

Online Unit (Draft)

Main Unit Objectives:

1. At the end of this unit, students will be able to identify at least three traditional purposes of storytelling / orature within Alaska Native history and culture.
2. At the end of this unit, students will be able to identify at least one purpose of storytelling / literature within Alaska Native culture in the post-contact era.
3. At the end of this unit, students compare and contrast the purposes of pre- and post-Western contact Alaska Native literature, focusing on at least two texts of their choosing from the same region.

Week 1: Pre-Contact Literature

During this week, students will engage themselves with pre-contact Alaska Native literature, and come to an understanding of its significance to Alaska Native culture in the era before Russian imperialism. Choose one of the five major Alaska Native cultural groups (Athabascans, Inupiaq, Yup'ik, Aleut, Southeast) as defined by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. The group you choose will be your focus for this unit. Choose carefully! Try not to choose a culture of which you are a part.

Week Objective:

1. At the end of this week, students will be able to identify at least three traditional purposes of storytelling / orature within Alaska Native history and culture.
2. At the end of this week, students will attempt to identify aspects of a sort of pre-contact “Native identity” as best as they can from the literature they read.

Readings:

You will read **two stories of your choice** from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (under “Cultural Resources” and then click your group of choice). There are many readings here. It is up to you to make sure you read a story that is a traditional myth.

Also read **one story of your choice** from your copy of *The Raven and the Totem: Traditional Alaska Native Myths and Tales*.

Though not required, it might be helpful to watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSYw502dJNY> to help recontextualize reading for meaning. Note: this is a very Western perspective, but will suffice for this week.

Activities:

Once you have read your stories, identify what didactic purpose you believe each story serves within the context of what you already know about that culture. Try to approach your readings from a traditional Western perspective, using the analytical skills you've built in this and other English classes. Do not do extra research into this culture (yet).

Write up your observations regarding the stories you read, focusing on these two questions:

1. What lessons do you think Native children were expected to learn from these stories? Do you think the stories make those lessons clear in an effective way? Try to identify **at least three** potential purposes for the stories (collectively).
2. In what ways do the stories give you a sense of what you might call the Native "identity?" Can you identify any behaviors or attitudes that you still identify with Native peoples, or ones that you feel have changed since then?

Week 2: Pre-Contact literature, continued.

During this week, students will contextualize their readings with new knowledge about their chosen group. Using your newfound understanding of this cultural group, you will re-evaluate your writing from last week.

Week Objectives:

1. After this week, students will compare the traditional Western approach to interpreting literature to the role that storytelling played in Indigenous Alaskan cultures.
2. After gaining newfound cultural knowledge on their group, students will reevaluate their previous interpretations of Native stories.

Readings:

Read the chapter in Steven Langdon's *The Native People of Alaska* that corresponds to the group you chose last week. You will also read:

Kawagley, O. (1999). Alaska Native Education: History and Adaptation for the New Millennium. In R. Barnhardt and O. Kawagley (Ed.), *Alaska Native Education: Views From Within* (pp. 73-95). Fairbanks, Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

You are only required to read up to 92. The last section is irrelevant for you but you may read it if you wish. The article gives a brief history of Alaska Native education and the purpose of storytelling. The last few pages will not help you with your activity.

Activities:

Revisit your writing from last week. Revisit the stories also, if that is helpful. Do another brief writing for this week. Try to be detailed as your writings this week will help you with your end-of-unit project.

1. In what ways has your understanding of the culture you chose changed? Have you gained new insights into their values, or identity?
2. Compare briefly the traditional Western approach to analysing literature (evidenced by the video in Week 1, regarding narrative structures and the human experience) with the Indigenous approach you've studied this week.
3. In what ways have your interpretations of the stories you read changed? Now that you have a more Indigenous perspective on literature and storytelling, try to approach the same questions from last week's activity again, noting any changes in your thoughts.

Week 3: Post-contact literature

You have now examined a *very brief slice* of pre-contact mythology and literature from your chosen culture. Now you will look at some more modern literature from that group, from after the beginning of the colonial era. "Post-contact" is a broad and problematic term with a variety of definitions but here, you will be concerned with this definition specifically:

1. post-contact literature is literature concerned with how indigenous or colonized peoples define themselves, their cultures, and their role in modern times; this is literature from after the moment of first contact, which differs from cultural group to cultural group.

Week Objectives:

1. After this week, students will organize thoughts and notes in preparation for writing a larger paper. Students may do this in the manner of their choosing but must show evidence of deep thought and organization.

Readings:

Note to classmates - *this is one part I'm having a hard time with. There's so much out there that's printed...there's a pretty strong supply of modern authors at the UAF library, but they're not available online. For a class like this somebody would have to scan a selection of authors from books instead of assuming they could pick their own online.*

OR this could be longer than a week and students could request to have things sent to their school in advance, but that's kind of inconvenient. I think I will go the scanning route but that's not exactly conducive to what I'm trying to do, either! For the sake of this draft I've just listed some authors that students could choose from, but obviously in the final draft, things will be different. Any input would be nice.

