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Rewriting the Narrative of American History: American Indian Identity and the Process of Recovery

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Teaching Situation and Rationale

“For minority cultures like those of Native Americans to resist absorption, for them to maintain identity, this body of communication...heretofore omitted – must be articulated” - Paul Eisenstein¹

In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, American Indian writer, teacher and activist Vine Deloria writes, “Easy knowledge about Indians is a historical tradition,”² fueled by pervasive stereotypes, invisibility, and a “tremendous amount of misinformation”³ (Deloria 12). Omitted history is pervasive when it comes to relating the “colonial dispossession” of Native lands and cultures in North America.⁴ Illuminating this history is one of the primary aims of the three books my students will study in this unit, along with the theme of recovering cultural identity.

I live and teach in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was founded as a Creek Indian settlement in 1828.⁵ Most of my students are not aware of the Native American history of our city, either because they are not from Tulsa (several were raised in other countries and we also have a high mobility rate), or because they do not encounter it in the textbooks of their required Oklahoma and American History classes. I teach at one of the most diverse high schools in my state, so my students come from a variety of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Nearly 50% of students at East Central High School are Hispanic, 22% are African American, 13% White, 5% American Indian, 5% Asian and 5% identify as Multi-Racial. My classes reflect that same diversity. Academically, even my Advanced Placement Language and Composition classes are composed of students who have varying ability levels, several of whom are English Language Learners. Some of my students are reading at or above grade level and are comfortable with the process of interpreting literature, while others are reading below grade level and have a more limited vocabulary. All of my students qualify for free or reduced lunch, based on their parents' income, and most work after school jobs (up to 30-40 hours a week), either because they are self-supporting or because they need to help with finances at home. Those factors can be a challenge when assigning homework or independent reading, as students have limited time outside of school for either, and some struggle with completing it. Therefore, I have to be creative when thinking about how to make the most efficient use of reading time in class, as well as structuring out of class reading assignments and homework so students are more likely to complete them.

This unit focuses on how each of the following works responds to a particular crisis in American Indian history: *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* (Angie Debo), *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Vine Deloria, Jr.), and *Winter in the Blood* (James Welch). My students will explore the primary concerns expressed by each of these American regional writers, and study how they are conveyed through each author's rhetorical choices (each work's particular context, purpose, topic/focus, audience and voice), and overlapping themes.

All my students are smart, funny, interesting people who each bring a unique perspective to the study of literature. I strive to bring them experiences that will broaden their horizons and help them see the connections between different genres of literature, as well as how different writings were influenced by the historical content in which they were written. In AP English, we are always looking at writing through the lens of the rhetorical triangle (the interrelationship between author, topic, audience, purpose and context), and the works in this unit lend themselves perfectly to that kind of contextual analysis. Because they are members of very diverse ethnic groups, and many of them have to navigate a divide between their home and school cultures, I think my students will find the issues of culture and identity in these works to be relevant and interesting. I also believe it's important for my students to understand the history of our city, so reading *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* will expose them to Tulsa's history, while also allowing me to introduce them to various aspects of the vibrant American Indian culture present in our city today. Although I will implement this unit with my 11th grade AP Language and Composition classes, it would be appropriate for any American Literature or American Studies class.

Objectives

This cross-curricular unit will address a number of learning objectives, allowing students to develop their literacy skills through independent study as well as collaboration. Students will develop research and multimedia presentation skills, develop visual literacy through analysis of non-print texts, and analyze the rhetorical strategies used in three non-fiction texts written in different genres. Students will familiarize themselves with major events in contemporary American Indian history as they relate to each of these texts, while developing an appreciation for the early Creek history of our local community, Tulsa. Students will engage in collaborative discussions about the interplay of history and identity, demonstrate understanding of the historical and thematic connections across the texts, and identify literary and rhetorical devices, while using them to support textual analysis. Throughout the unit, students will write in various modes for a variety of purposes, using the brainstorming process to generate ideas.

The Unit

For the most part, the unit will proceed chronologically. I will introduce it by showing my class the Facebook page for KOSU's *Invisible Nations* project, and playing a short segment on Tulsa's early history posted there ("Tracing Tulsa's Creek Roots"). After that I will project Tulsan J. D. Colbert's map of early tribal allotted lands overlaid onto a map of modern Tulsa and have students come up and mark the spot where they currently live, so they can see what was there around 1900. Taking them back about 80 years prior, we will begin reading

the first two chapters of *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* by Oklahoma historian Angie Debo (“Ancient Tulsa” and “Tulsey Town in the West”), to establish the context of early Tulsa as a Creek community. We will then watch the PBS documentary, *Indians, Outlaws and Angie Debo*, to provide more information about the writer and her audience, as well as her purpose (challenging the accepted version of events in early Oklahoma history). At this point, students will be reading chapters from the book at home (they will have one chapter at a time to read every two days, with a study guide and rhetorical analysis assignment to guide their reading; these will be discussed in class the following day). We will also be looking at photographs from the Tulsa Historical Society and Tulsa’s American Indian Resource Center that illustrate some of the people and events in the book, as well as entries from the “Indian Pioneer Papers”, an Oklahoma oral history collection covering 1861-1936.

