



Culturally Responsive ELA Instruction for and about AI/AN Students

Competency

Educators utilize AIAN texts, storytelling, and cultural pedagogy to provide culturally responsive instruction that embeds both cultural and academic standards in English Language Arts (ELA).

Key Method

Educators develop and implement a standards-aligned and culturally responsive ELA lesson that utilizes AIAN texts.

Method Components

How do I use AI/AN texts respectfully?

Add steps or strategies needed, background information, and definitions or details that are important to the work submitted in part 2.

- Search for vetted, authentic AI/AN texts (Tools for this are shared in the Resource Section)



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Teaching For and About Native Americans

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- Understand Federal Indian Policy and its impact on culture, history, and oral or written literary practices
- Address Native archetypes/themes in literature
- Emphasize and value oral cultural storytelling as text and literacy skill building
- Work to ensure accurate and respectful portrayal of Native people

Some questions to ask as you consider teaching a story with AIAN characters or content:

1. Are AIAN people presented as intellectual, creative, and governed humans rather than inferior or uncivilized as commonly portrayed in colonized literature?
2. Are AIAN people portrayed as one unit (pan-Indian) rather than celebrating the uniqueness of over 574 Native nations?
3. Do the texts you teach balance presenting the suffering of AIAN people with the joy and beauty of culture and resilience with more emphasis on the latter?
4. Are AIAN people only represented in a historical light rather than present and thriving (“We are Still Here”)?
5. Does the text use demeaning terms, broken English, or fake imitative names when referring to characters?
6. Does the artwork accurately reflect the AIAN nation or content of the book rather than generic or pan-Indian art (feathers, beads, totem poles, pottery, etc.)?

The Cultural Use of Storytelling in the Classroom

While stories are an integral part of an ELA classroom or literacy program, the art of storytelling, especially cultural storytelling, is often overlooked. Not only is storytelling a critical oral tradition for passing along information, lessons, and knowledge, but storytelling has powerful implications on literacy and emotional development. Inviting community and students to tell their cultural stories creates a safe space of understanding and identity while developing literacy skills. For example, an emphasis on storytelling in the classroom can:

- Improve listening skills
- Boost social and emotional health
- Promote excitement for reading
- Boosts participation and confidence
- Teaches story structure and language skills
- Expands knowledge
- Teaches lessons or values in an engaging way

Some examples of Native storytellers that can be useful in the classroom are local tribal members who you can connect to through tribal education departments. You can also share the work of famous Native storytellers like [Te Ata Fisher](#) or [Perry](#)



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[Ground](#). You can also access digital stories such as the collection of Star Stories from the National Museum of the American Indian:

1. [The Girl and Her Seven Brothers](#)
2. [Quillwork Girl and Her New Seven Brothers](#)
3. [The Fox and the Stars](#)
4. [The Younger Sister](#)
5. [The Star that Does Not Move](#)

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

Cultural responsiveness can be applied in any content area including reading instruction. At its basic level, cultural responsiveness means meeting students where they are culturally and linguistically. This approach to reading also values a student's native language which is not typically promoted or considered in teaching reading. So, what does culturally responsive literacy for AI/AN students entail?

- Utilize culturally appropriate texts, images, and resource materials for phonics and other literacy instruction. This requires seeking guidance from community, elders, and AIAN organizations.
- Seek to understand your own personal literacy experience and bias toward certain assumptions or long-held beliefs about literature and literacy. As educators, we tend to have familiar "favorites" that we love to read and teach. These are not always the best representation for our students and can often share harmful stereotypes or assumptions of other peoples or historical concepts.
- Have and share high expectations for students to read in English while also valuing their oral and written literacy in other languages
- Seek to understand the unique history and phonetic structures of a student's Native language. This can help in understanding potential challenges for code-switching
- Emphasize oral practice and storytelling. Many AIAN languages and communities are traditionally oral and "reading" is not critical to understanding
- Encourage discussion with practices such as Talking Circles. These circles equalize the power for discussion and encourage both talking and listening. The person speaking holds the talking stick or object. Only that person speaks then passes the object to another
- Engage parents, family, and community members in reading support. Invite community to share stories and language and read with students. Many times, reading is sent home for parents to oversee. Instead, bring parents and family in the space of instruction so that they can see what and how you are teaching
- Practice small group instruction for AI/AN students. While small group instruction can improve learning for every student, it can be very beneficial in building confidence and community for AIAN students. Culturally,



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learning is done as a collective and being singled out in a large group is uncomfortable. Having a small community in which a student still gets one-on-one contact with a teacher is more conducive to learning and confidence-building

Supporting Rationale and Research

August, D., Goldenberg, C., and Robert Rueda. (2006). Native American children and youth: Culture, language, and literacy. *Journal of American Indian Education* - Volume 45, Issue 3, p. 24-37.

https://jaie.asu.edu/sites/default/files/453_2006_3_august_et_al.pdf

Brown, K. (2019). Native American stereotypes in literature: The noble savage, the utopian man. *Digital Literature Review*, 6, 42-53.

