



First and Second Wave Native American Literature

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Overview

Novelist and scholar Louis Owens remarks that there is a learning curve when approaching American Indian literature, as the art of storytelling, tribal, historical or ceremonial knowledge is necessary to fully understand the nuances of this particular genre. Additionally, American Indian literature is complicated in its own contexts, as there is a tension between expression of American Indians by non-Indians and the history of representational encounters by American Indians themselves within public consciousness. Owens explains:

For American Indians, the problem of identity comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, often brutally enforced peripherality, cultural denigration – including especially as harsh privileging of English of tribal languages – and systematic oppression by the monocentric “westering” impulse in America.¹

In addition to analysis of the novels *Winter in the Blood* by James Welch, *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, this unit examines the historical background of each, deciphering the complexity of the genre of American Indian Literature. Relevant historical information from two non-fiction texts, *Like a Hurricane* and *Blood Struggle*, anchor the novels' historicity to two waves of Native American writing. It is crucial to understand the contemporary history of American Indian policy in order to understand the contexts in which these texts were written.

Specifically, my unit analyzes the two novels, *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko and *Winter in the Blood* by James Welch, comparatively with the contemporary text; Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True-Diary of a Part Time Indian*. These texts will collectively suggest that Contemporary American Indian literature spans identifiable waves: A First Wave is the return to reservation life and tradition, ceremony and ritual of tribal peoples; a Second Wave acknowledges the struggle of identity in America, but also asserts the need for life and interaction outside of the reservation as means to complete one's identity. The First Wave finds and satisfies a deficiency of identity; the second signals a need for integrated experience to fully form that same identity. Students will complete reading analysis and other formative assessments during their reading of these novels which will help them connect the historical themes introduced at the beginning of the unit. This unit combines visual and textual narratives as response to the racialized public misunderstandings about

American Indian life and identity in our contemporary era.

Rationale

African-American students in urban Philadelphia have little knowledge of contemporary American Indians, from where such people live to the traditions and history of native people. For many students, Indian people are relics of the past, people that were once the mythical inhabitants of our continent, forever frozen in historical obfuscation. Upon conducting informal polls among my ninth-grade students, American Indians are frequently not considered a category of people in the US that was listed by the vast majority of students. Philadelphia public school students are not the only demographic lacking knowledge of American Indians. Again informally surveyed, the bulk of people in my personal and professional networks also admittedly had very little knowledge about the history or current status of Native Americans in our own nation. The systemic and deliberate efforts to erase and marginalize native people have unfortunately succeeded in school curricula. Native American writer and scholar, Louis Owens confirms: “The Indian in today’s world consciousness is a product of literature history, and art, and a product that, as an invention, often bears little resemblance to actual, living Native American people.”² Owens sentiments express the dire necessity of this unit as a method to expose authentic narratives of modern Native American experiences.

This unit responds to the above-described void. Students of the twenty-first century are increasingly exposed to a global plurality of narrative voices as access to these stories and writers has become progressively more accessible, largely due to the proliferation of the Internet. This is important and a necessary shift from the traditional canon of dead white males. One scholar highlights: “as of yet, literature by Native Americans has met with only begrudging, and at best slight acceptance into the American canon”.³ Students, who are the burgeoning stakeholders of our societal constructions and mores, must receive equal education on the narratives and histories of imperialism, racism and violence of their own nation. A tension exists in a population indoctrinated with only nationalistic mythology, particularly those for whose physical and cultural signifiers do not correlate to the elevated icons. In the same way that students must be educated about the variety of experiences and voices globally, students must also be informed of the perspectives of the multitude of groups in the United States, including by not limited African-Americans, American Indians and Latinos.

This unit is an introduction (or revision) of Contemporary American Indian History and Literature. Novels will be used to explore the contemporary history of American Indians and the politics of identity that this history invokes. My hope is not only to expose students to the oft-suppressed voices of native people but also to add a new layer of nuance to their understanding of the troubled and conflicting narratives of our nation’s history.