As students are reading the Tulsa history book, we will also begin reading chapters in class from *Custer Died for Your Sins* by Vine Deloria, as there is an overlap in themes (abuse of Indians by whites, America as a corrupt society, and communal land as a link to cultural identity). For example, in Chapter Six, Debo discusses how the thriving Creek settlement of Tulsa began to change as it became a cow town and attracted more white settlers, and in chapters seven and eight she goes on to describe the mounting crisis of “a series of events that was to make of the Indian Territory a white man’s land”.⁶ These included admitting Tulsa to the Union, the discovery of oil, and the work of the Dawes Commission and the allotment process. There is a connection to this in Deloria’s chapter, “Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal” when he writes, “Land was the means of reorganizing the Indian as a human being. It was the method whereby land could be stolen legally and not blatantly”.⁷ This gives us an opportunity to take Deloria’s ideas and see how they relate to our local history. Students will use close reading strategies to analyze the rhetorical and stylistic components of Deloria’s chapters, including how his treatment of the subject matter is influenced by the context in which he was writing.

Activities will include a research component focused on Tulsa’s American Indian past, utilizing local resources such as the American Indian Resource Center, and Gilcrease Museum, and a reading of the poem “Leaving Tulsa” by Jennifer Louise Forrester, which ties into the nonfiction works thematically (addressing identity and land loss). In addition to taking notes, students will identify and chart text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-word connections on post it notes, to increase their engagement with the reading. Students will also analyze photographs from American Indian photographer Horace Poolaw, using the OPTICS analysis protocol (described in the activities section), to conceptualize what Deloria is saying about Native stereotyping by contrasting the dynamic Poolaw photographs with the static photographs of Edward S. Curtis’s “vanishing Indian”.⁸ To bring in a present day illustration of this contrast, we will also watch the short video “Smiling Indians” by the Native comedy troupe the 1491’s, which is dedicated to Curtis and presents an alternative view, as artist Ryan Red Corn explains, “they [Curtis’s portraits] shouldn’t dominate our idea of how Indians look or who they are”,⁹ much like Poolaw’s. We will also watch video clips from the movie “Reel Injun” when we read “The Problem of Indian Leadership”, where Deloria discusses media stereotypes. And when we read his chapter on “Indian Humor” we will again look at a few skits from the 1491’s and also read “Humor Is My Green Card. A Conversation with Sherman Alexie”, in which Alexie talks about using humor as “a way of joining their tribe”.¹⁰ Students will also compare and contrast Alexie’s ideas about Indian politics in this article with Deloria’s. We will also reference that chapter when we discuss the use of humor in *Winter in the Blood*.

Building on what students have learned, we will conclude the unit by reading an important work of American Indian fiction, James Welch’s *Winter in the Blood*. Having just read Deloria’s ideas about the need for

“retribalization”,¹¹ students will connect that to the process the nameless narrator goes through in *Winter in the Blood*. They will apply the same analytical process used with the first two works, to determine how the historical context influences the author’s rhetorical and stylistic choices as he conveys themes of isolation, loss, and the process of cultural recovery through reclaiming homelands. Welch is responding in part, once again, to “the pain that is history as told by the dominant culture”,¹² and the novel culminates with what Welch refers to as “quiet resolutions”,¹³ with the narrator finding “a tribal rather than an individual definition of ‘being’”.¹⁴ As we read, students will also discuss questions of self-identity and integration (how we see ourselves, which culture we identify with, and how assimilation does (or doesn’t) play into that; how does who and where we come from inform who we are?). Activities will include writing “Where I’m From” poems, as well as additional close reading activities analyzing the rhetorical components of the text. This unit will be aligned with the Oklahoma Academic Standards for 11th Grade English Language Arts.

American Indian History Over Time: The Animating Concerns of Three Texts

***Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* - Angie Debo**

Tulsa, Oklahoma has been through many incarnations in its history, but in its earliest days it was a thriving Creek Indian community. In *Tulsa: from Creek Town to Oil Capital* (c. 1947), Oklahoma historian Angie Debo chronicles Tulsa’s early history, from “The Ancient Tulsa” first established by the Lower Creeks emigrating from Lochapoka in Alabama in 1828,¹⁵ to the post-oil boom “Modern Tulsa” of the 1940’s. It is a regional story, but Debo is also writing to a national audience; she is challenging the accepted version of Oklahoma history, and enlightening her readers about injustices the US government and white settlers inflicted upon the Creek Indians, beginning in the 1880’s in the area around modern Tulsa. Throughout, Debo focuses on the importance of communal land to Indian identity, the connection between Indian land loss and natural resource extraction, and the dishonesty and abuse displayed by the US government and white settlers in their dealings with the Indians.