<https://doi.org/10.33043/DLR.6.0.42-53> or

<https://openjournals.bsu.edu/dlr/article/view/2759/1667>

Heredia, A. and Francis, N. (1997) Coyote as Reading Teacher: Oral Tradition in the Classroom. *Teaching Indigenous Languages* ed. Jon Reyhner. Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University. p. 46-55. https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_6.html

Making Culture Visible: Telling Small Stories in Busy Classrooms

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-9955-9_8

Geneva Gay (2013) Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43:1, 48-70, [DOI: 10.1111/curi.12002](https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12002)

Resources

Culturally Responsive Texts

[American Indians in Children's Literature](#)

[Evaluating American Indian Resources and Materials in the Classroom](#)

["I" is for Inclusion: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People](#)

[Native Americans in Literature](#) (A non-Native educator's journey to rethinking text representation)



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▶ Native Voices in Children's Literature

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

[Cultivating Identity Literacy | Facing History and Ourselves](#)

[Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction](#) from Keys to Literacy

[Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction](#) from NCCRest

▶ Indigenous In Plain Sight | Gregg Deal | TEDxBoulder

[Native American Literature in Your Classroom | Helpful Handout Educator Resource](#)

[NCSI Culturally Responsive Data Literacy](#)

[Storytelling: Oral Traditions | PBS LearningMedia](#)

["Te Ata" Fisher | Hall of Fame](#)

[Teaching Culturally, Teaching Responsibly](#). A one-pager from the National Indian Education Association

[USING TALKING CIRCLES IN THE CLASSROOM | Heartland Community College](#)

▶ 'We the People' - the three most misunderstood words in US history | Mark Ch...

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(300-500 words)

Please use the suggested word count as a guide to answering the following contextual questions. This will help our assessor understand your current context for working on this micro-credential.



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Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. What is your past experience and comfort level with using AIAN texts in your ELA classroom? After completing this module, what do you notice about the current materials you use in your ELA classroom? Are they AIAN inclusive?
2. How can your students, Native and non-Native, benefit from culturally responsive literacy instruction and using more inclusive AIAN texts?
3. Reflect on your prior ELA instruction. How often do you utilize AIAN texts in your courses? Are these AIAN authored or are they mostly texts about AIAN people authored by those who are non-AIAN?

Passing: Response provides reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both the teacher and the student. A learning goal that clearly states what they hope to gain from earning this micro-credential.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **three** artifacts as evidence of your learning.

Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

Artifact 1: AIAN Text Analysis

For Artifact 1, you will review an AIAN themed text that is included in your ELA instruction. If this text does not pass the review, you will select another text from a vetted source to use for the lesson.

- Select one of the texts from your ELA curriculum, phonics program, or classroom library to review.
- Review Use NMAI's Worksheet for Selecting Native American Children's Literature [NK360 - Education Initiative - Teacher Materials - Worksheet for Selecting Native American Children's Literature](#)
- If the text does not pass the rubric, search for a replacement AIAN text. It is helpful to search Debbie Reese's site [American Indians in Children's Literature](#). Review this text using the rubric.
- Upload the rubrics as Artifact 1. You may only have one NMAI rubric if your first AIAN text passed.

Artifact 2: AIAN Literacy Lesson Plan

For this artifact, you will develop an ELA lesson plan to accompany the AIAN text that passed the rubric for Artifact 1. Your lesson may be a read aloud, text analysis,



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small group, or other ELA-focused lesson. This is NOT intended to be a one-off lesson. It should be anchored into the instructional focus or theme.

- As you develop your lesson, be sure that the lesson includes the following:
 - Focus on the Native author or purpose for the text
 - Questions that illuminate the cultural content and values
 - Comparison of or anchoring to other texts or themes students have encountered in the unit or course study.
 - Student worksheet or lesson task that will be used as Artifact 3
- Upload the complete lesson plan with a student worksheet or additional tasks

Artifact 3: Student Artifacts

For Artifact 3, you will teach the lesson and upload TWO different student artifacts.

- The student artifacts could include
 - A completed student worksheet or written task with student identifiers removed
 - Images of student work
 - Images of student engagement such as a talking circle or creative response (The image needs to demonstrate culturally responsive instruction and not just show students working generically)
- Upload both artifacts. Be sure they are two different types of artifacts

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: [AIAN Text Analysis]	Educator uploads at least ONE reviewed and passed NMAI text analysis rubric. OR Educator uploads BOTH rubrics, one pass and one fail	Educator uploads ONE rubric that is a pass but is incomplete	Educator uploads ONE rubric that fails, but does not upload a passing text analysis rubric
Artifact 2: [AIAN Literacy Lesson Plan]	Educator uploads a lesson plan that includes all FOUR components: Native text, text-centered questions, anchor to text or themes,	Educator uploads a lesson plan that includes THREE components: Native text, text-centered questions, anchor to text or themes, and	Educator uploads a lesson plan that includes One or TWO components: Native text, text-centered questions, anchor to text or themes, and



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	and student task/worksheet	student task/worksheet	student task/worksheet
Artifact 3: [Student Artifacts]	Educator uploads TWO complete and different student artifacts that represent classroom engagement	Educator uploads TWO complete student artifacts but both are the same type of activity or artifact	Educator uploads only ONE student artifact

Part 3 Reflection

(300-500 words)
 Use the word count as a guide to writing a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. How has the experience of reviewing and teaching AIAN texts shifted your own perspective of literacy?
2. How did students engage with the AIAN text and content? What were some of their questions or responses? Was there anything that surprised you?
3. How will you change your practice going forward to be more inclusive of AIAN texts and stories regardless of your students' ethnicities?

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.

NEA acknowledges the [National Indian Education Association](#) for its review and endorsement of this micro-credential.



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