



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2015 Volume I: Teaching Native American Studies

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## **The Surviving and Thriving of Cultures: Foundational Study of American Indian History for Literature**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.01.08

by Robert M. Schwartz

Modern students face struggles, as have people throughout history. Students struggle to compete in high school, the practice arena for an increasingly globalized society and, therefore, can benefit from a more foundational study of American experience. The original Americans – the Native people of this continent – have an amazingly rich history. From their ancient beginnings to their modern challenges, the tragedy and resiliency of American Indians can make for similarly rich study within an English classroom. This unit explores the cultures and experiences of the original American survivors – American Indians – juxtaposed with both advanced literary study and foundational reading skills across two classes. Compared with commonly utilized American drama, students will study a play by a modern American Indian playwright in order to synthesize the meaning of the “American Dream.” In a different classroom, struggling readers will read survivor stories in order to enhance their interest in reading, the reading skills themselves, and students’ socio-emotional understanding of a society that has endured much persecution. This is a study of a society that continues to both survive and thrive today.

(Recommended for English, grades 9-12)

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