

Dr. Caitlin Johnson

MSUM

Native American Literature

Overview of Presentation

- Looking over the considerations for presented text set
- A progression of recommended texts (elementary, middle, high school, teacher recommended)
- Tips for using Native American literature with students

Overview of Considerations

- Listed preferences from school districts that I have worked with in the past (A collection of essays, short stories, and/or poetry that would complement what is already in the curriculum.)
- Fulfill fiction/non-fiction MN state standards.
- Grade-level appropriate (not just lexile)
- Content appropriate for age (historical trauma; emotional maturity)

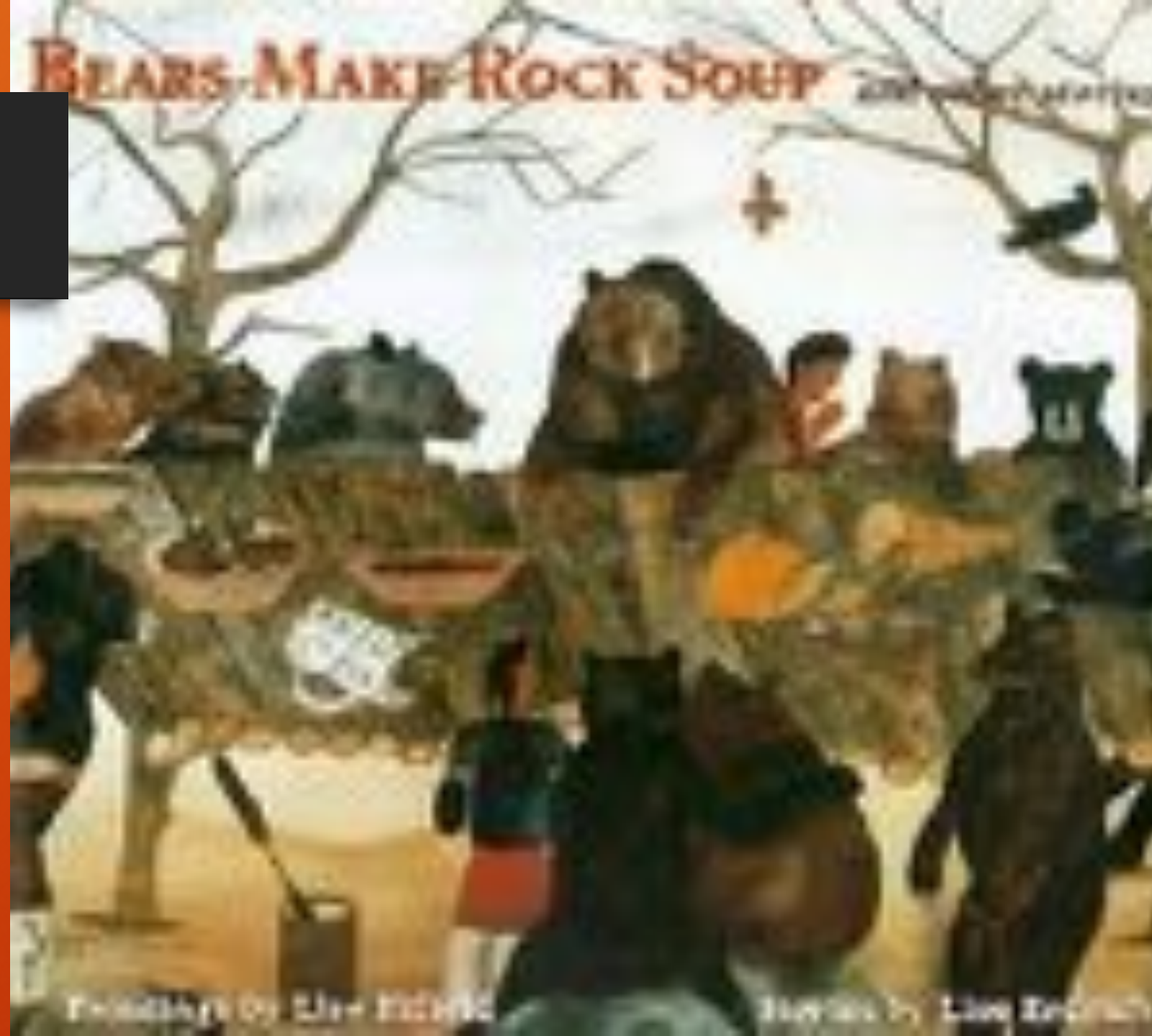


Recommended Elementary Texts



Bears Make Rock Soup

- Written and Illustrated by Indigenous People
- Uses traditional oral narratives to tell a story
- Uses humor and illustration to engage the reader