Throughout the book, Debo emphasizes the importance of community and the land to Indian identity. The Lower Creeks emigrated from Lochapoka in Alabama to Tulsa beginning in 1828.¹⁶ In 1836, the Upper Creeks, including Opothle Yahola, followed when they were driven out of Alabama following the “Creek Uprising”. According to Debo, they “gathered...ashes from the center of the square where a sacred fire had been lighted in ceremonial observances” since the town’s beginnings; those ashes would “establish the communal hearth”¹⁷ in their new home, which they named Tallasi, after their scorched homelands in Alabama. When the Lochapokas arrived they kindled a new fire in a dedication ceremony near 17th and Cheyenne, under a giant oak tree; the Council Oak Tree still stands today to commemorate the “formal founding” of Tulsa.¹⁸ Debo chronicles the civic and communal life of this early community, governed by an intricate clan system and grounded firmly in the land. The chief who guided these early settlers through “the first hard years of pioneering” was Achee Yahola. He was the first chief to represent the town in the “councils of the Creek Confederacy”.¹⁹ The community expanded as more Creeks settled in the area and influential Lewis Perryman, a mixed blood who was not a citizen of Lochapoka but “who had adopted the white man’s individualism in managing their property”,²⁰ established the first trading post in the area. He and his relatives attended a Presbyterian boarding school established in 1850 by Robert Loughridge. In 1856 the “Christian

influence” began to reach “Tulsee”.²¹ U.S. agents “discouraged the communal system of agriculture”, which was a core part of the Indian view of the land. More Lochapokas were transitioning to private farming, but the town organization was still central to their community.

In 1856, before the Civil War, Tallasi was a “content and self-sufficient”²² community; then the outbreak of the war divided the young community, and ultimately decimated it. The Creeks of Tallasi lost their peaceful community and their land. The Union Creeks followed Opothle Yahola into exile in Kansas, where they “kept their town organization”, and faithfully observed their ceremonies.²³ In 1866 they finally returned to their “ruined homes”,²⁴ once again reclaiming their communal lands, which they embraced with “thankfulness” and re-established their homes with the ceremonial “town fire”.²⁵ The Perrymans returned and Josiah established the first post office in 1875, and the town became known as “Tulsa”.²⁶ The Perrymans and other settlers established ranches on the land and the town began to grow and thrive again. The square was still the “political center of the community”; the Creek Nation adopted a Constitution in 1867, and the town remained “the local unit of government”.²⁷ New legal practices led to increased crime, but several active Creek churches were established in the area, along with a neighborhood school.²⁸ The mixed blood ranchers hired white laborers by paying a tax to the tribe under Creek law, which led to development of their farms. With the arrival of more white settlers, the sense of community slowly began to change. Federal officials didn’t try to remove white settlers, who were classified as “intruders” under Creek law. Many of these white men became “builders of modern Tulsa”. In 1866, Congress made provisions for the “coming of the railroads”, which Creeks feared would lead to more white settlement.²⁹ This came to pass with what Debo calls “the beginning of modern Tulsa”.³⁰

As Tulsa grew, the disinterest and dishonesty often displayed by the US government and settlers in their dealings with the Indians expanded. The railroads brought more white settlement and business went in to accommodate the increased activity, with H.C. Hall opening the first store in 1883.³¹ Railroad employees, who were considered residents, and “traders” (including hotelkeepers) were licensed and paid taxes to the tribe, despite protests from the Creeks, who resented their presence. According to the U.S. Indian Office, legal white settlers had the same “right of occupancy” as the Creek citizens, and could sell their title to other whites.³² These settlers watched the Creek games and ceremonies with interest, but for the most part the whites “hardly realized they were in the midst of an Indian settlement”.³³ Creek law only applied to Indian citizens, so there was no civil law. There were “Indian police”, but Tulsa was a “wide open” town of the wild west.³⁴ That did not stop the organization of churches or business development, though, which was spurred on by the railroad industry. The railroads led to the burgeoning cattle trade,³⁵ and for 20 years Tulsa was a bustling cow town; Cherokee and Creek ranchers and mixed-blood Indian cattlemen thrived and white cattlemen leased land not assigned to Indian tribes. The tension between the Indians and the settlers of the young, restless town grew, however, as the builders “had no thought of its remaining in Indian country; they would soon sweep away the restraints of tribal tenure, and their own strong hands would shape its future”. The events that followed shortly would make Indian Territory a “white man’s land”.³⁶

Debo often returns to the idea that Indian communities had a very different view of land ownership and the purposes of the land than the US government and the white settlers. The Indians believed in communal ownership of property and viewed land as a part of their identity, as historian Charles Wilkinson notes, “land will always permeate what it means to be Native”;³⁷ in contrast, the government and the settlers viewed land mostly as a commodity or as something to be conquered. Wilkinson also observes, “The concept of sharing, integral to Indian societies, did not jibe well with the individualistic, materialistic attitude that drove the

nation's economic system".³⁸ The move to turn Indians into farmers to make them more like white settlers would also allow non-Indians to extract valuable resources from the land for their own profit; to this end, "The BIA pressed hard for full assimilation of the Five Civilized Tribes".³⁹ In 1887, the General Allotment Act allowed the Bureau of Indian Affairs to "allot" reservations and break up traditional Indian communal land ownership by transferring some lands to tribal members and then opening the rest to purchase by non-Indians.⁴⁰ Beginning in 1889 in western Indian Territory, Indians were allotted individual farms and the surplus lands were opened to homesteaders. Those settlers began to form Oklahoma Territory. The land run into the Cherokee Outlet in 1893 was close to Tulsa, which filled the area with white homesteaders.⁴¹ Also in 1893, the government was appointed to "close out the affairs" of the Indian tribes in the eastern half of "present day Oklahoma". The tribes "resisted" vigorously, as they feared it would destroy their way of life, but Congress abolished their control, and over the next 14 years "tribal institutions were liquidated" and the area was joined with Oklahoma Territory and admitted to statehood.⁴² Congress passed the Curtis Act authorizing the "sale of Indian Territory 'townsites'". Beginning in 1889, US courts were set up; their jurisdiction spread and - with a push from business leaders -Tulsa was incorporated in 1898, the same year land allotment began.⁴³ The agreement between the Dawes Commission and the Creeks to plat and appraise the townsite was ratified May 25, 1901.⁴⁴

