the noble U.S. Cavalry, resplendent in their blue uniforms and epaulettes, crisply shooting the enemy off their horses, even as an occasional private or corporal bit the dust, felled by a deadly arrow. It should be noted that all youngsters of my generation received their earliest medical training when we were instructed never to pull an arrow from a wound.

I had no awareness that Wissahickon Avenue, the street which intersected mine, three doors away, named in turn after a lengthy creek running through Northwest Philadelphia, meant 'catfish stream,' and that the original appellation was derived from the Indian word, 'misamekhan.' It would be difficult for any person, native or tourist, to travel around Philadelphia without encountering a street bearing a name from the Indian past: Manayunk, Passayunk, Cherokee, Wyoming, Susquehanna. Ironically, attribution for many of these names is assigned to the Delaware tribe, called after an Englishman, Lord de la Warr! The tribe itself, and its associated group, the Lenni Lenape, can now be found in Oklahoma and Ontario, forced there through policies that resemble, at least in part, the brutal forced Westward relocation of the Cherokees that has come to be known as "The Trail of Tears."

No visible or self-identified Native American attended my elementary, junior or senior high school or college, although the Girl Scout camp I attended at ages 10 and 11 was respectfully though mysteriously called "Indian Run." In elementary school, we sang in chorus, "One little, two little, three little Indians," unaware that its reversal second verse, "Ten little, nine little, eight little Indians," could be described by a modern Native American writer as indicating the Anglo American expectation that this first American league of nations would indeed disappear.

Even as my home and religious training propelled me to civil rights, feminist, peace and gay rights marches, meetings and letter-writing campaigns, it has remained remarkably easy to maintain a comfortable ignorance regarding Native American creations, issues and plights. Native Americans, activists now in their own cause, did not see the need to wait for me or for my denomination to develop sensitivity and awareness. The Unitarian Universalist Association, at its General Assembly this year in St. Louis, opened with a now-required and traditional tribute to Native Americans. Unable to locate a tribe nearby, the church leadership cast their invitation to the next nearest Indian council. Came back the reply: "We have neither the time nor interest to travel a distance to make you feel good. Work on your own issues!" Nevertheless, the four-day program featured several workshops devoted to American Indian history and concerns, one of which was entitled "Indian Mounds and White Responses." Attendance at this 8:00 a.m. session filled the room to overflowing. I came away with three learnings: first, that a visit to the Cahokia Mounds was an immediate priority; second, that one of the greatest mistaken concepts adopted by Europeans "Coming to America" was that Native American culture was fixed in time, unchanging and inflexible; third, that some Native nations encountered difficulties with climate change not unlike what the world at large faces today.

Textbooks and curricula of the 1950's and 1960's provided a firm foundation for ignorance regarding Native Americans. Today's texts reflect a substantially greater inclusivity and sensitivity. The survey I anticipate sharing with my students contains both primary sources and commentary that indicate real progress. Native voices published independently, however, make clear that there is still much work to do in addressing what Buffy St. Marie, quoted by Paula Gunn Allen in the preface to her book *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*, points out is a continuing neglect of monumental proportions: Germany benefited from a grand reconstruction effort following World War II. Native American nations still wait, their numbers, though rebounding somewhat in recent years, will probably never recover from the decimation brought by disease and devastating displacements. My students may raise questions of a similar nature in noting that Congress provided compensation for former Japanese internees, but is unlikely even to discuss the idea of reparations for slavery.

Literary Invaders

Robert Spiller and compatriots exemplified the drive toward making Native Americans

invisible, at least in the field of literature, when they suggested in their tome, *Literary History of the United States*, that:

- The literary history of this nation began when the first settler from abroad of
- sensitive mind paused in his adventure long enough to feel that he was under a
- different sky, breathing new air. . . (xix).

Showing respect, but limited understanding, Spiller generously suggests that although Indian literary traditions are primarily oral, their expression is ". . . analogous in many of its details of form and substance to the genres familiar to students of European literature" (Spiller et al, 695). Native writer and editor, Paula Gunn Allen demurs, almost a quarter of a century later: "The stories in the oral tradition follow certain aesthetic

processes that differ from the processes employed in the modern Western tradition" (Allen, 1989: 2). My students, by spending time looking at works in both traditions, will develop their own conclusions.