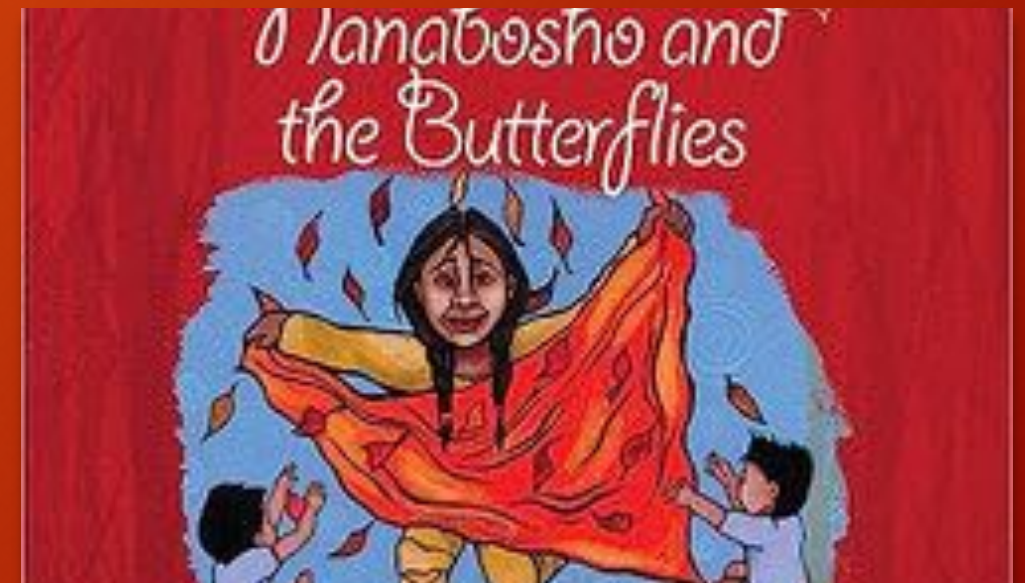
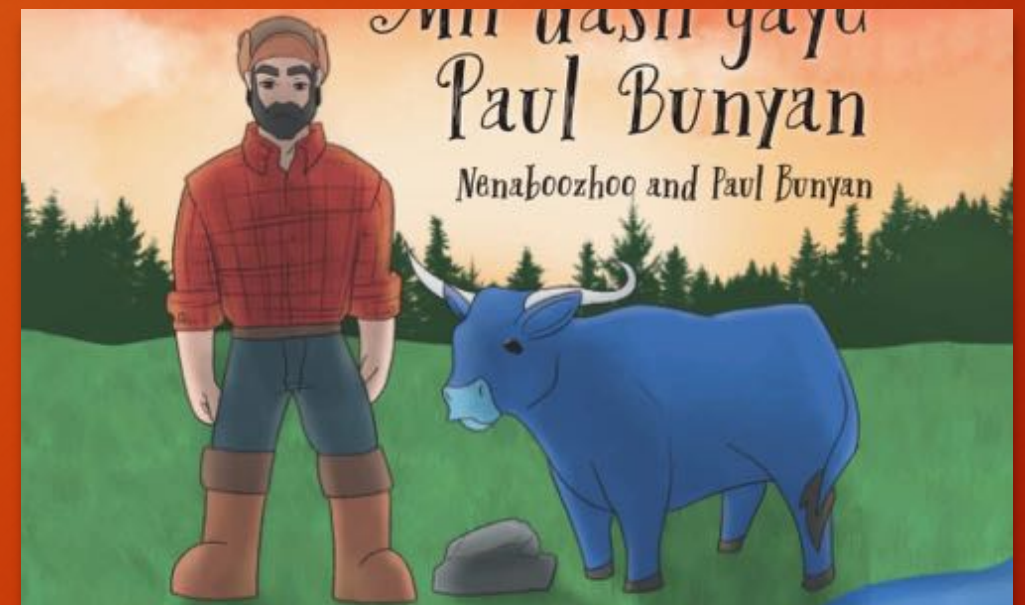
Josie Dances by Denise Lajimodiere

- Ojibwe girl's coming-of-age story
- Highlights her own daughter's experience at powwow.
- Strong cultural ties to community
- Symbolism using the drum and animals