Resource extraction and land loss were soon to be inextricably linked for many Indian tribes. In the Dakotas in 1874, discovery of minerals in the Black Hills' led to the nullification of their 1868 treaty, and the dismantling of the Great Sioux Reservation.⁴⁵ Similarly, in Oklahoma on June 25, 1901 (one month after the agreement with the Dawes Commission), investors and oil men began descending after drillers struck oil with the first producing well in Red Fork, just outside Tulsa. This frenzy for oil became the backdrop for platting and selling the townsite.⁴⁶ The sale of lots began in 1902. A few "unoccupied" lots sold at auction, yielding the Creeks just \$659. The rest of the land was sold for a "fraction of the appraised valuation to the holders of occupancy titles or "dummies" whose names they used".⁴⁷ 80% of the land went to white settlers, and was often purchased for five to ten cents an acre.⁴⁸ After compiling the Dawes Rolls, The Dawes Commission "divided the Creek domain into 160-acre tracts and allotted it to individual citizens under a fee simple title".⁴⁹ Many resisted and were given allotments against their will.⁵⁰ The Cherokees received 110 acres and the Osage received 659.52 acres, but also retained ownership of the mineral rights, as their reservation was "allotted by another Federal agency". As Debo points out, "This change in land tenure gave the white men greater freedom to exploit natural resources in the vicinity of Tulsa", as they had been doing even before allotment with lumber operations and coal mining.⁵¹ By 1904, Congress removed restrictions on the sale of land, or they expired, and "Tulsa grew, unhindered". Some allottees benefitted from this growth "as the city spread out over their farms".⁵² For example, the Perrymans and Hodges had acquired most of the land directly east of Tulsa. However, in many cases land had been lost through "forgery, a supposed lease that turned out to be a deed, manipulation of the records, or a guardian's sale".⁵³

This change in land holdings and the discovery of oil signaled the end of Tulsa's days as a cow town, as some mixed-blood ranchers farmed on their restricted land and often the "full bloods...turned their land over to white men" through long-term leases or deeds and "withdrew to inaccessible places in the hills".⁵⁴ A few cattlemen continued on a smaller scale, leasing from the allottees. Oil development had been halted because of allotment restrictions, but on July 10, 1903, the Secretary of the Interior "issued regulations permitting leasing under department supervision".⁵⁵ Oil men from around the country inundated Indian Territory to bid for leases to put down test wells. As new wells hit oil and the Katy and Frisco railroads expanded in the area,

new towns sprang up. When Oklahoma officially became a state in 1907, it was at the top of the list of oil producing states. With statehood, “the last traces of the old, easy going Indian regime were swept away”. Some full blood Indians became wealthy from allotments in the oil fields and some mixed bloods entered the fray of the “new competitive order”, but most Indians “grieved in silence for the old days, brushed aside and forgotten by a people too busy for reflective thinking”.⁵⁶ The year before statehood, 1906, in the midst of business protests against government regulations hindering oil development, Creek Indian Chitto Harjo and a group of fullblood Indians spoke to a US Senate committee holding hearings in Indian Territory. As David Hodge translated, he told the committee of the history of “I and my people”, from Alabama to Oklahoma where “I carried out these agreements and treaties in all points and violated none”,⁵⁷ and contended that the treaties were still in force, “I never agreed to the allotting of my lands...My treaty said it never would be done unless I wanted it done”.⁵⁸ The Senators explained that the old treaty had been nullified and Congress and the President “wanted all the Indians to give up and take their allotments”. Harjo seemed to realize that addressing the US government was futile, so he protested, “I can call on four of the civilized Governments across the mother of waters to come in and see that this is right”. In Debo’s words, Chitto Harjo’s impassioned plea for justice “was the last flare of the Indian spirit in the white man’s town of Tulsa”.⁵⁹

Angie Debo researched and wrote about the history of American Indians in Oklahoma throughout her career, to bring to light the injustices of Federal Indian Policy, and how that played out at both state and local levels. She said, “I thought of Federal Indian Policy as the true American Imperialism”, and her work continued to reflect that belief, in the way she challenged the accepted version of history.⁶⁰

Custer Died for Your Sins - Vine Deloria, Jr.

Much like Angie Debo, In *Custer Died for Your Sins* (c. 1969), writer and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. responds to a political crisis in American Indian history: the disastrous Congressional policies of termination and relocation of the 1950’s and 1960’s, and the resulting loss of tribal land so essential to Indian identity. As with Debo, he writes to illuminate a narrative that has been omitted from the history books, and reveals American government to often be dishonest and abusive. In a book of essays written within this framework, he forthrightly addresses issues such as race relations, as well as Indian humor and identity. Deloria is writing for two audiences: Indians and whites. He writes to educate whites and instill in Indians a belief in their culture that will motivate them to take action that will produce real change. Each essay in the book follows a similar format: Deloria outlines a theme, summarizes his beliefs as they relate to his thesis and ends with a prognosis for how the situation could be changed.