Historical Background

The Commencement of an Era: Native Americans in the 1960s and 1970s

Understanding key elements of the experiences of Native Americans in our country is crucial to understanding the texts American Indian writers produce. Louis Owens succinctly draws this comparison:

Just as the major figures of modernism – T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, et al. – demanded that readers know Greek and Roman mythology and the literary history of their western cultures, Indian writers today have come to expect, even demand, that readers learn something about the mythology and literary (oral) history of Native Americans...In addition to some basic knowledge of the tribal histories and mythologies of the Indian cultures at the heart of these novels, reader should be aware of crucial moments in Native American history of the last two centuries.⁴

Thus, as one prepares to teach a unit on Native American texts, one must first become acquainted with the history of the people who are writing them. An intimate knowledge of the historical contexts in which, and from which, these novels arise is crucial. Literature is influenced by history and history informs the movements from which literature is birthed.

Beginning in the 1960s, a proliferation of Native American voices began to rise into the public consciousness. While this recovery seemingly appears in isolation, it is, in fact a resurrection of storytelling traditions that have existed for centuries before and after the arrival of Europeans on North American soil. Native voices resound; however, American literary society does not always listen. A First Wave of novels, poetry and essays by American Indians parallels the surge of activism beginning with the occupation of Alcatraz by a group called Indians of All Tribes (IOAT) from November 1969 to June 1971.⁵ During this period, IOAT organized around the principles of rejection of federal termination policies and demands of restoration of treaties with Indian tribes. Key leaders of this group include Russell Means, LaNada Means, and Russell Oakes.⁶

Forced assimilation arose after a 1943 survey of living conditions of reservations, which the Senate investigated Native American's quality of life, finding destitution and horrific instances of extreme impoverishment. After this exploration, the federal bureaucracy, via the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), enacted a policy from 1953 to 1968 known as House Concurrent Resolution 108.⁷ Instead of permitting maintenance of their own cultural practices and customs, forced assimilation plunged urban American Indians into even worse "dereliction" of spirit than the termination policies attempted to recover.⁸ The Termination Policy of 1953 came after a series of legislations, each more austere than the previous. These adjudications follow Andrew Jackson's infamous Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the creation of Indian Boarding Schools beginning in 1860.

Termination slated Native Americans to be essentially bused into urban areas and assimilated into typical Anglo-American lifestyles and mores. An overwhelming failure, termination splintered families, placed Native Americans into housing facilities also used to house recently released felons and provided limited and ineffective job training and placement for those forced into these bewildering urban environments.⁹ Indian Law expert Charles Wilkinson describes the assimilation process as creating a "nearly universal sense of alienation and dislocation" including the wide spread proliferation of alcoholism.¹⁰ Similarly, Owens remarks:

With twenty-five thousand American Indians enlisting in World War II, the Indian veteran became a common sight in urban Indian gatherings and back on the reservations. Suffering the same kinds of trauma experiences by all soldiers at war, the Indian veterans had the added pains of discrimination and, more crucially, the eventual return to an Indian world where identity had been difficult for a long time.¹¹

One positive residual effect of the voluntary relocation programs was the provision that “many children, having grown up in the cities, helped build the Indian professional middle class, which played a central role in revitalizing Indian life in the latter part of the twentieth century.”¹² From this stock, activist intellectuals like Vine Deloria, Jr., Clyde Warrior and other college educated youth emerged. This allowance for social mobility, and most importantly high quality education, created a space in which the “Native American Renaissance” could occur. Louis Owens remarks “contemporary American Indian writers indeed most often permanently enter that [leisure] class, possessing as they do a consistently high level of education (almost always at least one college degree) and mastery of English.”¹³ This fact most certainly muddies the complex history of seemingly simultaneous oppression by and emancipation from the white Eurocentric world. Later, Second Wave Native American writers such as Sherman Alexie, albeit indirectly, spring forth from the same vein.