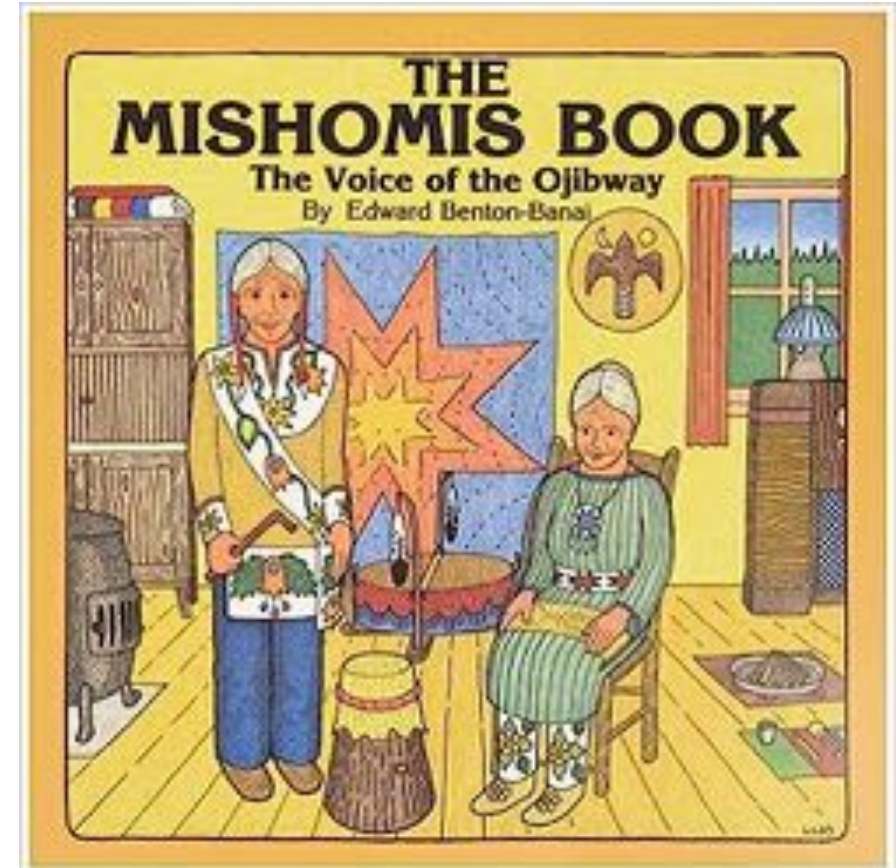
The Nanaboozhoo Series

- Multiple authors
- Trickster series
- Uses legends/oral narratives for the overall stories



The Mishomis Book by Edward Benton Benai

- Written for readers from all cultures
 - Works particularly well working with Ojibway and Native youth
- Provides an introduction to Ojibway culture and an understanding of the sacred teachings,
- Part of language and culture revitalization (to keep these stories and teachings alive)