As an interesting sidelight, Spiller reveals the minimal knowledge a mid-20th century specialist in United States history had regarding Mayan written literature by giving credit to the "early Spanish colonizers" for preserving "some poor fragments." Spanish Bishop Landa, one of those very same colonizers, had in fact burned hundreds of volumes of the Maya books (probably of many different kinds—almanacs, histories, religious guides to divination, etc.) as a corrective for this 'devil's literature.' A subsequent father of the church did indeed, however, help translate verses preserved by Mayans themselves into Spanish, paving the way for our ultimate opportunity to read them in English.

Stolen Language

The exact number of Native American languages (not dialects) existing prior to European contact is not known. Estimates vary from 200 to 600. What is known is that starting with Columbus, indigenous languages were ignored or devalued, squelched or marginalized so that today, the majority have disappeared and the many more (there are some strong ones!) are headed in that direction.

The importance of language preservation to a people cannot be minimized. In the words of O'odham speaker and educator Arlene Joyce Hughes: "Our language, our Himdag, is the number-one source of our soul, our pride, our being, our strength, and our identity." When, as a youngster in school, a teacher learned she was speaking her own language and not English, she was summarily "dragged. . .into a closet in the basement. . ." and left there. She can still ". . .smell the mildew of the dark closet. . .and the sound of footsteps from above." Today, Hughes is part of a program funded by the federal government that is dedicated to preserving the language for its own sake, and encouraging the "meta linguistic awareness" that provides students with an academic advantage (McCarty).

"Connecticut Shore:" Our languages are remembered here/by the shapes of stone/whose truth names embrace/Algonquin words/that sank beneath/the measured weight/yet remain undrowned/by imperial English. Joseph Bruchac (Holt's commentator on Native American literature)

Objectives

In American public schools today our objectives seem to have been rendered quite simple while the means of achieving those objectives remain deeply complex. Although educators have traditionally sought to "nurture, protect and prepare" students for lifelong learning and satisfaction in life, a powerful focus on standardized testing combined with growing difficulties in preparing effectively for a demanding college entrance requirements and a sharply competitive and changeable job market create pressures and expectations that test instructors' mettle in dramatic ways.

My objectives, therefore, combine the basics of reading, writing, listening and speaking with the goal of sharpening critical thinking, problem-solving, technology and active citizenship.

Awareness and Critical Questioning

The awareness that I hope will become a part of my students' lives "from this course forward" will begin the first day with our first look at the 11th grade anthology. Students will be asked to consider the how's and why's of both text and artwork selection and placement. We will consider what the class as a whole knows about the Indian Nations of the New World. I can provide a mini-lesson overview, perhaps making use of portions of *1491* by Charles Mann as a jumping off place. Once we have established a general understanding and had practice in questioning techniques, students will be invited to continue to raise questions throughout our study of literature and extending their analytical practices in consideration of all media.

Strategies

As counterpoint to European actions and words, students will develop the tools for "reading" native cultures through primary verbal and nonverbal sources: things involved with creating housing, clothing, domestic artifacts, environmental alterations and story telling. We will create a rubric for scoring likely levels of authenticity, or as my maternal forbearer often said, "Consider the source."

The basic textbook for the 11th grade English core curriculum is Holts' *Elements of Literature, Fifth Course, Essentials of American Literature*. As an opening exercise, students will pursue their own definitions of what is "American" through brainstorming and cooperative learning group consensus. They will be invited to reflect on their learnings from the American history course they took in the 10th grade. We will then survey our textbook to see what is included vis a vis Native American and other non-European communities and individuals. As an example, the opening page offers on the left-hand side a photograph of Ute petroglyphs and on the right J. Winthrop's metaphor for the God-blessed "City upon a hill." To its credit, Holt highlights the more current conception of the explorer's "finds": "Columbus did not discover a new world; he established contact between two worlds, both already old." J.H. Perry (Holt, 8).

Our text gives approximately equal space to descriptions of Native American oral traditions and accounts of captivity by an English settler. The publisher does offer a helpful checklist of Native American beliefs culled from their own expressions that include their focus on practical information, high regard for the natural world without man as the center, devotion to metaphor, a cyclical rather than linear view of time, traditional celebration of life events and respect for the essence of an observance over, say, the mode of transport (walking, riding horseback, driving) to that observance.

Students will have an opportunity to match or differ from these conclusions by reading and interpreting on their own the literature of Native Americans in the manner of *Walam Olum*, the Delaware Indian (however suspect its origin) creation myth (Velie, 1991, 92-133). Youngsters can then compare these and other texts with those provided in our Holt anthology.

Our emphasis and search will have a local focus. Student will research the names, customs, beliefs and community history of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania tribes (two being the Lenni Lenape and the Delaware), creating a map to show pre and post William Penn settlements. We will visit the Museum of Natural History and the University of Pennsylvania Museum to view artifacts and representations of natural environments. Close by our school are woods surrounding the Wissahickon Creek, a much-visited statue of a Native American

"generic" Indian chief and geological features that can amplify student findings on pre-Columbian environments. Students will combine note taking from their research and expeditions with entries in an artifact "diary" where things created and developed by Native Americans will speak for themselves. A classroom timeline that combines Native American and European community histories will be initiated this fall, maintained and added to as the year progresses.

We will make use of "A Checklist for Evaluating Native American Children's Books" developed and distributed through the American Indian Library Association website — both for a collection selected from the nearby public library and for our own anthology. Students will then evaluate the evaluation and determine whether a similar rubric could be developed for texts depicting African Americans, women, differently abled, the elderly and other groups (<http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/AILLitAward.doc>).

An important aspect of our investigations and research will be the attention paid to reading strategies. In 2004, David C. Garnes, Graduate Research Associate and Chester P. Wichowski, Project Director at Temple University's Center for Professional Development in Career and Technical Education developed a reading program that drew on well-established approaches to reading comprehension. In its adaptation of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy, Temple emphasized the establishment of routines easily codified with a checklist. Together we predict what we think a given text will say, establish a purpose for the reading, check and connect our prior knowledge, survey the text for titles, subtitles, visuals and real-world applications. In the midst of the reading, we clarify by focusing on difficult vocabulary, re-reading unclear sentences or passages, scanning ahead, making notes via graphic organizers or outlines, and asking for help from peers or the teacher. Also during the reading, students (and the teacher) form questions about the text, check our ability to identify the who, what, where, when, why and how of the text, guessing what information will come next, and forming a question that again makes a link with real-world issues. Finally, the summary process after reading can include paraphrasing or retelling material to peers, creating test questions, identifying and recording main points, producing an outline, web or map and confirming one's conclusions with a partner or group. The items presented here can all be recorded briefly in journal form as the process unfolds. Though the routine might seem dull at first, the habits formed can lead to an accurate and thorough comprehension of both narrative and expository texts. An exit pass (The Last Word) where a student jots down one concept or detail understood and one still found puzzling can provide the teacher with valuable feedback and a focus for the next day's beginning of class.

The Chronology

As we move through the year, students will consider what is in the text, how it is presented, and more tellingly, what is missing.

Initiation

Page two of our Holt anthology begins with a timeline titled "Encounters and Foundations to 1800." Of 21 Literary Events, only one relates to Native Americans: "1682 — Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative is published" (Holt, 2). Of 37 items under Political and Social Events, four make mention of Native Americans. No information regarding displacement or decimation of indigenous tribes appears in the timeline. There is, however, clear reference to Indian deaths to disease including the lack of immunity, a graphic description of the effects of small pox by William Bradford, and a cogent summary of the outcome for Native and Newcomer: "The so-called settlement of America was a resettlement, a reoccupation of land made waste by the diseases and demoralization introduced by the newcomers" (Holt, 8). Considerable space is devoted to the misadventures of Cabeza de Vaca with the apparent purpose of sharing his descriptions of the diet of starving

Gulf Coast indigenous peoples.

Required Reading

The first citywide required reading is Arthur Miller's, *The Crucible*. Ironically, the one character in the historical record who is an American Indian is transformed by Miller into an African servant. Did Miller consider two victimized groups interchangeable or was he noting the potential erasure of a people?

The Gift Not Taken

Iroquois Constitution, with a focus on peace among five American Indian nations, does not provide as complete a picture as Charles C. Mann succeeded in doing in his July 4, 2005, op-ed piece, "The Founding Sachems" in the *New York Times*. Noting that the Indians of the Northeast, hence those closest to the minor and major birthplaces of liberty, Boston and Philadelphia respectively, provided role models of individual liberty, diffusion of power, and legal protections for women, Mann points out that our Constitution passed on fully implementing all three (<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F10811FF355E0C778CDDAE0894DD404482>).