Self-Determination to Present

Through determination, perseverance, and sheer force of will, the official policy to replace termination with self-determination was passed into law in the 1970s. Wilkinson notes: “Ever since the reservation system, Native Americans held dear the impulse to govern their homelands free from BIA control.”¹⁴ Self-determination began the path toward satiation of this desire. Though the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) created years before addressed this wish the establishment policy was not directly for or about American Indians. The OEO, however, signaled the beginning of the use of the terminology of self-determination for sovereign tribal governments. Institutions such as the Rough Rock Demonstration School, and, later, the Navajo Community College (now called Diné College) signaled the beginning of opportunities for Native Americans to manage their own major programs.¹⁵ This legislation became the first instance of a “leadership class that they finally had the power to make their own mistakes.”¹⁶ In other words, tribal leaders and members had options to exercise agency, instead of forcible determinations being enacted upon them. Officially established in 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, created an environment in which “instead of the federal agencies’ building a tribal community center, setting up a day care program, running a health clinic, or writing an economic development plan, a tribe could contract with the agency, receive the funding directly, and do the job itself.”¹⁷ This proved to be the first in many steps toward tribal governments establishing and expanding “tribal infrastructures and leadership opportunities.”¹⁸ It was a policy of choice and the first of its kind.

Reservation life, tribal governance – both its benefits and its limitations – and socio-economic issues inform the experiences of many of the Native Americans in the United States to date. Self-Determination simultaneously helped and hindered tribal people, as vastly as the ways in which the tribes generate and allocate income through the passing of the Act.¹⁹ Today, there is a much wider variation in voices of Native Americans. These narratives proliferate through the outcroppings of new mediums such as YouTube, Twitter and informational websites. For instance, the sketch comedy group, *The 1491s*, work in a tradition of irony and cynicism, calling attention to the paradoxes, micro-aggressions and points of tension that contemporary Native Americans face daily. Additionally, Native Americans are increasingly involved in stand-up comedy,

spoken word, dramatic readings and other forms of expression previously unexplored.

Two Waves of American Indian Literature

The First Wave: Reconciling Identity

The First Wave begins in 1969 with the publication of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*. This novel signals the entrance into a moment in American Literature in which Native American voices began to be received and recognized by the literary public. Soon after Momaday's publication and subsequent success, including receipt of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction that year, a number of American Indian writers emerged. According to Owens, only nine novels by American Indian authors had been published prior to 1968.²⁰

Native American novels serve to articulate a sense of self-determination for themselves. Narrative creation becomes a political testimony at time when reservation life remains beleaguered. The enactment of termination policy spurred a resistance movement that, at least momentarily, put Native Americans, and by extension their voices and desires, on to the forefront of the national political stage. In *Blood Struggle*, Wilkinson characterizes the disenfranchisement of American Indians after World War II as a time with "little hope" because the "reservations were dead-end streets economically."²¹ Termination and forced assimilation were also not a solution and the outlook for most was bleak at best. At this same time that this social upheaval occurred, novelists began publishing texts in an effort to express the sentiments of the era. Kenneth Lincoln's coined "Native American Renaissance" discusses this First Wave of texts. Authors include James Welch, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko and N. Scott Momaday. Since then an evolution has taken place in the way American Indian writers approach their subjects and the way these novels fit into the mainstream of American literature.

Furthering this point, in his seminal text on the resurgence of Native American literature, Lincoln posits that native voices have not been silent, but rather, the literary world has participated in "failures to hear partly from the tragedies of tribal dislocation and mistranslation, partly from misconception about literature, partly from cultural indifference."²²

Both *Winter in the Blood* by James Welch and *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko serve as exemplars of the desire felt by native people to return to the old ways and to live lives of tribal sovereignty and the exploration and desire for discovery/recovery of identity, both individual and collective. The nameless narrator of Welch's novel "sifts through the debris of two cultures in conflict...Indian ruins scatter amid the wreckage of Western materialism."²³ The narrator's struggles between reckoning the past memories of his loving father, First Raise, and the present reality of his pragmatic, though distant mother (as the narrator states: "I never expect much from Teresa and I never got it"²⁴), only referred to by her Christian name, Teresa. This deliberate naming construction demonstrates the dichotomy of old verses new, Indian verses European, ancient verses modern. The narrators struggle with identity is self-characterized as a crisis of individual identity, coming "not from country or people; it came from within me."²⁵ Later the narrator states, "Again I felt that helplessness of being in a world of stalking white men...I was a stranger to both and both had beaten."²⁶ After a tumultuous series of events in the towns and bars he haunts, the narrator remarks, "I wanted to lose myself, to ditch these clothes, to outrun this burning sun, to stand beneath the clouds and have my shadow erased, myself along with it."²⁷

Tayo returns home to help with the burial of his grandmother. He realizes then that the only way he can recover of his lost identity is through the act of return to tribal lands and customs.