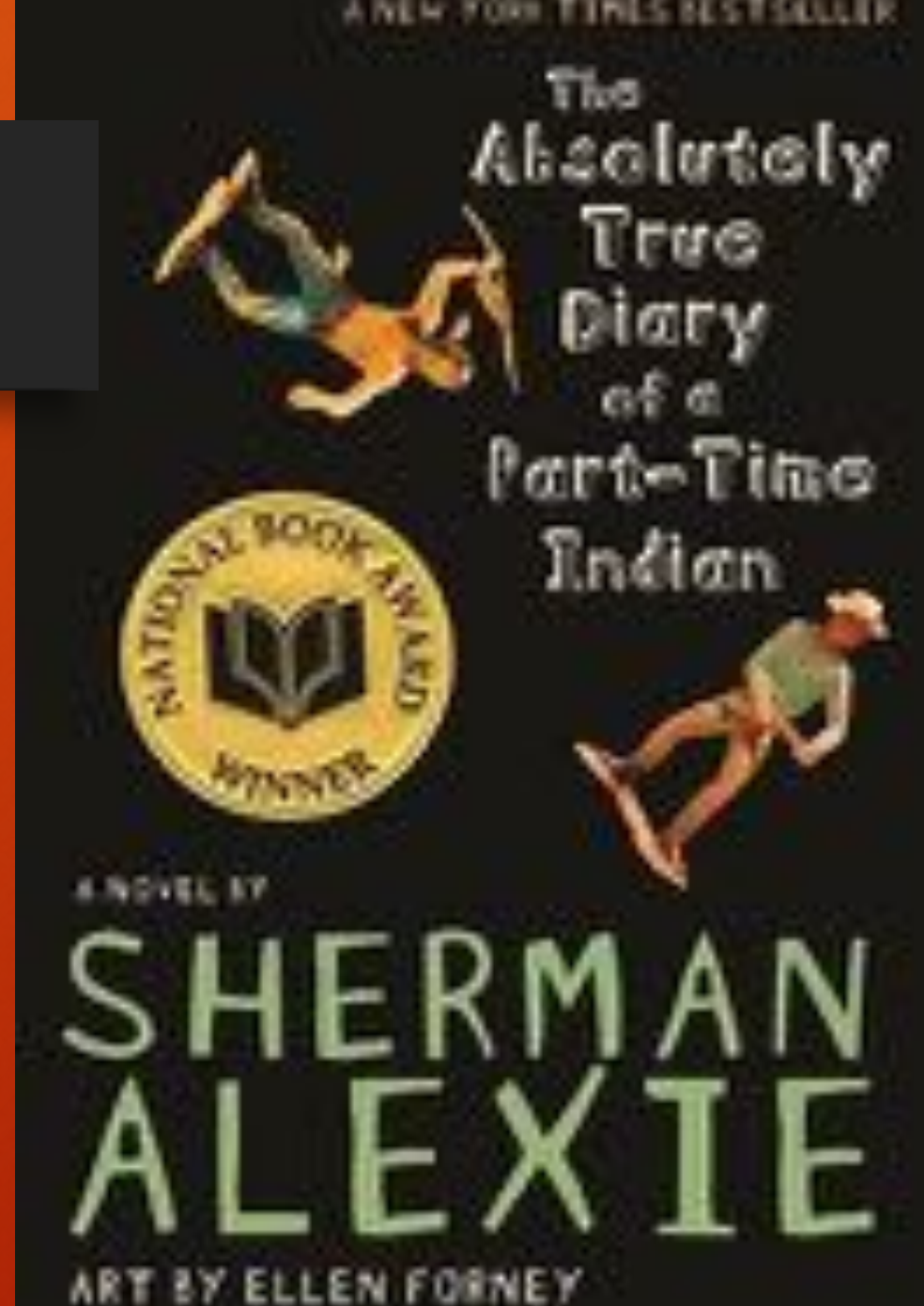




Recommended Middle School Texts

Sherman Alexie: The use of banned books

- A current legal trend in the Supreme Court shows support for the schools, however, it also “cautions educators to remain aware of values, including minority values, in the communities they serve” (2023).
- This is a major argument for challenging potential book bans, specifically if the ban censors the voices of marginalized groups (like those reflected in boarding school texts or Sherman Alexie), which can be detrimental to students who belong to those marginalized and oppressed groups.
- If a book we are teaching does become embroiled in censorship issues, the NCTE has an Intellectual Freedom Center that has been in operation since the 1950s (as a response to McCarthyism).

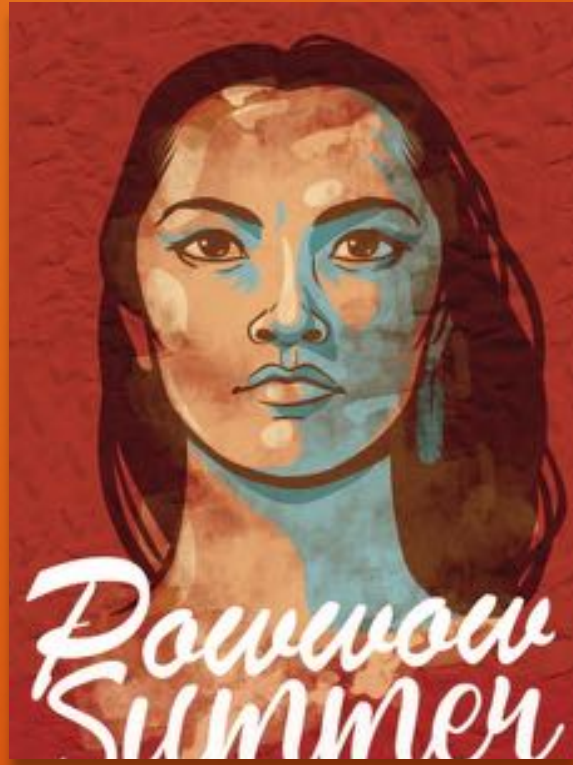


Apple in the Middle by Dawn Quigley

- *Apple in the Middle* has won national recognition from the American Indian Library Association (AILA), an affiliate of the American Library Association (ALA), becoming one of four titles to be recognized in the first-ever American Indian Youth Literature Young Adult Book Honors.