The main issues Deloria responds to in *Custer Died for Your Sins* center around the catastrophic effects of the Indian Termination Policy and the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 on American Indian communities. These policies led, once again, to land loss in communities for whom land is inextricably linked to identity; as Angie Debo writes, “a sense of history that united them and their ancestors who had lived on the same soil”.⁶¹ The “termination” policy was initiated by the Indian Bureau in 1950 during the Eisenhower administration. In 1953 Congress enacted Public Law 280, which promoted “rapid assimilation” and gave states jurisdiction (criminal and civil) over reservations.⁶² As Debo observed, “In practice it meant pull the land out from under the Indians and break up their communities”.⁶³ Children were sent to boarding schools where they were often punished for speaking their tribal languages. Larry Stillday, who was a little boy on the Red Lake Reservation, recalls the termination era: “We had the loss of land. We had the loss of religion to the missionaries...Our children were being ripped away, to government boarding schools, to non-Indian foster homes off the reservation. Losing children is like losing the land”.⁶⁴ Under the Relocation Act of 1956, Indians were moved

from their lands to large cities to find work and adjust to urban life;⁶⁵ more than 100,000 Indians moved off reservations during relocation.⁶⁶ The US government, once again, proposed to deal with what they saw as the “Indian Problem” by taking Indians off their lands so they would finally “appreciate all that America had to offer”.⁶⁷ It was also partly the result of a “backlash” against the progressive Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, initiated during the Roosevelt administration to “promote tribal rights”.⁶⁸ It was not until 1975, when Congress enacted the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act that the sovereignty of American Indian communities was restored and “tribal, cultural and religious renewal”⁶⁹ began to happen, due in large part to the efforts of American Indian activists like Deloria.

In relating these processes and his reactions, Deloria, like Debo, tells of the mistreatment of Indians by misguided whites and a corrupt US government, who were at odds over very different views of the purposes of land. He writes, “whenever Indian land was needed, the whites pictured the tribes as wasteful people who refused to develop their natural resources”,⁷⁰ but Indians view the land as part of who they are, not just a commodity. He points to multiple instance of treaty abrogations as another example of government land theft, as “treaties...were cast aside by the whites as if they didn’t exist”.⁷¹ He also connects this to infringement on water and fishing rights, which many tribes had through treaties, which were often challenged. Recalling the allotment process, in “Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal”, Deloria writes, “Land was the means of reorganizing the Indian as a human being. It was the method whereby land could be stolen legally and not blatantly”.⁷² He points out how termination was yet another way to force assimilation onto Indians, “we gave up land instead of life and labor...For one hundred years, every program of public and private white America was devoted to the exclusion of the black”, but “Everything possible was done to ensure that Indians were forced into American life”,⁷³ including the policies of termination and relocation; he calls termination “the single most important problem of the American Indian people at the present time [in 1969]”.⁷⁴ Deloria calls for a “cultural leave-us-alone agreement”, believing that the only way forward for Indians is through self-determination, and “tribal solidarity”.⁷⁵ At the end of his book he states, “Tribalism is the strongest force at work in the world today”,⁷⁶ and predicts a “retribalization” of the nation by Indian colonists,⁷⁷ contending that Indian problems are “legal and not cultural”, and advancing the idea that political action is the way to realize renewal.⁷⁸ This renewal began to be realized in the years following the publication of *Custer Died for Your Sins*, with federal Indian policy legislation passed to restore tribal sovereignty.

In the essay “Indian Humor”, Deloria contends that one element that increases a group’s ability to withstand and ultimately overcome these shared struggles is humor. He opens the essay by writing, “One of the best ways to understand a people is to understand what makes them laugh”.⁷⁹ To enlighten his audience about what makes American Indians laugh, he relates a series of anecdotes and jokes, by activist Clyde Warrior and others, that illustrate how humor is used to ease tensions as well as move people to action. He relates that in Indian history, teasing has been a long-standing “method of control of social situations”,⁸⁰ designed to ease disputes and lead people to teasing themselves to show humility, while advancing a cause. In fact, Deloria contends that humor “is the cement by which the Indian movement is held together”.⁸¹ To illustrate humor as it applies to the BIA and the relocation policy, he tells the following joke: “When the space program began...discussion often centered about the difficulty of returning the men from the moon to the earth...one Indian suggested they send an Indian to the moon on relocation. “He’ll figure out some way to get back’”.⁸² These jokes illustrate Deloria’s belief that “when a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others...then it seems that that people can survive”.⁸³

***Winter in the Blood* - James Welch**

Winter in the Blood (1974), a seminal novel by contemporary American Indian writer James Welch, was published the year before Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975. It deals with themes related to American Indian history, which are familiar from the other two texts: reclaiming homelands and identity through reconnection with one's past. Welch's novel addresses the devastation of American Indian communities by centuries of colonization, up to the termination era outlined in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, and proposes a hopeful resolution through "finding a self that is transpersonal and includes a society, a past and a place".⁸⁴ A "masterpiece of comic fiction",⁸⁵ *Winter in the Blood* also uses humor to "emphasize the absurdity of negative and self-feeding cycles such as colonization".⁸⁶ Even a pivotal moment in the story, when the narrator begins to assemble the pieces of his past, is deflated by a horse's fart. This is an example of how Welch uses scatological humor to "undercut the sentimentality of the moment".⁸⁷ This relates to Deloria's ideas about using humor to ease tension and facilitate survival.