The Real Thanksgiving Story

Holt provides an oil painting visual of the first thanksgiving. No corrective of the mythical tale is offered. In his fascinating volume, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James Loewen deconstructs the distortions, particularly the reality of who fed whom, when the concept was made a holiday (1863) and the even later attachment of Pilgrims to the celebration (1890's) (93-97).

The Great Popularizer

Although the Holt anthology does not include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wildly popular poem, "Hiawatha", J.D. McClatchy uses the setting name, Gitche Gumee as his title in an essay on Longfellow's pre-eminence with the people if not with the critics (175). The traditional view of this tale of Native American bravery, remembered widely by lines from its section IX: "On the shores of Gitche Gumee/Of the shining Big-Sea-Water,/Stood Nokomis, the old woman,/Pointing with her finger westward,/O'er the water pointing westward,/To the purple clouds of sunset." Robert Spiller identifies the source of the story that Longfellow used as Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Spiller acknowledges that this collector of folklore both invented some of his material and "mixed the traditions of various tribes" (694). Spiller describes Longfellow's acquisition of the tale as "favorable," and states his sincere belief that ". . .it is through Hiawatha that most Americans even now learn what little they know about the American Indian story" (Spiller et al, 694).

Helen Carr finds this "knowledge" less than propitious: "Myth is a Janus-faced concept; the word is used of the deepest insights and the most deluding lies"(Carr, 102). Hiawatha, the noble Indian warrior leader (actually conflated from several other individuals) stoically accepts the future for his defeated nation. Carr argues that the poet helped facilitate ". . .the acceptance of the displacement and destruction of the Indian. . .". It is a virtual certainty that this result was farthest from Longfellow's intention. The effect, however, holds sway. As students read Hiawatha in its entirety and investigate the artistic license Longfellow took, they can decide whether this well-intentioned effort had the impact that Carr suggests (106-107).

Surrender

Chief Joseph's eloquent speech (Holt, 454) is on a par in quality with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Missing,

however, are expressions by Native Americans that show resistance and defiance rather than abject, though understandable surrender. Chief Seattle's speech might be an instructive comparison despite its questionable authenticity: "Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished" (<http://www.halcyon.com/arborhts/chiefsea.html>. Students may wish to look into figures, stories and poems of resistance and rebellion.

Modern Writer Present

The only remaining Native American writer in Holt is M. Scott Momaday, represented by his story, "The Way to Rainy Mountain" (1999). The narrator returns to the land of his youth to say farewell to his grandmother who ". . . belonged to the last culture to evolve in America." Her Kiowa tribe had once ruled the plain but succumbed eventually to the "unrelenting advance of the U.S. Cavalry." Momaday paints a vivid picture of the landscape and the lost years. He has no choice but to move on. Students can research the Kiowas and other Plains tribes. A bitterly ironic surprise awaits the student researcher on the Google image page for the Kiowas (<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&lr=&q=kiowa&sa=N&tab=wi>).

Modern Writers Presented

To prepare class for individual investigations, I will provide four mini lessons:

I. James Welch, *Winter in the Blood*; II. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*; III. Susan Power, *Stone Women*; IV. Poetry samplings from *From Totems to Hip-Hop*, *A Gathering of Spirit*, *Sister Nations*, *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*; *The Bridge Called My Back*.

I will consider theme, genre, characterization, and voice.

Modern Writer(s) Proposed

Research: Individual Choices. Students may choose from any of the writers listed above or pursue a writer found on the IPL website, then create biographical sketches and in-depth analysis of a minimum of 10 poems, and/or 5 short stories, and or 1 novel (<http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/>).

A class PowerPoint supplement to the textbook will offer correctives to erroneous juxtapositions (an 1830 painting of Black Cloud with the Puritan writings) and expansions chronologically to connect artifacts, their "stories," and American Indian literary milestones. Images for this portion of the unit are available through Yale, the New York Public Library, the Internet Public Library, the National Indian Museum at the Smithsonian, National Geographic and the Mashantucket Pequot/ Native Lifeways Museum and Research Center.