Powwow Summer by Nahanni Shingoose



- Teaches about ceremony and cultural traditions
- Themes of cultural identity and the struggles with it



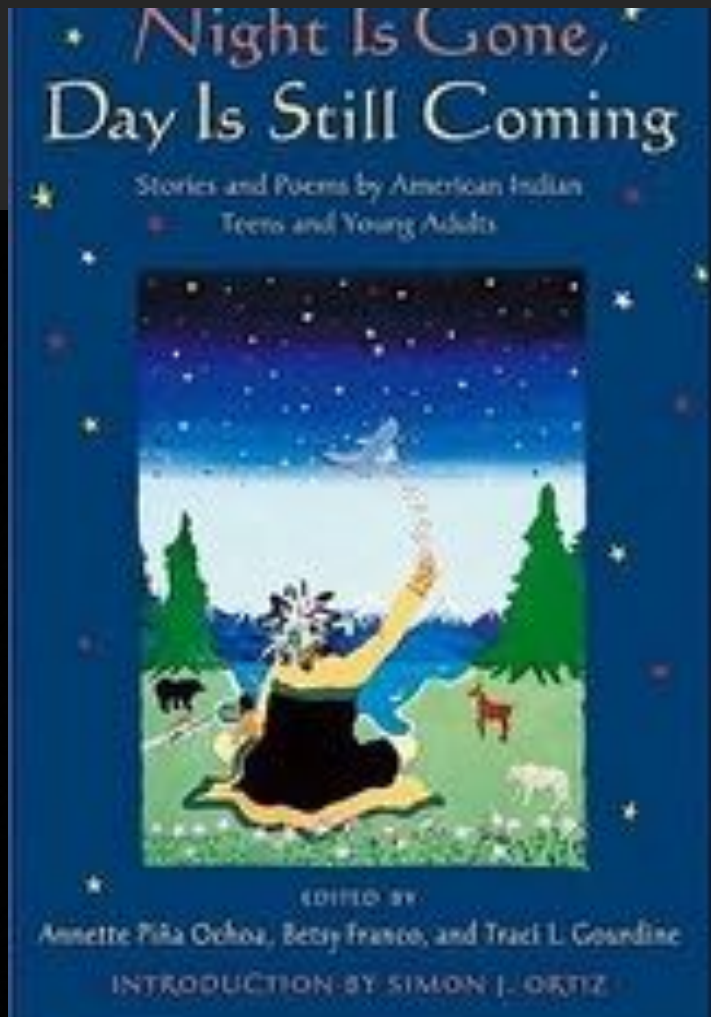
Recommended High School Texts



9th Grade:

#NOTYOURPRINCESS by Multiple Authors

- This collection of poems, essays and art by Native women chronicles the challenges and stereotyping they face. A new generation of women is using their voices to create change.
- Genre: Personal Essay & Poetry



9th Grade:

Night is Gone: Day is Still Coming, an anthology of works by Native teens

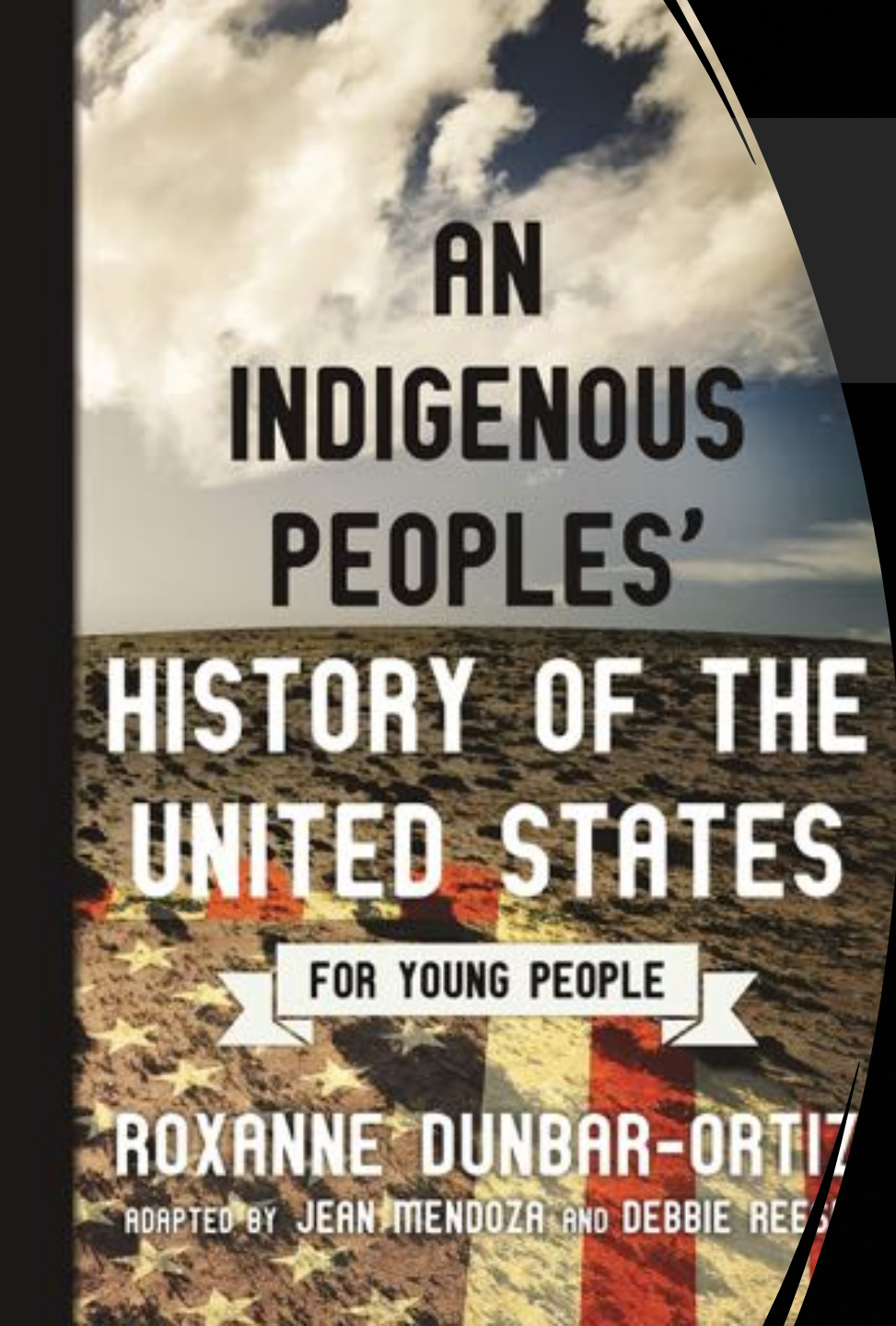
- The voices of fifty-seven young American Indians emerge in a powerful collection of original writing coedited by the anthologist of *YOU HEAR ME?* and *THINGS I HAVE TO TELL YOU*.
- Genre: Personal Essay, Non-Fiction; Cultural Studies; Poetry