Winter in the Blood deals with the journey of a nameless narrator, a thirty-two-year-old man who has returned to his home on Montana's Fort Belknap reservation. He is alienated from society, his family, and himself, as he works on the cattle ranch of his mother Teresa and step-father Lame Bull. He says "the distance I felt came not from country or people; it came from within me".⁸⁸ When not working on the ranch, he occupies himself with alcohol and sex and goes on a search for Agnes, a woman who once lived with him, but disappeared while he was away. Throughout the early part of the book there are flashbacks that offer clues that something very painful happened to the narrator when he was young. We get snippets of memories of his father, First Raise, who froze to death in a ditch, and his older brother, Mose, who was killed in an accident on the ranch. These fragments let the reader know that something is missing, or has been omitted.

The narrator experiences a 'winter', an isolation and lack of feeling or cultural identity, that connects to a larger historical problem. This winter mirrors the "felt burden of history"⁸⁹ that has left "Native cultures in the throes of a winter that has rooted itself in the blood - a fate that is, as Welch's narrator testifies, one sad thing".⁹⁰ James Welch is among the American Indian writers "most concerned with the effects of reification and capitalism on American Indian people".⁹¹ It is also the story of the Blackfeet Indians, and their cultural history, from which the narrator has become alienated. The narrative moves between different times and places: the reservation, the nearby town, and an earlier time just before the US cavalry forced the Blackfeet onto the reservation. The novel is centered on one specific event, "one brutal winter, through which the narrator's ancestors struggled to keep their lives and their dignity".⁹² The narrator hears a story that describes his grandmother as a young woman, revealing a side of her history he did not know. He gets this story in pieces from an old Indian, Yellow Calf. Each time he visits Yellow Calf, he is immersed in the past, but then he returns to a present rooted in the aftermath of colonization, where "urbanization has done a poor job of imposing itself on the people it has removed from the land" (through relocation, for example), "especially the Indians who....lost their cultures as well";⁹³ the narrator does not have a "cultural-historical" viewpoint. As the author reveals the narrator's history, it causes the reader "to question the version of Indian history that America's dominant culture has written".⁹⁴ Once again, we encounter a narrative about omitted history.

But *Winter in the Blood* is also a story of recovery. It is through his conversations with Yellow Calf that the narrator learns the story of his grandmother's past and discovers that Yellow Calf is actually his grandfather, a man he remembers going to visit with his father when he was very young. This revelation allows him to reconnect not only with a "lost kinsman, but also a lost community".⁹⁵ As he makes peace with his past and the deaths of his brother and father, his growth is evidenced by the "helping hand" he offers to a cow

stranded in the mud. He is not able to save her, but his effort and his emerging sense of “being a part of that world” and being connected to the land, allow us to see a “positive change” in his outlook;⁹⁶ “I wondered if Mose and First Raise were comfortable. They were the only ones I really loved...Some people, I thought, will never know how pleasant it is to be distant in a clean rain, the driving rain of a summer storm”.⁹⁷ In that moment the narrator makes peace with the tragedy in his past and all its “guilt and loss”, and realizes that it “is not without value and comfort”.⁹⁸ As the rain cleanses him, he is able to forgive himself, making peace with personal and collective history. When he returns for his grandmother’s funeral, he throws the tobacco pouch into her grave, signifying his acceptance of himself as a “bearer of Blackfeet tradition”;⁹⁹ he has found “a self that is transpersonal and includes a society, a past and a place”,¹⁰⁰ and can “perhaps lessen the pain that is history as told by the dominant culture”,¹⁰¹ so he can move forward.

Strategies

Since each of the works are relatively brief, and I have only one set of books, the majority of reading will take place in the classroom (with the exception of the later chapters in the Debo book). We have fifty-minute class periods and this is approximately a six to eight-week unit, so there will be adequate time to complete the reading in class. Any supplemental texts will be provided as photocopies, or posted online in Google Classroom. During reading, I will stop frequently to check for understanding, provide clarification and introduce and guide close reading activities.

The desks in my classroom are arranged in groups of four, so students can easily work together. They will use the classroom sets of marker boards to answer some questions as a group (brainstorming observations about structure, or how the books relate to each other, for example) and hold them up, so I can easily check for understanding. This emphasis on group work will be especially helpful for my ELL students, those new to the AP English program, and my struggling readers. Students will annotate while reading, using specific symbols to chart their observations and questions; this will help my struggling readers by facilitating self-monitoring. They will also identify and chart text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-word connections on post it notes, to increase their engagement with the reading by drawing connections between the book and their lives and experiences as well as the world around them. Activities with vocabulary in context will be incorporated periodically to assist with vocabulary development.