After this realization, Tayo goes to visit the old blind man who lives at the edge of town, Yellow Calf. Yellow Calf has formed a bond with Tayo and it is only at the end of the novel, when Yellow Calf describes the first bleak winter of 1883, that the past and the present seem to connect and his identity is fully reconceived and solidified, finalized upon the burial of his grandmother. The narrator in this moment understands both are a connected continuum of experience, not disparate, unaligned realities.

By the closing pages of the novel, the unnamed narrator realizes his own position in the world. The remains of American Indian culture and the pervasive Western culture of materialism can find a balanced coexistence. This recognition is, perhaps, the final claim to an identity that the narrator searches for throughout the text. Critic Louis Owens emphasizes that through the telling of the narrative the reader has just read, "the narrator has asserted some kind of order and significance within his own life."²⁸ His life, and by extrapolation the life of modern Native Americans, is not one of the construction of either/or but rather one of both/and.

Similar themes inform Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. Lincoln remarks: "To tell a story the Indian way, no less to write, means not such much to fictionalize, as to inflect the truth of the old ways still with us."²⁹ In other words, Silko, working in a similar tradition to Welch, reconciles the new reality of the present with the painful reality of the past. Silko's protagonist, Tayo, struggles with his return home, suffering from battle fatigue (which we now call post-traumatic stress syndrome), a blossoming taste for alcohol and a disdain for the hypocrisy of the return of racism against Indians, temporarily suspended during World War II, but only because the nation was in need of soldiers. A sense of double consciousness is a point of contention during the First Wave of Native American literature, most specifically found in Silko's protagonist, Tayo.

Silko's embedded poems, referencing creation stories like the Spider Woman, ground the novel in the old ways and Tayo's struggle for recovery of his identity highlight the interplay of modern life. The novel functions as a methodology for its moment: the wounds of the new, Western, modern world can be healed and identity can be regained by a return to the old ways. Tayo retreats into the natural landscape of the mountains and with the help of a beautiful woman, begins to heal and find solace from the brutality of World War II.

Like the nameless narrator in *Winter in the Blood*, Tayo in *Ceremony* must return to reservation life, to the methods and means of his people to find spiritual completion. Through the characterization of Tayo, Silko leads the reader through a meta-ceremony in the act of reading, as Tayo himself is lead through the final and successful healing ceremony that he first rejects.³⁰ In this moment the author asserts American Indian Literature as "a rich source of power and something to be celebrated rather than mourned."³¹ As outlined in the historical background above American Indians during the same time these novels were published began to meld a sense of identity as both American and Indian in the policies of Self-Determination. Lincoln describes this as: "The curative memory of love calms Tayo's nightmarish voices...The orphan can then come home."³² Silko layers the traditions of storytelling with the issues of modernity. Tayo finds peace from the psychosis of war through the trope of a healing woman, Ts'eh. The setting of this epiphany occurring in the seclusion of the naturalistic landscape of the mountains signals Tayo's need to rebalance his mind from a war that is ransacked by artifice and modernity. After all, the catastrophic bomb that ends World War II belongs in the realm of the modern future not the ancient past.

The Second Wave: Ambivalent Enfranchisement

A Second Wave of Native American literature parallels the aftermath of the Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975. The Second Wave is characterized by an ambiguous racialized experiences, ambivalence toward the status of the identity what it means to be a Native American and the legacies, positive and negative, of the turbulent fight for enfranchisement of the previous decades. After the resurgence of Native American novels and short stories that often doubled as political statements, a new moment comes about in direct reaction to the one prior. This moment – which I am calling Second Wave – is a new period of Native American Literature in which civil rights and enfranchisement have been granted and, now, contemporary Indians seek to position themselves both in and outside reservation life. The Second Wave explores how to be an Indian in the increasingly connected life of an American in the twenty-first century.

Sherman Alexie's works best embody this new era of Native literary production. Sherman Alexie began his career in the early 1990s; however, his engagement with tribal history and reservation life began when he was born in 1966, on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Alexie openly discusses issues of poverty, alcoholism and hopelessness as blights to contemporary Native American life. These issues are addressed in his writing, but also in films like *Smoke Signals*, and also through a plethora of interviews and talks that Alexie has given, readily available via a Google search.