In this way, students will gain a solid historical perspective and the power to resist the shifting winds in fashionable views of Native Americans — not as obstacles to God's plan for Europeans to conquer the Americas, nor as uncivilized savages, nor as romantic manifestations of the ideal human — but as a variety of societies who left a wealth of evidence on how they survived, organized and persisted long before the adventurers from abroad arrived to alter their universe. They may, perhaps, be able to offer more felicitous expressions to the Pennsylvania State Legislature website which describes Native Americans as "Mongoloid," "unaware of European culture," characterized by "Stone Age living," and explains their move from Pennsylvania environs being due to "pressure of white settlement" and suggests that they "drifted West" (http://www.legis.state.pa.us/wvov/vc/visitor_info/pa_history/pa_history.htm). A slightly different slant is offered

at an Oklahoma town's website: "1831 - Delaware Indians, originally from the Lenape People from the Delaware Region, complete their move to Kansas from Missouri. 1854 - Kansas becomes a Territory. The Delaware Nation lands were surveyed and each tribe member received compensation for all but a small portion of their land by the United States, which was dispersed in the 'Delaware Trust Land' sale" (<http://www.ozawkie.org/history.htm>). If one seeks information from the tribe itself, the picture becomes clearer still: "The ever growing influence and takeover of the European colonists, forced the tribes to relocate either from conflict, or less than favorable land exchange. The relocation of the Delaware, or Lenape was very difficult, as they had to renounce their beliefs and customs in order to integrate into Western tribes" (http://www.lenapeindian.com/FAQ/lenape_FAQ_ans_009.htm).

As a final aspect of this unit, students will have the opportunity to compare European treatment of Amerindian culture with that of African Americans. A common lack of understanding ruled European approaches to both groups. Again, from Spiller's work:

American literature has ever been ". . .aware of its responsibility in the making of a nation from a complex of peoples in voluntary union" (xxi). Through study, my students will help free both the peoples involuntarily made part of that union, and their history as well.

Activities

Materials Needed:

Student journal books

Computers with internet access

Anthologies of Native American poetry, essays and short stories

Historical monographs of Pennsylvania Indian history

Standard American literature textbooks

Chart Paper

Markers, Tape

Each lesson may be conducted over one to three days, depending of the availability of space in one's core curriculum. The target group is 11th graders, heterogeneously assigned to third year English with a focus on American literature. The lessons may be adapted for middle or elementary school, based on the choice of literature. They may be presented together as a unit or spread out through the school year.

Lesson Plan # 1

Speaking of the Blackfeet . . . James Welch said this: "They weren't particularly noble Indians. They weren't particularly bad Indians. They were human beings. That's really what I wanted to get across, the idea that historical Indians were human beings. They weren't clichés."

(<http://poetry.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/>)

Content/Concepts: Acknowledging and Countering Stereotypes

Goal: To raise student awareness of both the widespread influence yet stereotypical views of American Indians in modern culture; to establish a framework for both noticing and analyzing the incidence of these limiting attitudes.

Instructional Strategy/Delivery: Brainstorm ideas, images of what constitutes being an American. Record the contributions on large newsprint and post. Distribute Bingo Sheets. After activity, analyze in regard to percentages of negative, positive or simple informational aspects of each square's item.

Performance Task: Move about classroom, speaking to each classmate at least once, finding individuals who can answer questions in Bingo blocks. Only one answer permissible from each person until each classmate has been approached. Write answer in block and have classmate who provides the answer initial the block. Score one point for each completed row.

Text/Media: Handout:

Find someone who. . .

(table 06.04.01.01 available in print form)

Extension: Homework or Research: Select two items new to you and track down five facts for each. View the movie *Pocahontas*. Compare with real-life story via the web (<http://www.powhatan.org/pocc.html>).

Lesson Plan # 2

"An odd thing occurs in the minds of Americans when Indian civilization is mentioned: little or nothing." Paula Gunn Allen

Content/Concepts: Textbook Survey and Discovery

Instructional Strategy/Delivery: Students as Detective/Scholars

Performance Task: Utilizing both the table of contents, timelines, and index, create a list of all textual and pictorial Native American-based "elements" in our textbook. Roughly compare with other materials. Begin web search for oral traditions and writings of Native Americans that might be added to round out the volume.