9th Grade:

Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices by Multiple Authors

- Truly universal in its themes, *Dreaming In Indian* will shatter commonly held stereotypes and challenge readers to rethink their own place in the world. Divided into four sections, 'Roots,' 'Battles,' 'Medicines,' and 'Dreamcatchers,' this book offers readers a unique insight into a community often misunderstood and misrepresented by the mainstream media.
- Genre: Personal Essay, Non-Fiction; Cultural Studies





**AN
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES'
HISTORY OF THE
UNITED STATES**

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ

ADAPTED BY JEAN MENDOZA AND DEBBIE REES

9th Grade:

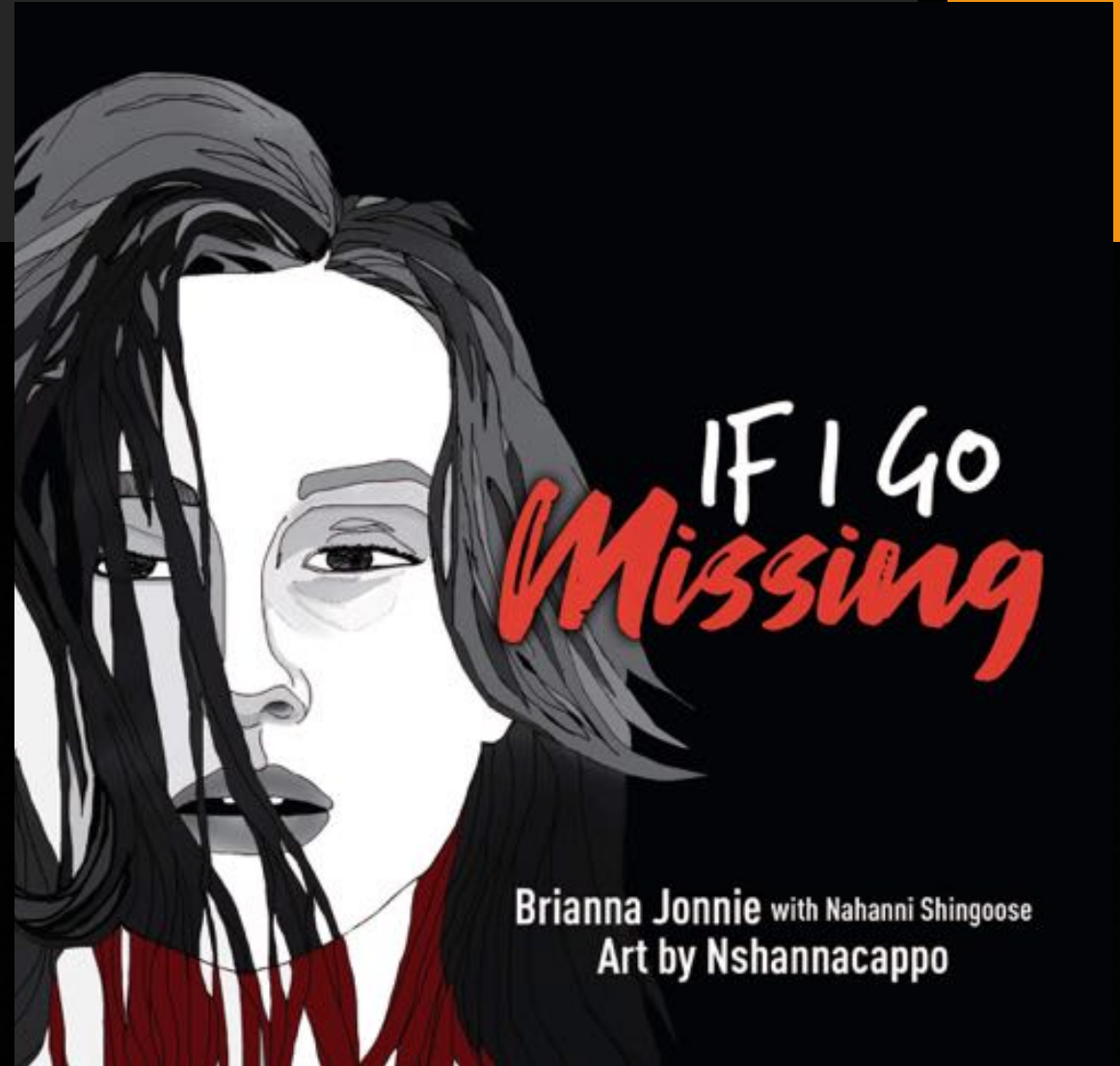
**An Indigenous People's History of the United States
for Young People by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**