Growing up in the aftermath of the protest movements of the 1960s and 70s, Alexie shifts the focus of Native American writing from return to tribal lands and identity to the interrelated tensions of realizing and maintain identity as both American and Indian concurrently. This shift signals the beginning of a new wave of Native American Literature.

Scholar Jeff Berglund, in *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays*, notes: "Tribal members, through the generations, evolve new traditions and ways of being in the world. Tradition is not static or opposed to innovation."³³ Alexie's words create new traditions to evolve in his contemporary literary moment. Berglund also maintains that Alexie "has stated on more than one occasion that he's moved to explore certain subjects not just because they shed light on the experiences of American Indian people but because they lead to a deeper understand of aspects of himself or his thoughts."³⁴ Alexie, in works such as *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, addresses the issues of contemporary American Indian identity as more about relationships and juxtapositions, and less about distinct, separate American Indian culture. For Alexie, to be an Indian is to be an American.

For example, the primary struggle of Arnold Spirit, Jr., in *Absolutely True Diary* is to be himself, in whatever ways he can. Native American reformer, Charles Eastman touched on these issues almost a century before, being able to vacillate between the two worlds of white and Indian society with a level comfortability; however, in his time Eastman was the exception, most certainly not the rule. Alexie works within this legacy in *Absolutely True Diary* in which the main character Arnold is working toward this balance, making peace with both sides by the conclusion of the novel. Gordy, Arnold's first friend at Reardan, states this clearly: "Life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being of the community."³⁵

When Arnold first leaves the reservation to attend Reardan High School, he feels the tug of resentment from people around him, including his best friend, Rowdy, but remarks, alternately that "a few folks, especially the grandmothers, thought I was a brave little dude for going to a white school."³⁶ Arnold himself sees the improvement in the quality of his education as an opportunity to develop his own unique identity, something he feels his parents were denied, aptly illustrated on page 12 of the text. Rowdy and others on the reservation

feel that he is a traitor to his people, but through the encouragement of elders and the insistence of his math teacher, Mr. P, Arnold comes to realize that in order to develop fully, he has no other choice. This ambiguity is central to the text. The forces that push and pull Arnold are not always the clearly demarcated racial, class or economic lines that one would necessarily expect. The only Indian student in a wealthy white high school forces Arnold to search deeply for truth of his own design. He is well aware of the vast divide between himself and other students, economically, culturally and socially. He explores this dichotomy in the illustration on page 57, explaining the many differences between himself and his white schoolmates. Ultimately, after a series of deaths and distresses, the reconciliation with his estranged best friend helps him to realize that in order to fully form his identity he cannot live within the compartmentalization of the reservation. Rowdy encourages Arnold, stating, “You’re the nomadic one...I always knew you were going to leave.”³⁷ Arnold realizes his destiny has potentiality to be different from the confines that trapped his family and friends. As he says in the penultimate chapter: “I realized that, sure, I was a Spokane Indian. I belonged to that tribe. But I also belonged to the tribe of American immigrants. And to the tribe of basketball players. And to the tribe of bookworms.”³⁸ Arnold Spirit, Jr. can be all American and all Indian simultaneously; he simply must accept this reality and it will be so.

This novel signifies the harkening of a new era of Native American Literature, no longer a renaissance but rather a revision. Native Americans are granted tribal autonomy. However, reservation life is not always ideal and tribal governance is not exempt from corruption and mismanagement. The Native American people have been left alone, but, as Alexie demonstrates in the character of Arnold’s father, hopelessness and loneliness pervade the existential struggles of many tribal members. The struggle for autonomy and release from bureaucratic dismantling paved the way for the battle to avoid self-destruction. Life on the reservation, as Alexie illustrates, is littered with domestic abuse, alcoholism and depression. Life off the reservation, as illustrated in earlier novels like those of Welch and Silko, also leads to depression and disillusionment. Alexie dialogues with his predecessors in that life has changed, but different is not necessarily better. There is definitively room for improvement and Alexie sees this tension as a civil rights issue intimately linked to access and privilege. Glimpses of this can be seen in *Absolutely True Diary* and even a brief browsing of Alexie’s Twitter feed content confirms the same.