Text/Media: Holt, *Elements of Literature*, Fifth Course

Extension: Homework or Research: Write a proposal to the School Reform Commission requesting redress for the omissions. Make a case for a particular poem, short story, or novel excerpt that should be added to the text as well as ancillaries like film and trade books that should be made part of the 11th grade curriculum.

Lesson Plan # 3

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again. William Penn

[the white runners] should have walkt along by the River Delaware or the next Indian path to it . . . should have walkt for a few Miles and then have sat down and smoakt a Pipe, and now and then have shot a Squirrel, and not have kept up the Run, Run all day. Lappawinsoe, Lenni Lenape chief

Content/Concepts: William Penn and Indians of the Delaware Valley: Promises Kept

Instructional Strategy/Delivery: Convergence of art, politics and religion

Performance Task:

1. View artist's rendering of William Penn's Treaty with the Indians.
Write a journal entry telling the story from Penn's, then the Indians' point of view. Check whether it is possible to identify any of the Indians by name.
2. Read the story of the 1737 Walking Purchase. Write a letter by an imaginary Indian attorney to William Penn's sons explaining what legal actions you propose to take and your reasons why.
3. Investigate the fate of the Delaware Lenni Lenape tribes in the years, decades, and centuries after their encounter with the Penn family.
4. Create a poster that features a story or writing by a Lenni Lenape from any era. Decorate with sketches of items printed in the history book, *Pennsylvania*.

Text/Media: http://www.delawaretribeofindians.nsn.us/walking_purchase.html

Extension: Homework or Research: Fill in a Pennsylvania and U.S. map showing the movement of the Delaware Lenni Lenape tribes. Write an original poem or story to record any segment of their history.

Lesson Plan # 4

". . .the name and memory of Hiawatha. . .has been confused with two Indian divinities, the one Iroquois, the other Algonquin, and his history has been distorted and obscured almost beyond recognition." Horatio Hale

Content/Concepts: The Power of Literature to Misinform: "Hiawatha"

Instructional Strategy/Delivery: Paired Guided Reading

Performance Task:

1. In a small cooperative learning group of 3 or 4, read a portion of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Hiawatha." Write a summary of that portion. Include notes on literary devices used, including rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, simile, metaphor and imagery. Report out to class for gathering of the complete story.
2. In the same group, read your portion of the Horatio Hale account of the life of the real Hiawatha.
3. Use a Venn diagram to assess where the stories differ and converge.

Text/Media:

1. "Hiawatha" from website: <http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/hiawatha.html>
2. Biography of the real Hiawatha by Horatio Hale, 1883
<http://www.markshep.com/nonviolence/Hiawatha.html>
3. Selected "warrior" poems from *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*.

Extension: Homework or Research: (1) Investigate the contemporary reception to Longfellow's poem and current views (from invisibility to parody). Write a persuasive essay for a literary criticism text recommending its inclusion or exclusion in a modern-day high school curriculum.

(2) Read Paul A. W. Wallace's *White Roots of Peace: Iroquois Book of Life*, chapters: "Hiawatha Sees Himself," "Combing the Snakes Out of Atotarho's Hair," and "World Citizens," then write an informational essay comparing Hiawatha's Indian legend-based role in the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy with the simplification/distortion in Longfellow's rendering.

Lesson Plan # 5

"American Indians have been written about from the time of the intrusion of white men on the Western Hemisphere. . . The instances of American Indian authors expressing their personal views of the human condition have, until the last few years, been rare and unnoticed." T.D. Allen

Content/Concepts: Indian Writers of Today: Lives, Themes, Voices

Instructional Strategy/Delivery: Literary Exploration

Performance Task: Combine name searches in American Indian anthologies with searches on the web for a writer who has written both poetry and fiction, short story or in novel form. Create a book cover to symbolize your contents: short biography, timeline, list of friends and associates, list of writings, one poem with explication, one prose excerpt with explanation of context.

Text/Media: Anthologies compiled by Ishmael Reed, Alan R. Velie, Paula Gunn Allen, Diane Glancy & Mark Nowak; novels: *Ceremony* and *Winter in the Blood*.

<http://www.ipl.org/div/natam> (Click on poets)

Extension: Homework or Research: Create a mini-bio to be placed on the class wall timeline. Select one date from your author's life, learn and record one literary and one historical event that coincide with that date. Create post-its to apply in line with your mini biography.

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use