We will engage in writing activities in the form of informal written responses to the reading, as well as writing “Where I’m From” poems, allowing them to reflect on their personal histories as we discuss issues of culture and identity. The use of models for writing and audio materials and visual clips helps students who are more visual and auditory learners. Similarly, the use of advance organizers helps them organize their thoughts (the OPTICS protocol, for example). We will use the rhetorical triangle (the inter-relationship between speaker, audience, subject, purpose and context) to frame our analysis of each work, so that visual will be central to our discussions.

I will use formative and summative assessments, allowing students to demonstrate their learning throughout the unit, including an in-class essay modeled after an AP exam essay. There will be small assessments throughout that utilize digital technology, such as Plickers and Kahoot, allowing me to quickly poll students to check their understanding of ideas in the books.

Classroom Activities

First Activity: Visual Representation of American Indians: Analysis of Non-Print Text Using the OPTIC Method

This activity is designed to introduce students to photographic representations of American Indians by photographers from different time periods. This is an introductory activity to *Custer Died for Your Sins*. It will help students see the differences in representation over time, with Edward S. Curtis's "vanishing Indian" of the 1880's juxtaposed with Horace Poolaw's dynamic photos of his Kiowa community. It also gives them the opportunity to discuss stereotypes in photographic representation, and allows them to draw connections between the photographs and Vine Deloria's ideas about American Indian stereotypes in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Finally, giving students practice with formal analysis of photographs allows them to develop their visual literacy through practicing a process for "reading" and interpreting a non-print text, an essential skill for the AP Language and Composition exam.

Process

Begin by showing clips from the film "Reel Injun" to generate discussion of representation of American Indians in television and film. Project Horace Poolaw's photograph "Jerry Poolaw, on leave from duty in the Navy" (1944) onto the Smartboard. Give students a graphic organizer to take notes on the elements of OPTIC as the process is modeled using the Poolaw photograph: Observation: Who is the speaker and what is the topic? Summarize the action. Parts of the picture: Describe the color, lighting and movement in the photograph. How is it framed? Title: How does the title inform your understanding of the context of the photograph? Interrelationships: How do the elements relate to each other in the picture? How could this be connected to the speaker's purpose or message? Conclusion: What argument is the photographer making?

Next, give each group of 3-4 students a portrait by Edward S. Curtis and a different Poolaw photograph (each group will have different photographs), two small whiteboards and 3-4 markers. Have them go through the OPTIC protocol as a group for each photograph, noting their observations for each of the letters on their whiteboards (recording the Curtis photograph on one board and the Poolaw photograph on the other). When they are finished, have each group hold up their whiteboards and report out on their analysis of each photo. Record each group's analysis on a large sheet of chart paper so it can be referenced during later discussion. When the charts are finished, discuss them as a whole group and help students draw connections between the different groups' analysis of each photographer. This should lead them to notice the static nature of Curtis' photographs and how it contrasts with the dynamic nature of Poolaw's, as well as the way this is accomplished through elements such as the framing of the photographs and interaction between the subjects and their environment. After discussion, play the short video "Smiling Indians" by the 1491's, which is dedicated to Edward S. Curtis, and confronts the idea of stereotyping American Indians, based off images like Curtis's "vanishing Indian". Finish with final observations about how the video connects to Poolaw's photographs (both in content and style). In the next lesson, as students read Vine Deloria's essay "Indians Today: the Real and the Unreal", they will make note of how these ideas about images and stereotypes are reflected in Deloria's ideas.

Second Activity: Tulsa History Research Project: Multimedia Presentation

This activity is designed to deepen students' understanding of local history in a specific area of interest to

them. It allows them to synthesize their expanding knowledge of American Indian history, gained from reading *Tulsa: from Creek Town to Oil Capital*. The project also gives them practice developing and narrowing a research question and documenting sources, and the presentation portion allows them to develop media literacy and multimedia presentation skills, while demonstrating their understanding of the subject matter.

The Process

Assign students to heterogeneous groups of three to four. Each group will research a subject of their choice related to a specific aspect of Tulsa's Indian history. Their final product will be a multimedia presentation (created in Photostory, Glogster, PowerPoint or some other multimedia format of their choice) disseminating their findings. Their purpose can be informative or persuasive. To begin, help students brainstorm topics and develop research questions, using the following examples: How did the aftermath of allotment affect the structure, visibility and identity of Creek Indian communities in specific ways? What were the major contributions of a particular figure in early Tulsa history (such as Opothle Yahola)? What was the significance of the sport of Indian Ball in the early Creek community?

Once they have developed questions, groups spend four class periods in the library accessing the library databases, as well as the archives of the Tulsa Historical Society, the American Indian Resource Center and the Indian Pioneer Papers Collection, researching and documenting information about their topics (there will be a mini lesson in the library on MLA documentation). Each group should record at least ten facts related to their findings, from at least six sources. They will turn in a Works Cited page, documented in MLA format, with annotations explaining each source and its relevance.

Students spend the next four days back in the classroom, working on their multimedia presentations. Take students through the process of creating a Photostory presentation, using a single frame as an example (there is also a Photostory tutorial on YouTube; groups may also choose a different program for their final product). They should include at least ten visuals with accompanying text explaining the content, context and significance of the pictures they choose (in ten Photostory or PowerPoint slides, for example). The presentation should also include voice over narration, or a soundtrack with relevant music, depending on the technology used. When everyone finishes, groups spend 5-6 minutes each presenting to the class, enhancing the whole group's understanding of historical figures and issues in early Tulsa history.