Teaching Strategies

Appealing to Multiple Modalities

This unit seeks to appeal to the multiple learning modalities within a classroom. This is important as it gives students who learn from one modality more readily than the other will have equal moments of access to engage with the works presented. To add, the Internet is a cache of all types of clips, sound bytes and videos related to content, easily accessible within a few keystrokes, which will appeal simultaneously to visual and auditory learners. For the visual learners in the classroom, Alexie’s text provides illustrations to support his words. Additionally, in the introduction to the novels video and audio clips of interviews with Alexie will be used to appeal to auditory learning styles.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment, in opposition to summative, or final, assessment, is a way to check for student

understanding. Formative assessments widely vary in type and formality. Some can be as simple as posing questions or statements to the group of students asking them to respond with thumbs up/thumbs down (agree/disagree) or rank their opinion or response in the “Fist of Five” style, in which the pupils hold up a corresponding number of fingers (one is lowest; five is highest) to gauge interest, understanding or express opinions. Formative assessment can vary from a brief exit ticket to a longer more structured written constructed response.

Reflective Journaling

While reading students will complete journaling prompts throughout the unit, sometimes in class and sometimes as homework. This process allows students to track their writing in a coherent, related grouping, while documenting their exploration and analysis of topics related to identity.

Collaborative Student Learning

At several points throughout the unit, students will be invited to work with one another during classroom activities. A prominent idea behind collaborative student learning allows for students to interact on a peer-to-peer level and potentially communicate ideas about the subject of study in a manner different from that of the teacher. For low-level learners the benefit lies in direct and specific feedback that is sustainably longer and more intense than a teacher could give any single student in a normal period. For higher-level learners, understanding and synthesis is encouraged when they are “teaching” another student information that they have comprehended. Teaching someone else encourages thought synthesis and idea analysis.

Before, During and After Reading Strategies

Before, During and After Reading Strategies (BDA) can be easily integrated into reading. “Before” strategies include KWL (know/wonder/learned) charts, historical context introductory lessons, identifying and defining terms and vocabulary, and anticipation guides or making predictions; “During” strategies include guided questions by the teacher, active mark up of the text and notes from the Teacher-Guided Close Readings. “After” strategies range from a simple discussion with all students participating to a more formal written defense of their choice. It is important to note through each of these stages of the reading process students are constantly reading, writing and thinking about reading and writing. BDA strategies check-in and monitor students’ progress throughout the entirety of the text and provide pause in order for the teacher to interject, suggest and discuss elements of previously introduced historical and cultural contexts, where pertinent.

Public Forum Debate

As a multi-step summative activity, through modeling students will learn methods of debate and debate scoring. This will help students practice methods of argumentation, citation of text sources and improve written and oral communication. Students will also be learn to evaluate and provide feedback their peers, which is a methodology proven to promote critical thinking skills

Classroom Activities

Informational Text Analysis: Sherman Alexie’s Wall St Journal Article, “Why the Best Kids Books Are Written in Blood”

The informational text selected is Alexie’s response to criticism of the mature themes of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. This is widely available online via a simple Google search. Students will read and annotate the text, responding first individually on points of concurrence and/or dissent with Alexie’s argument, then collectively in small groups of three to five. This analysis and following discussion will create the foundation to references for the argumentative essay that follows this activity.

Argumentative Essay

After reading the text of *Absolutely True Diary*, creating notes or mind maps on lectures and information presented on contemporary Native American history by the teacher and reading and analyzing the informational text, “Why the Best Kids Books are Written in Blood,” students will prepare an opinion paper on the prompt: Should Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* be taught in American high schools?

Students will take a pro or con side of their choice and write an argumentative essay using the resources provided in class throughout the unit.

Public Forum Debate

After students have draft, revised, peer-edited and finalized their essays, they will present their arguments in a public debate forum. The class can be split into several pairs of teams, at least four, in which one pro and one con group will present while the rest of the class evaluates the debate. Evaluation can be via rubric, score from 1 to 5 or, even, simple two-column glow/grow feedback. This element of the debate is the optional choice of the teacher based on management needs, time constraints and student skill levels. Additionally, it is highly suggested that the class creates a list of norms for the debate environment prior to beginning the speeches.