This week you will read **two** stories, poems, or pieces of short non-fiction by an author of your chosen cultural group. They can be from different authors if you like (ex. two different Athabascan authors, such as Mary Tallmountain and Velma Wallis) but you must read two separate pieces. The authors you choose must have been alive and writing in the post-contact era (we'll say, anything after 1741 -

<http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=130>.) This should not be difficult - any named Alaska Native author you can find will have been born after this.

Unattributed stories are typically from before this time. Make sure you are not reading modern retellings of traditional stories (which you would find on ANKN, for example).

You can find some digital copies of modern Alaska Native stories at these resources:

library.uaf.edu

alaskool.org

ankn.uaf.edu

Be sure to search by cultural group. Some authors to consider are:

Athabascan:

Mary Tallmountain, Velma Wallis, Sidney Huntington, Harper Haines

Aleut / Alutiiq: (You're pretty much going with nonfiction here)

AlutiiqLanguage.org, Dean Kohlhoff

Inupiaq:

Ticasuk Brown, Joan Kane

Southeast:

Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer, Pamela Rae Huteson

Yup'ik:

Oscar Kawagley, Susie Silkook

If you have any trouble finding an author or an author's work online or at your school library, don't hesitate to email me. I can get it for you from the University of Alaska.

Activities:

Once you have gone through your readings, take notes on the following topics. You can create a graphic organizer if you wish, or simply take detailed notes. You do not need to do a formal write up this week, since you had to find your own readings, but you should turn your notes into me so I can see that you did your readings and that you focused on all the right topics:

1. In what ways do you see modern Native struggles represented in these readings? Subsistence issues, struggle for cultural identity, schooling troubles, economic downturn, etc. Is this in your reading at all?
2. How have attitudes towards the topics you analyzed in Weeks 1 and 2 (the Native identity, attitudes towards nature, the role and purpose of literature) changed between the time of your first readings, and the readings from this week? Try if you can to take note of the wide span of time between your traditional readings (likely first told before 1741, but written after) and your modern readings (likely written after 1900).

Week 4: Comparing and Contrasting

This week, you will take everything that you have absorbed in the last three weeks and synthesize it together into a single product. In an essay, you will compare and contrast pre- and post-contact literature of your chosen Alaska Native group. You will focus on the purpose of storytelling and the portrayal of the group's identity. See "Activities."

Week Objectives:

1. At the end of this week, students will compare and contrast the purposes of pre- and post-Western contact Alaska Native literature, focusing on at least two texts of their choosing from the same region.

Readings:

There are no readings for this week. If it has been a while since you have written a compare / contrast essay, these might be helpful to review, but are not required:

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/comparing-and-contrasting/>

<http://www.bookrags.com/articles/5.html>

Activities:

Using at least two of the stories you've read during this unit (one pre-contact and one post-contact), you will write a brief 3 to 5 page compare and contrast essay, focusing on the two eras of Alaska Native literature you have studied. You may use all of your readings if you so choose.

Your goal is to pick apart what you believe is most representative of the Alaska Native cultural identity from each of these two eras (what it means to be Native, what their cultural values are, what roles are important in this culture, etc.) by picking out specific examples from your stories and doing a literary analysis of what you believe those elements represent, reinforcing your analysis with cultural context from the non-fiction readings in Week 2. You will also focus on what you believe the purpose of literature in general is in the pre- and post-contact eras, once again, reinforcing your thesis with both examples from your story and context from the nonfiction readings in Week 2.

Unit Assessments:

Note to classmate: I have some really well-developed rubrics that I've used for writing in the past. They're easy to adapt. If you've ever seen 6 trait or 6+1 trait rubrics, those are the writing rubrics I'm talking about. I'd pretty much use a variation of those for grading every objective along the way (with the exception of the knowledge one). They can be easily weighted or have things removed, for example if I needed to remove things and focus on organization for the notes objective. That said, they don't really offer much in

the way of reinforcing assessments...I've tried to make this entire unit build on itself and circle back on itself repeatedly to help students feel as though they're moving towards a more cohesive project that's always been assessed repeatedly. I think that works well. I've also made this unit more chronological, as per Lexie's recommendations, but it's hard to do the choose-your-own-readings thing with younger (high school) students. I might drop that for the final version in this class if I can't think up something better. I'm thinking, assessment wise, that I'd also like to incorporate speaking somehow into this. Turn that essay into a presentation. I'm bouncing around ideas on how to do that, so any advice anybody has would be greatly appreciated. I'm thinking presentation at a village community center uploaded onto YouTube, but I've no idea how to grade that or teach it over the internet.

Anyway, I've not uploaded the rubrics here (you can Google 6 traits rubric, mine is like that but more detailed), because I haven't adapted it to the final paper, since I'm still thinking about incorporating speech somehow. Thanks for reading my draft!