Third Activity: "Where I'm From" Poem

This activity allows students to think and write about place and identity, by creating a fifteen to twenty-line poem based on their own memories, experiences, and interests. This introductory activity for *Winter in the Blood* will help them connect to the content, as the book centers around the identity crisis of the main character, as evidenced by his lack of a sense of place, or connection to his past and homeland. Brainstorming things that have made them who they are - their own experiences and memories - will give students a foundation for discussing the links between culture, personal history, and identity. Writing about these experiences in poetic form will allow them to share their own histories, cultures and unique identities, building a sense of community in the classroom.

The Process

Begin by showing students the Jay Z and Beyonce's video "Where I'm From" on YouTube. After watching, discuss how "place" and identity are informed by more than just a specific location; identity is influenced by personal history, music, memories, food and many other components. Ask students to explain how that is

shown in the Jay Z video. Next, project a copy of George Ella Lyon's poem "Where I'm From" on the Smartboard. Give each student a copy of the poem to follow so they can perform a "mash up" reading, where each student reads a line or two aloud. After reading, discuss the elements that have informed George Ella Lyon's identity and sense of "place" (foods, memories, family, plants, scars, ordinary objects, etc.).

Give each student two index cards and have them number one to four on one card and four to eight on another, leaving a few lines in-between. Take them through the following brainstorming activity where they list associations with the past that inform their identity. Their associations may be negative or positive. Read the following list of questions, spending two to three minutes on each (if students are stuck on one, they can leave it blank and return to it later before drafting their poem):

1. Think about music that has been important in your life. List three or four songs that you just love or that have influenced you in some way.
2. What are some things people have always said to you? Maybe it's a nickname or a saying that you always hear from family or friends like "you have to earn respect"; list two or three of these.
3. What games or activities did you play growing up (soccer, kickball, hopscotch)? These can include video games you played by yourself, or church activities or childhood games played with friends. List three or four.
4. Think about food that you love or that you've always eaten at a particular time. It could be anything from food cooked for a family celebration to your favorite fast food. List three or four important food traditions in your history.
5. What books or stories do you remember that affected you in some way? It could be fiction or nonfiction, short or long - a children's book that you read over and over, for example, or an essay in a magazine, or a novel or short story or poem you read in school last year. List two or three.
6. List two or three scars from your life. These could be literal (a scar from an accident) or figurative (an emotional scar as a result of divorce, for example).
7. Think of a place that is "home" to you. It could be a room in a house, a basketball court, or any other place where you are most comfortable and can be yourself. Visualize that place and make a small sketch of it.
8. Think about milestone events in your life. These could be positive (winning an important game, or graduating from middle school) or negative (a divorce, or the death of a close relative). Sketch a small life map that charts these chronologically.

After the brainstorming activity, project one or two more sample "Where I'm From" poems, so students have a good sense of the structure, and have models to follow. Give them a template they can follow to complete a draft of their poem (a Google search will locate samples and templates). Using the template, have students' identity places where they can incorporate the results of their brainstorming into the structure of their poems, referencing the models they have read. Give the class about 30 minutes to complete first drafts of their poems. As they finish, they can take turns reading their drafts aloud to a partner and getting feedback using the PQP strategy: Praise ("I liked the way..."); Question ("Why did you...?"); Polish ("I can suggest..."). The next class period, students will continue giving peer feedback, revising their poems, and typing a final draft. When all students are finished, their final drafts can be combined into a class book, so they can take turns reading their poems in Author's Chair, and have their own book of models to share with other classes.

Appendix

Standards

This unit is aligned with the Oklahoma Department of Education's Oklahoma Academic Standards for 11th Grade English Language Arts, which my district follows. This unit meets the following OAS standards: Writing - 11.2.W.1(writing narratives embedded in other modes, through writing a Where I'm From poem); Critical Reading - 11.3.R.6 (comparatively analyze texts, through connecting the three texts and providing evidence for interpretations and thematic connections) and 11.3.R.1 (analyze the extent to which historical perspectives affect the authors' stylistic and organizational choices in the three texts; Multimodal Literacies - 11.7.W.2 (constructing visual or multimedia presentations to enhance understanding, through designing a presentation for the Tulsa history project) and 11.7.R.1 (analyze techniques used to construct arguments, through analyzing the arguments presented in non-print texts from different time periods); Research - 11.6.R.2 (synthesize information from primary and secondary sources, through conducting research for the Tulsa history research project) and 11.6.W.2 (integrate finding from sources, through creating a central thesis statement for their Tulsa history project, based on their research findings; Speaking and Listening - 11.1.R.3 (engage in collaborative discussion about appropriate topics by discussing the three texts in pair, group and whole class situations) and 11.1.W.1 (give formal and informal presentations , using textual and visual evidence, through presenting their Tulsa history research project) and 11.1.W.2 (work effectively within diverse groups, share responsibility and value individual contributions, though working in pairs and groups of four to discuss, problem solve and complete various assignments; Vocabulary - 11.4.R.5 (use dictionaries, thesauruses and other references as needed to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary); Language - 11.5.W.3 (demonstrate command of standard grammar, mechanics and usage through writing and presentations).

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