Resources

Bibliography for Teachers

Lincoln, Kenneth. *Native American Renaissance*. Berkeley: U of California, 1983.

In this seminal text, Lincoln coins and explores the term “Native American Renaissance” in order to describe the increase of literary text by Native American authors such as Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday and others.

Owens, Louis. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992.

Owens contributes to the dialogue on Native American Literature, focusing on novels by Native Americans since 1969. Cogently written, each chapter focuses on a particular novel, including both *Ceremony* and *Winter in the Blood*.

Roush, Jan, and Jeff Berglund. *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah, 2010.

This collection of essays provides an updated consideration of Sherman Alexie's work, including *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Alexie's poems and short stories are also discussed.

Smith, Paul Chaat, and Robert Allen Warrior. *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. New York: New, 1996.

Like A Hurricane examines the beginning stages of the protest movement of American Indians, including the Occupation of Alcatraz and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This is an easily accessible text and a must-read for any teacher preparing to educate students about the rise of modern American Indian politics.

Wilkinson, Charles F. *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*. New York: Norton, 2005.

Wilkinson, an Indian law professor, gives a well organized and expertly explained account of the struggles and triumphs of Native Americans to regain tribal sovereignty and native lands in contemporary America.

Reading List for Students

Alexie, Sherman, and Ellen Forney. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown, 2007.

An illustrated semi-autobiographical coming of age novel for young adults. The protagonist, Arnold Spirit, Jr., struggles to straddle to seemingly opposing worlds: his home on the Spokane Indian Reservation and his affluent, all white high school, Reardan.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1986.

Silko's novel traces the return home of Tayo, a Native American World War II veteran, and his struggle to rectify the atrocities of war with his return to tribal reservation life.

Welch, James. *Winter in the Blood*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

In *Winter in the Blood*, an unnamed 32-year old, emotionally stunted narrator find himself struggling with the concept of Native American identity.

Materials for Classroom Use

Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. By Sherman Alexie. Alliance Vivafilm, 1999. DVD.

This fictionalized film examines experiences of young Native Americans living on the Coeur d'Alene reservation in Idaho and their struggles with violence, death, alcoholism and the despondency of the people surrounding them.

Appendix

Effective academic school year 2012-2013, Pennsylvania adopted the PA Common Core Standards, which require increased focus on close textual analysis, persuasive writing and reading informational texts. The standards also put emphasis on not only reading and writing, but also listening and speaking. This unit

satisfies these stipulations through the requirement of students to read texts comparatively, write arguments using textual evidence to prepare for the final assessment debate, present their findings orally and, finally, listen to others and evaluate their work.

Endnotes

1. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992), 4.
2. Ibid, 4.
3. Ibid, 16.
4. Ibid, 29.
5. Smith, Paul Chaat and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane* (The New Press: New York, 1996), 19-21.
6. Ibid, 71-72.
7. Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (Norton: New York, 2005), 65-67.
8. Ibid, 66.
9. Ibid, 85.
10. Ibid, 23.
11. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992), 31.
12. Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (Norton: New York, 2005), 85.
13. Ibid, 7.
14. Ibid, 189.
15. Ibid, 192-193.
16. Ibid, 194.
17. Ibid, 197.
18. Ibid, 197.
19. For further information see Chapter 13 "Casino Lights and the Quandary of Indian Economic Progress" in Wilkinson's *Blood Struggle*.
20. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992), 24.
21. Ibid, 26.
22. Kenneth Lincoln, *Native American Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California, 1983), 3.
23. Ibid, 148.
24. James Welch, *Winter in the Blood* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 17.
25. Ibid, 2.
26. Ibid, 96.
27. Ibid, 100.
28. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992), 24.
29. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1992), 222.
30. Kenneth Lincoln, *Native American Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California, 1983), 26.
31. Ibid, 26.
32. Ibid, 245.
33. Jan Roush and Jeff Berglund. *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Salt Lake City: U of Utah, 2010), 244.
34. Ibid, 243.
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36. Ibid, 79.

37. Ibid, 229.

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