

LESSON PLAN - NATIVE AMERICAN LITERATURE: A PARADIGM SHIFT

EALRS: (Reading 1) The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.
(Reading 2) The student understands the meaning of what is read.

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary (suggested for Advanced Students, College Prep level)

BASIC CONCEPTS: Recognizing cultural values represented in most Native American fictional literature and analyzing the structure of it.

ORGANIZING GENERALIZATION: Almost all Native American fictional literature has a unique and vastly different perspective and structure than most mainstream fictional literature. It is important to recognize, analyze and critique these structural differences to allow a greater depth of understanding to occur.

CULTURE AREA: United States/World Indigenous Population

TIME PERIOD: Contemporary

BACKGROUND: Native American fictional literature often effectively demonstrates the relationship Native people have with the world around them. It can reflect the concepts of Native peoples relationship with the land, their spirit, and their place in the world. When examining these concepts it is important to juxtaposition mainstream literature with that of Native literature:

Mainstream Literature

linear
monologic or dialogic
hierarchical
secular
critique of culture
individual

Indigenous Literature

cyclical
conversational
egalitarian
metaphysical
critique of colonialism
communitarian

The mainstream literary paradigm has certain elements rarely found in Native literature; a hero, clear-cut villains, plot structure, & concluding purpose, to mention just a few. Native literature is bicultural, the characters move freely in the world, beyond and through stereotypes or cultural idioms. Much like the traditional trickster figures in Native stories, the concept is to see chaos behind order, an ability to laugh at themselves, to escape conformity for freedom. They help provide another model that has a structure that allows for equality, helping others to have a good life.

OBJECTIVES:

Knowledge:

Students will: (Reading 1.2) build vocabulary through reading, (Reading 1.4) understand elements of literature, (Reading 2.1) comprehend important ideas and details, and (Reading 2.3) think critically and analyze authors' use of language, style, purpose and perspective.

Skills:

Students will: read one of the recommended books, or portions of books, and define the main differences between mainstream literature and Native American literature.

Values:

Students will: examine and increase vocabularies relevant to different contexts, cultures, and communities, analyze literary elements (plot, characters, setting, theme, point of view, conflict, resolution), explain how an author uses language to influence different audiences, and apply information gained from reading to give a response and express insight,

ACTIVITIES: Students should first define the terms under characteristics of mainstream and Indigenous literature, explore their concepts of these terms, and then undertake reading one of the recommended books. If there is not sufficient time to read an entire book, then portions of *Ceremony* could be used to illustrate the main points of this lesson.

EXTENSIONS: Some Native American literature and authors bridge the above mentioned paradigm shift. Sherman Alexie and his movie *Smoke Signals* is one such example and can be used to illustrate this point.

EVALUATION: Even though this is recommended for advanced students it can be comprehended by most students. Students should be made to realize they are learning to communicate cross-culturally in this lesson.

MATERIALS/ RESOURCES: *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko or *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich