



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2024 Volume I: Myth, Legend, Fairy Tale

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## **Unraveling Myths of Indigenous America: Creation Stories and Cultural Resilience**

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### **Introduction/Rationale/Background Information:**

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When you hear the word “myth,” two different ideas might emerge in your mind. If you do a quick Google search, as my students would if asked to define the word “myth,” you would discover two definitions. The first: an anthropological definition, where a myth is “a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.” In this sense, the word “myth” would be synonymous with folktales, fables, legends, and allegories. The second definition, however, is pejorative. The second meaning of the word myth is “a widely held but false belief or idea,” which relegates such myths to misconceptions, fallacies, and stereotypes.<sup>1</sup> I will be addressing both types of myths in this unit. In an attempt to distinguish between the two ideas more clearly, I will differentiate my terminology. When I am referring to myths in the anthropological sense, I will identify them as “stories” or “myths.” When I am addressing myths in the pejorative sense, I will identify them as “stereotypes” or “misconceptions.”

The narrative of indigenous peoples of the Americas has often been overshadowed by misconceptions and misinformation. Among the many stereotypes that persist, one of the most malicious is the notion that indigenous cultures are relics of the past, having been decimated and consigned to the pages of history books. This idea of indigenous extinction, that seems to have started almost immediately upon European settlement and conquest, was already prevalent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was the dominant narrative by the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2,3</sup> This unit of study seeks to challenge this narrative by delving into the diversity of vibrant, resilient, and persistent indigenous cultures. Through an exploration of creation myths from indigenous peoples across the Americas and the Caribbean, this unit aims to not only dispel the misconception of indigenous extinction but also to celebrate the enduring richness of indigenous cultures and their traditional stories.

The prevailing stereotype of indigenous extinction is rooted in a colonial legacy that sought to marginalize and erase indigenous peoples and their cultures. From the earliest encounters with European explorers to the present day, indigenous communities have faced systemic oppression and experienced cruel violence; they have been robbed of and removed from their lands; and they have been forced to assimilate. Despite these

challenges, indigenous peoples have demonstrated remarkable resilience, preserving their languages, customs, and spiritual beliefs across generations.

Central to the cultural identity of indigenous peoples are their creation stories, which offer profound insights into their cosmologies, values, and worldview. Throughout North, Central, and South America, as well as the Caribbean Islands, myriad creation myths abound, each reflecting the unique histories and cultural landscapes of their respective societies. By examining creation myths from various indigenous cultures, students will have the opportunity to engage with the multiplicity of indigenous perspectives and narratives. From the cosmic origins of the universe to the intimate connections between humans and nature, these myths serve as windows into the collective imagination and spiritual consciousness of indigenous peoples and offer profound reflections on the human condition and our place in the world.

This unit of study will invite students on a journey of discovery and reflection. Students will be challenged to critically examine their preconceptions and assumptions about indigenous cultures. They will explore the diversity of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, and focus on several creation myths as representative stories from different places across these regions. Throughout this unit, students will have the opportunity to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complexities and continuities of indigenous life, as they challenge the misconceptions that have obscured the vibrant histories of indigenous communities and as they are exposed to the persistent and enduring legacies of indigenous cultures. By celebrating the resilience and creativity of indigenous peoples, I hope to foster in my students a deeper sense of empathy, respect, and solidarity with the diverse cultures throughout the Americas, and inspire a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of human diversity.

I teach Social Studies to seventh and eighth grade students at Nathan Hale School. The majority of the students at my school represent minority populations, with 50.1% identifying as Hispanic, 14.5% identifying as Black, 1.6% identifying as Asian, 4.2% identifying as two or more races, (and 29.6% identifying as White) in the 2023-24 school year.<sup>4</sup> I know from established relationships with my students from this past year that my Hispanic and Black students have familial roots throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, specifically from Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Saint Lucia. And all of these lands were inhabited by indigenous peoples long before the Europeans came, and the cultural legacies of those peoples have been influencing the development of those places since the very beginning, since the very creation of their universes, which began with their unique creation stories.

The seventh grade World Cultures and Geography curriculum begins with an overview of Geography and then dives into a study of Latin America, which includes South America, Central America, and the island nations of the Caribbean. The eighth grade United States History II curriculum begins with a survey of pre-Columbian cultures across the North American continent. I believe that this unit could be incorporated into either of these curricula, as well as modified for inclusion in the fifth grade United States History I curriculum, or modified as part of a Language Arts unit on creation myths. I intend to utilize this unit with my eighth graders this coming school year. In the future, I may reorganize the unit and split it up geographically, focusing on indigenous cultures of the Caribbean and South and Central America with seventh graders and indigenous cultures of North America with eighth graders. Because the middle school grades in my school operate on a block schedule of 70 minutes, meeting with students every other day, I have organized the included lessons to reflect this timing.

# Teaching Strategies/Classroom Activities/Lessons

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## Lesson One: Misconceptions of Native Americans

Objective:

- Students will identify and debunk common stereotypes and misinformation about Native American cultures, including the misconception that indigenous cultures were exterminated and extinguished centuries ago.

Materials Needed:

- Do Now Handout: Prepared for students to write down any preconceived notions, misconceptions, or stereotypes about Native American cultures they may hold or have observed around them.
- Visual aids (images, videos) depicting the diversity of various Native American cultures.
- Handout with examples of Native American misconceptions and stereotypes. These handouts serve as discussion prompts for students to analyze and critically evaluate during the lesson.
- Whiteboard or chart paper and appropriate markers.

Lesson Plan:

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Do Now: Students respond to a written prompt, writing down any preconceived notions, misconceptions, or stereotypes they have or have observed about Native Americans.
- Share out. Write down responses on the whiteboard or chart paper without commenting.
- Explain the objective - that the purpose of the lesson is to examine and challenge these and other common misconceptions/stereotypes before gaining a deeper understanding of Native American history and culture.

Teacher-led Discussion about Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes (20 minutes):

- Present students with handouts containing statements representing common misconceptions and stereotypes that students may encounter in popular culture, media, or education about Native Americans. These examples will students can engage in the discussion to identify, analyze, and challenge these stereotypes, thereby deepening their understanding of Native American cultures and promoting cultural sensitivity. Read through all examples together. Examples of statements that could be included in the handouts:
  - "All Native Americans lived in tipis and hunted buffalo."
  - "Native American cultures are primitive and uncivilized."
  - "Native Americans are a homogenous group with the same beliefs and customs."
  - "Native Americans receive free money from the government."
  - "Native American spirituality is based solely on worshiping nature."
  - "Native Americans are inherently violent and aggressive."
  - "Native American languages are dying and have no relevance in modern society."
  - "Native American history begins and ends with the arrival of Europeans." \* See Misconception of Extinction - Discuss/analyze together, along with any other misconception/stereotype you choose.

(see next lesson segment)

- Facilitate a brief class discussion on at least two misconceptions, including the Misconception of Extinction (see below), encouraging students to analyze the origins and implications of these ideas:
  - Where do these ideas come from? What are the sources of your information?
  - From whose authority or perspective was/is the information being shared/disseminated? What is their purpose in sharing the information?
  - Are the sources current? Relevant? Accurate?
  - How does the general public's belief in these ideas impact the cultures and communities that the ideas are about?
  - Challenge students to consider how these misconceptions may have been perpetuated by popular culture, media, or historical narratives.
- Presentation on the Misconception of Extinction:
  - Introduce the misconception that indigenous cultures were exterminated and extinguished centuries ago. Explain that while indigenous peoples faced significant, repeated challenges, their cultures and communities have persisted to the present day.
  - Provide historical context by discussing the impact of European colonization on Native American populations, including capture and enslavement, direct and indirect warfare, forced removal, exposure to disease, and cultural assimilation.
  - Note examples of resilience and resistance among indigenous peoples, such as the survival of cultural practices, languages, and traditions despite centuries of adversity. Could use Pequots and Mohegans as local examples of indigenous peoples who are actively existing in our state. (Be brief; a later lesson specifically addresses resilience.)
  - Use visual aids to illustrate contemporary Native American communities, emphasizing their diversity and ongoing struggles for sovereignty and recognition. (Be brief; the next lesson specifically addresses diversity of communities.)

Debunking Activity (15 minutes):

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the other misconceptions from the handout.
- Instruct students to debunk their assigned misconception by researching its origins, the historical context in which it came to prominence, and its contemporary relevance. Encourage them to consider alternative perspectives and sources of information, as well as visual aids that may help them show their evidence.
- This time is for gathering information and developing an appropriate device to present their findings.

Group Presentations (15 minutes – 2-3 minutes per group):

- Have each group present their findings about their assigned misconception to their classmates.
- Have students jot down one thing they learned from their classmates.

Reflection and Conclusion (10 minutes):

- Lead a class discussion reflecting on the lesson objective and its implications for understanding Native American cultures.
  - Encourage students to consider how challenging misconceptions can promote cultural sensitivity, empathy, and respect for indigenous peoples.
  - Emphasize the importance of questioning dominant narratives and seeking out diverse

perspectives in order to cultivate a more inclusive and accurate understanding of history and culture.

- Conclude the lesson by inviting students to share any insights or questions they have gained from the discussion.

## **Lesson Two: Diversity of Native American Cultures**

Objective:

- Students will gain an understanding of the diversity of Native American civilizations across the Americas, including the Caribbean, North, Central, and South America.

Materials Needed:

- Maps of the Americas
- Slide presentation with information and visual aids (images, videos) depicting various Native American cultures
- Note-taking handouts for students to take notes on during the slide presentation

Lesson Plan:

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Begin by showing maps of the Americas and pointing out the regions inhabited by various Native American tribes and civilizations.
- Discuss the vastness of indigenous cultures across the land, including the Caribbean, North America, Central America, and South America.
- Explain that today's lesson will focus on exploring the rich diversity of these cultures and addressing common misconceptions.

Slide Presentation of Native American Civilizations (50 minutes):

- Provide an overview of significant Native American civilizations throughout the Americas, noting key aspects of each culture, such as language, religion, social structure, and artistic achievements. Use visual aids to enhance understanding and appreciation of indigenous cultures. Touch on each geographic area; include two to three groups from each area.
  - The Caribbean: Taíno, Carib, Arawak, Jibaro (Taíno subgroup in Puerto Rico)
  - North America: Navajo (Diné), Cherokee, Sioux (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota), Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), Apache, Mohegan, Pequot, Quinnipiac, Inuit
  - Central America: Maya, Aztec (or Mexica), Lenca, Garifuna, K'iche' (Quiché)
  - South America: Inca, Mapuche, Quimbaya, Chachapoya, Nazca, Yanomami

Conclusion and Reflection (10 minutes):

- Summarize the key points covered in the lesson, emphasizing the diversity and complexity of Native American cultures.
- Encourage students to reflect on how their understanding of Native American cultures has evolved throughout the lesson.
- Remind students of the importance of challenging stereotypes and promoting cultural sensitivity and

respect.

- Invite students to ask any remaining questions or share any additional thoughts before concluding the lesson.

### **Lesson Three: The Resilience of Indigenous Cultures I**

Objective:

- Students will explore a primary source to understand the historical resilience of indigenous cultures in the face of colonization and cultural assimilation.

Materials:

- Do Now Handout: Prepared for students to write down their prior knowledge or perceptions about the impact of colonization on indigenous peoples, as well as to record a definition of “resilience” and its significance in the context of indigenous cultures.
- Primary Source: Excerpts from Bartolomé de las Casas’s “A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies.”
  - “A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies” is the personal account of the Spanish Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas, who came to the Americas in the 16th century. He was struck by the inhumane ways in which the native peoples were treated by the European explorers and conquerors, and he went on to be a leading opponent of slavery, torture, and genocide of the Native Americans by the Spanish colonists.
  - Passage Selection: Choose excerpts that describe the encounters between European colonizers and indigenous peoples, highlighting instances of violence, exploitation, or cultural suppression.
- Discussion Handout: Prepared with questions to guide student reflection and discussion.

Lesson Plan:

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Do Now: Ask students to write down any prior knowledge or perceptions they have about the impact of colonization on indigenous peoples.
- Share out.
- Define and discuss the term “resilience” and its significance in the context of indigenous cultures.

Reading and Analysis (20 minutes):

- Distribute excerpts from Bartolomé de las Casas’s “A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies” to all students. Have them work independently or in pairs (depending on students’ reading skills) to read the excerpts:
  - Primary Source Analysis: Encourage students to annotate as they read and react to significant information in the excerpts from Bartolomé de las Casas’s book.
  - Remind them that they are looking for examples of the resilience of the Native Americans in response to what was happening to them.

Discussion and Reflection (30 minutes):

- Create small groups to discuss their reactions to the excerpts and to answer the following guided

discussion questions.

- Remind students that our classroom is a safe space to share out their feelings.
- Have students assign fixed or rotating roles of discussion facilitator, note-keeper, and time-keeper.

Discussion Questions: Discuss the following questions in response to the excerpts from Bartolomé de las Casas's book:

1. How were the indigenous people treated by the Europeans? What was your reaction to this treatment?
2. In what ways did the indigenous people react to and take action against what was happening to them? What was your reaction to their response?
3. Given these examples, how did European colonization impact indigenous cultures?

Conclusion (10 minutes):

- Reconvene as a whole class to share insights and observations from the small group discussions.
- Emphasize the importance of recognizing and honoring the resilience of indigenous cultures, both historically and in the present day.

## **Lesson Four: The Resilience of Indigenous Cultures II**

Objective:

- Students will explore a secondary source to understand the historical and contemporary resilience of indigenous cultures in the face of colonization and cultural assimilation.

Materials:

- Do Now Handout: Prepared for students to write down their prior knowledge or perceptions about the impact of colonization on indigenous peoples, as well as to record a definition of "resilience" and its significance in the context of indigenous cultures.
- Secondary Source: Excerpts from "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants" by Robin Wall Kimmerer or "Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants" by Robin Wall Kimmerer, adapted by Monique Gray Smith.
  - "Braiding Sweetgrass" is a book that explores the intersections of indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and environmental stewardship through the lens of Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a botanist. The book weaves together personal anecdotes, indigenous teachings, and scientific insights to illuminate the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world, highlighting the resilience of indigenous cultures in maintaining ecological harmony. The alternate text is a companion book, which has been adapted specifically for a younger audience and may be more appropriate to use depending on your students.
  - Passage Selection: Choose excerpts that highlight indigenous ecological knowledge cultural revival and environmental activism; connection to ancestral wisdom; and/or implications for the future.
- Discussion Handout: Prepared with questions to guide student reflection and discussion.

Lesson Plan:

### Introduction (10 minutes):

- Do Now: Ask students to write down any prior knowledge or perceptions they have about the impact of colonization on indigenous peoples.
- Share out.
- Define and discuss the term “resilience” and its significance in the context of indigenous cultures.

### Reading and Analysis (20 minutes):

- Distribute excerpts from “Braiding Sweetgrass” to all students. Have them work independently or in pairs (depending on students’ reading skills) to read excerpts:
  - Secondary Source Analysis: Encourage students to annotate as they read, noting examples of indigenous resilience and strategies for cultural preservation in the excerpts.

### Discussion and Reflection (30 minutes):

- Create small groups to discuss their reactions to the excerpts and to answer the following guided discussion questions.
  - Remind students that our classroom is a safe space to share out their feelings.
  - Have students assign fixed or rotating roles of discussion facilitator, note-keeper, and time-keeper.

Discussion Questions: Discuss the following questions in response to the excerpts from “Braiding Sweetgrass”:

1. How have indigenous cultures developed intricate ecological knowledge systems based on centuries of observation and interaction with the land? What was your reaction to this knowledge?
2. In what ways are indigenous communities leading efforts to protect and restore ecosystems or sacred sites? What was your reaction to these efforts?
3. How do indigenous teachings about reciprocity, respect for all beings, and intergenerational knowledge transfer contribute to cultural resilience and environmental sustainability?

### Conclusion/Reflection (15 minutes):

- Reconvene as a whole class to share insights and observations from the small group discussions.
- Emphasize the importance of recognizing and honoring the resilience of indigenous cultures, both historically and in the present day.
- Reflective writing activity where students respond to prompts such as:
  - What are some lessons that we can learn from indigenous cultures about living in harmony with nature?
  - How can individuals and communities incorporate indigenous ecological knowledge into environmental conservation efforts?

## **Lesson Five: Exploration of Creation Stories in Our Own Cultures**

### Objectives:

- Students will explore the importance and cultural significance of creation stories in their own cultures, gaining an understanding of how these stories shape their worldview, identity, and community values.



## Materials Needed:

- Handout with prompts for exploring creation stories.
- Whiteboard or chart paper and appropriate markers.

## Lesson Plan:

### Introduction (20 minutes):

- Review and discuss vocabulary:
  - Myth: a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon
  - Creation Myth: a symbolic narrative of how the world began and how people first came to inhabit it
- Review the lesson's objective and prepare students to examine their own creation stories.
- Remind students to approach the lesson with sensitivity and respect for their own and others' cultures.
- Invite students to write down a creation story they may know or have heard, or to share what they know about creation stories and their significance in different cultures. Give them time to brainstorm and write. (Be prepared to discuss a creation story to help students get started – possibly review Gaia and the Titans from Greek mythology that they studied in seventh grade.)

### Exploration of Creation Myths (40 minutes):

- Have students share out their stories in small groups before sharing out to the whole class. Take notes on the whiteboard or chart paper. Use the following basic questions to discuss stories:
  - Who were the characters in each story?
  - What was the setting of each story?
  - How does the creation process unfold?
  - What are main ideas/themes of each story?
  - What is the purpose of each story?
- Facilitate a discussion about the similarities and differences, and how the stories reflect the communities that they come from. Use the following questions to compare the stories:
  - What similarities exist between any of the stories?
  - What differences exist from one story to the next?
  - What role do gods, spirits, or animals play in the creation story?
  - How are concepts such as order, chaos, creation, and destruction depicted?
  - What cultural values or lessons can be gained from the creation story?

### Reflection (10 minutes):

- Have students reflect on their experience: the story they told, the stories they heard, and what they learned about how stories help connect us to our communities.

## **Lesson Six: The Significance of Creation Myths in Indigenous Cultures**

### Objective:

- Students will explore the importance and cultural significance of creation myths in indigenous cultures, gaining an understanding of how these narratives shape worldview, identity, and community values.

## Materials Needed:

- Visual aids (images, videos) depicting creation myths from various indigenous cultures
- Handouts with examples of creation myths
- Whiteboard or chart paper with appropriate markers

## Lesson Plan:

### Introduction (10 minutes):

- Review vocabulary:
  - Myth: a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon
  - Creation Myth: a symbolic narrative of how the world began and how people first came to inhabit it
- Remind students to approach the lesson with sensitivity and respect for their own and others' cultures.
- Review the lesson's objective and prepare students to examine various creation myths across indigenous cultures.

### Exploration of Creation Myths (30 minutes):

- Share examples of creation myths from different indigenous cultures to provide context and stimulate interest. Show several (3-4) short videos – documentary-style and/or animated – of creation stories from various indigenous peoples.
- For each video, guide students to answer the following basic questions to compare stories:
  - Who were the characters in each story?
  - What was the setting of each story?
  - How does the creation process unfold?
  - What are main ideas/themes of each story?
  - What is the purpose of each story?
- Facilitate a discussion about the similarities and differences, and how the stories reflect the communities that they come from.
  - What similarities exist between any of the stories?
  - What differences exist from one story to the next?

### Analysis of Themes and Symbols (20 minutes):

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the creation myths provided. Instruct students to analyze the themes, symbols, and motifs present in their assigned creation myth. Encourage them to consider questions such as:
  - What role do gods, spirits, or animals play in the creation story?
  - How are concepts such as order, chaos, creation, and destruction depicted?
  - What cultural values or lessons can be derived from the creation story?

### Discussion and Reflection (10 minutes):

- Have each group present their analysis to the class, discussing key insights and interpretations.
- Invite students to consider the relevance of creation myths in contemporary society and their potential

for inspiring reverence for nature, cultural pride, and intercultural dialogue.

### **Additional Lesson/Project Ideas to Extend Unit**

#### Creation Myth Comparative Study:

- Whole-class daily deep dives into different indigenous communities and their creation myths. Introduce a particular people, their cultural heritage, significance, and achievements. Read, view, and analyze one or more of their creation stories. Identify and explore the themes, symbols, natural and cultural values reflected in the stories. Discuss the diversity of indigenous perspectives and beliefs.

#### Media Explorations:

- View and discuss visual representations of native creation myths in films and animations.
- Analyze how different mediums (literature, art, films and documentaries) interpret and portray indigenous cultures across time.
- Reflect on the importance of cultural representation and authenticity in media.

#### Creative Expression Activities

- Invite students to create their own interpretation of a creation myth through a medium of their choice, such as writing, art, music, or performance.
- Creation of a multimedia presentation or artwork that integrates elements from different indigenous cultures.

#### Additional Resource Ideas:

- Guest speakers: Invite indigenous community members or scholars to share their perspectives and experiences, and engage students.
- Field trips: Visit museums or cultural centers with exhibits on indigenous cultures.
- Online resources: Links to reliable websites and documentaries for further exploration.
- Encourage students to engage with indigenous voices and perspectives through literature, art, films and documentaries, and community events to deepen their understanding of Native American cultures.

#### Research Project Ideas:

- Creation Myth Creative Study: Have students work in pairs or small groups to research a creation story and develop a creative way to present the story: write and perform a play, illustrate and narrate an animation, write and illustrate a picture book.
- Historic Tribe Study: Assign students individually or in small groups to research and create a creative presentation about a specific Native American tribe or nation. Projects would focus on challenging stereotypes and promoting cultural awareness through the study of a particular tribe's history, language, culture, stories, and traditional geographic home, as well as their response to a contemporary issue affecting them.
- Contemporary Case Study: Divide students into small groups and assign each group a case study or article on a specific contemporary indigenous issue. Examples may include:
  - Keystone XL Pipeline and the Lakota Sioux
  - Amazon Rainforest Deforestation and Indigenous Rights
  - Urbanization and Cultural Preservation among Indigenous Peoples

- Land Rights and Environmental Conservation in the Caribbean
- Language Revitalization and Cultural Heritage Preservation
- Hurricane Resilience and Community Empowerment
- Argumentative Document Based Question Study: Have students gather and use evidence from multiple sources to build an argument for celebrating Indigenous Peoples’ Day rather than Columbus Day.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Google, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Castanha, xi-xiii.

<sup>3</sup> O’Brien, xi-xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> EdSight, 2024.

## Resources for Students and Teachers

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Angarova, Galina. “As Indigenous Peoples, We Are Resilient,” *Cultural Survival, Inc.*, August 8, 2020, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-we-are-resilient>.

- Message from the Executive Director of Cultural Survival, an organization that advocates for indigenous peoples’ rights and supports indigenous communities’ self-determination, cultures and political resilience.

Bringhurst, Robert. *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World*. Second Edition. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999.

- A comprehensive collection of stories from the Haida, an indigenous people from British Columbia.

Castanha, Tony. *The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction: Continuity and Reclamation in Borikén (Puerto Rico)*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.yale.idm.oclc.org/lib/yale-ebooks/detail.action?docID=652565>.

- Book debunking the misconception of indigenous extinction, revealing resistance and cultural continuity on the island of Borikén (Puerto Rico).

De las Casas, Bartolomé, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/20321/pg20321-images.html>.

- Account written by a Spanish Dominican priest who came to the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and witnessed first-hand the inhumane treatment of the Native Americans by the Europeans.

EdSight: "Nathan Hale School, New Haven School District, Connecticut Report Card,"

[https://edsight.ct.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?\\_district=New+Haven+School+District&\\_school=Nathan+Hale+School&\\_program=%2FCTDOE%2FEdSight%2FRelease%2FReporting%2FPublic%2FReports%2FStoredProcesses%2FConnecticutReportCard&\\_select=Submit](https://edsight.ct.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_district=New+Haven+School+District&_school=Nathan+Hale+School&_program=%2FCTDOE%2FEdSight%2FRelease%2FReporting%2FPublic%2FReports%2FStoredProcesses%2FConnecticutReportCard&_select=Submit) (accessed July 2, 2024).

- Breakdown of data regarding students' race/ethnicity at Nathan Hale School in New Haven.

Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz. *American Indian Trickster Tales*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

- Collection of trickster tales, including creation stories, from indigenous peoples across North America.

Finally Detached, "Taino Creation Myth: Ancient Wisdom and Its Relevance in Modern Life," July 18, 2023.

<https://medium.com/@finallydetached/taino-creation-myth-ancient-wisdom-and-its-relevance-in-modern-life-e0c0f7f5f8bc>

- Article explaining a Taino creation myth and exploring applications of the story's symbolism and wisdom to modern-day life.

Google search: "definition of myth," definition from Oxford Languages,

[https://www.google.com/search?sca\\_esv=bb6fb22019ea88f6&q=myth&si=ACC90nxP-lIVVa3oXeZW4VPWVYHuv59coOi2UmmzvcVJqCF\\_dNqFnBJlmyOiekloErdllc-\\_ktUgALh0\\_pTgngJsL\\_fF1cw%3D%3D&expnd=1&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwjL5oHI24iHAXUxEgiaHVRVCaIQ2v4legUJBCZAQ&biw=1440&bih=754&dpr=1](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=bb6fb22019ea88f6&q=myth&si=ACC90nxP-lIVVa3oXeZW4VPWVYHuv59coOi2UmmzvcVJqCF_dNqFnBJlmyOiekloErdllc-_ktUgALh0_pTgngJsL_fF1cw%3D%3D&expnd=1&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwjL5oHI24iHAXUxEgiaHVRVCaIQ2v4legUJBCZAQ&biw=1440&bih=754&dpr=1) (accessed July 1, 2024).

- Necessary distinction between the anthropological definition of myth and the perjorative definition of myth.

Grant-Costa, Paul. "Quinnipiac: The People of the Long Water Land," April 1, 2021.

<https://connecticuthistory.org/the-people-of-the-long-water/>

- Article highlighting the native peoples of what became south-central Connecticut.

Hungrywolf, Adolf. *Legends Told By the Old People of Many Tribes*. Revised Edition. Summertown, Tennessee: Native Voices, 2001.

- Collection of tales collected from throughout North America.

Indigenous Resilience Center at the Arizona Institute for Resilience, <https://resilience.arizona.edu/>

- The Indigenous Resilience Center is part of the Arizona Institute for Resilience, aiming to position the University of Arizona as a world leader in indigenous resilience research, education, and outreach. Its mission is to center indigenous ways of knowing into co-designed environmental solutions and train the next generation of community leaders.

Keegan, Bill. "The Taino Myth of the Cursed Creator," TED-Ed:

<https://youtu.be/arlTwhiMxVM?si=Pj8lX9shx327yNs->

- Animation telling of the creation of the world according to the Taino tradition.

Kopenawa, Davi and Bruce Albert. *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Cambridge,

Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2013.

- Collaborative work between a Yanomami shaman of the Brazilian Amazon and a close friend that is an impassioned plea to respect native rights and preserve the Amazon rainforest.

Marchese, Halle. "Taíno Origin Story Comes to Life in Animated Video by TED-Ed, Museum Archaeologist," November 5, 2019. <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/science/taino-origin-story/>.

- Article addressing the making of the animation telling of the creation of the world according to the Taino tradition.

Native Northeast Research Collaborative <https://www.thenativenortheast.org/>

- An inclusive digital humanities endeavor that engages tribes, scholars, educators, students, and the general public in the study of the Native presences in the Atlantic Northeast.

O'Brien, Jean M. *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. [muse.jhu.edu/book/24468](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24468).

- A comprehensive study and analysis of 19<sup>th</sup> century documents from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island exploring how European Americans erased and then memorialized native peoples, effectively ingraining the myth of indigenous extinction.

Pané, Fray Ramon and Arrom, José Juan. *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians: A New Edition, with an Introductory Study, Notes, and Appendices by José Juan Arrom*. New York, USA: Duke University Press, 1999. <https://doi-org.yale.idm.oclc.org/10.1515/9780822382546>.

- Fray Ramon Pané, a young Spanish friar, accompanied Columbus on his second voyage west across the Atlantic Ocean in 1494 and then lived among the indigenous people on the island of Hispaniola, to learn their language and to write a record of their lives and beliefs.

PBS. "Circle of Stories," <https://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/index.html> (Accessed July 10, 2024).

- A web-based presentation using documentary film, photography, artwork, and music to honor and explore Native American storytelling.

*The Popol Vuh: A New English Version*. Translated from the K'iche' by Michael Bazzett. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2018.

- A recent, poetic translation of the Mayan creation story.

Powell, Barry B. *World Myth*. Pearson, 2014.

- Accessible overview text about mythology around the globe, organized by chronology and geography.

"Unlearning Columbus Day Myths: Celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day," National Museum of the American Indian: <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/columbus-day-myths> (accessed June 28, 2024).

- An excellent overview and starting point for students to access information about the on-going cultural shift from celebrating Columbus Day to celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Wall Kimmerer, Robin. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*. Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

- A series of essays on scientific and cultural understanding of plant medicine that exists in the world around us, written by an active member of the Potawatomi nation.

Wall Kimmerer, Robin. *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*. Adapted by Monique Gray Smith. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Zest Books, 2022.

- A version of the original text illustrated and adapted for a younger audience to be better able to access its understanding of plant medicine to heal the world around us.

“We Know Where We Come From: Creation Story,” Lewis and Clark National Historic Park Teen Film Camp, 2011. [https://youtu.be/wZZmFTnpehs?si=ym\\_sjeKEz-x7Mb\\_m](https://youtu.be/wZZmFTnpehs?si=ym_sjeKEz-x7Mb_m)

- Creation Story of the Native Americans in the Lower Columbia River Region in NW Oregon and SW Washington, Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribe

## Appendix on Implementing District Standards

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The teaching of Social Studies always happens in conjunction with the teaching of English Language Arts, which is why I am including standards from both disciplines.

Social Studies Standards are divided into four dimensions: History, Civics, Economics, and Geography. This unit addresses the following standards from the Connecticut State Department of Education’s “Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks,” published in February 2015.

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/social-studies/ssframeworks.pdf>:

### HIST 8.1

Analyze connections among events and developments in historical contexts.

### HIST 8.2

Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

### HIST 8.4

Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

### HIST 8.8

Evaluate the relevance and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

### CIV 8.3

Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of public policies in multiple settings.

### CIV 8.4

Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

### GEO 8.3

Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology influence the spatial connections among human settlements and affect the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices.

To reference English Language Arts standards for Connecticut, the Connecticut State Department of Education redirects to the Common Core State Standards Initiative website. I accessed two different areas of English Language Arts standards that my students will cover in this unit:

1. "English Language Arts Standards in History/Social Studies, Grades 6-8,"  
<https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/6-8/>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.

2. "English Language Arts Standards in Reading Informational Texts, Grade 8,"  
<https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/8/>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

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