- Going beyond the story of America as a country “discovered” by a few brave men in the “New World,” Indigenous human rights advocate Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz reveals the roles that settler colonialism and policies of American Indian genocide played in forming our national identity.
- Genre: Non-Fiction; Cultural Studies

10th Grade:

If I Go Missing by Brianna Jonnie

- Combining graphic fiction and non-fiction, this young adult graphic novel serves as a window into one of the unique dangers of being an Indigenous teen in Canada today.
- Genre: Personal Essay, Non-Fiction; Graphic Fiction

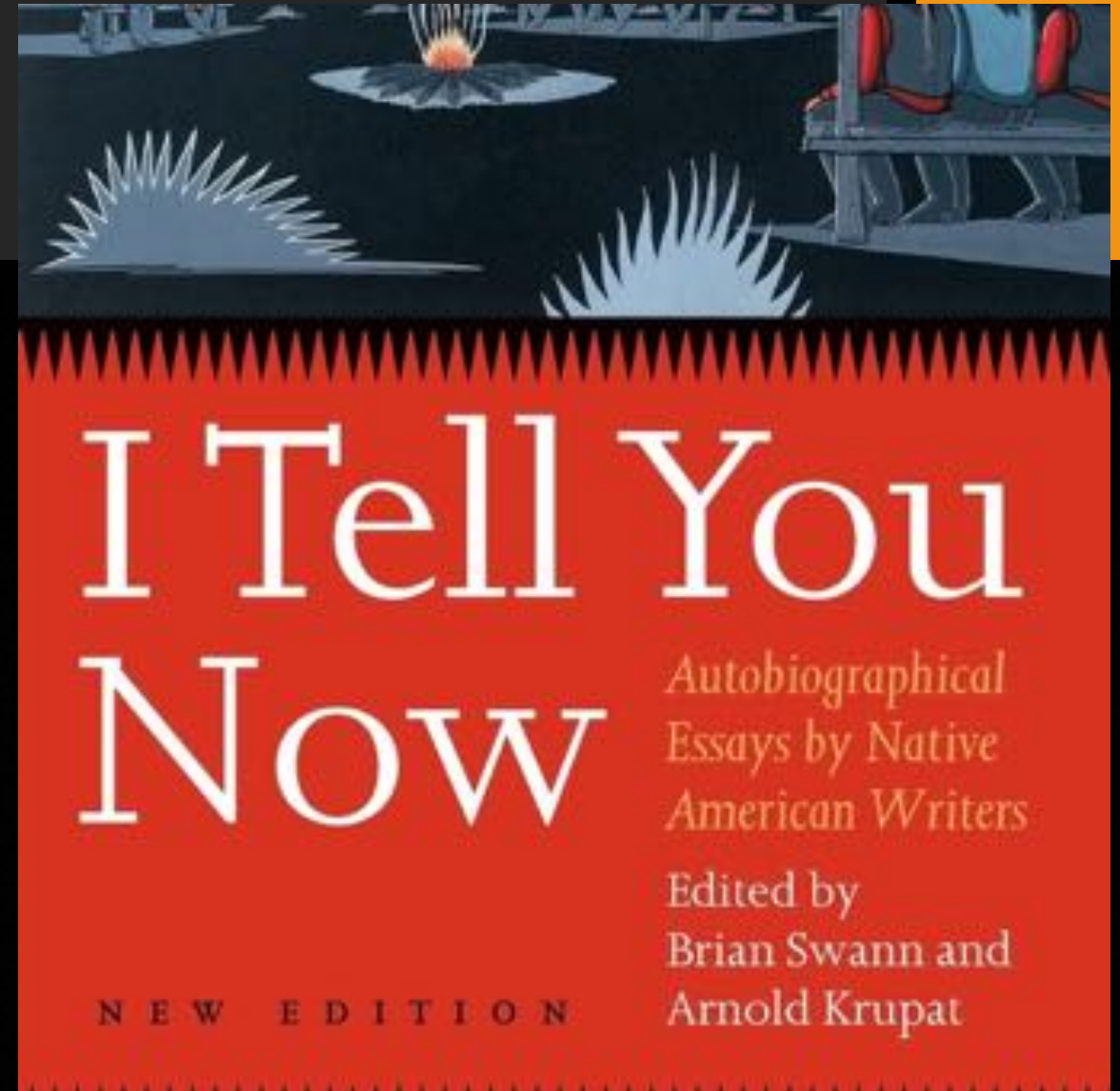


10th Grade:

I Tell You Now: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers

I Tell You Now is an anthology of autobiographical accounts by eighteen notable Native writers of different ages, tribes, and areas. This second edition features a new introduction by the editors and updated biographical sketches for each writer.

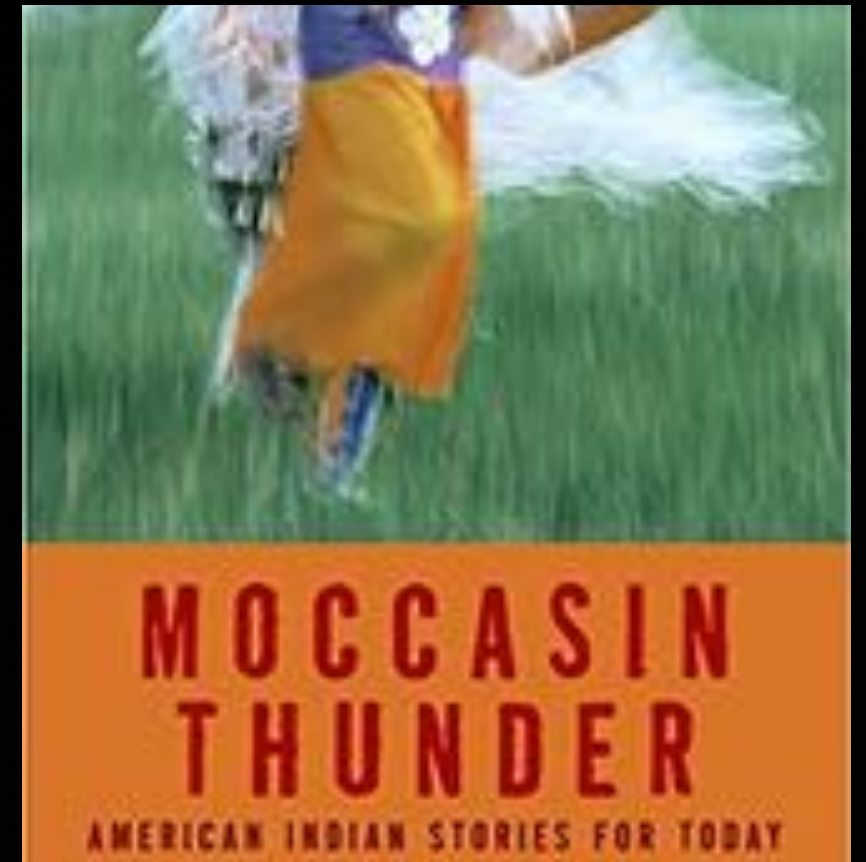
Genre: Personal Essay, Non-Fiction; Cultural Studies



10th Grade:

Moccasin Thunder by Multiple Authors

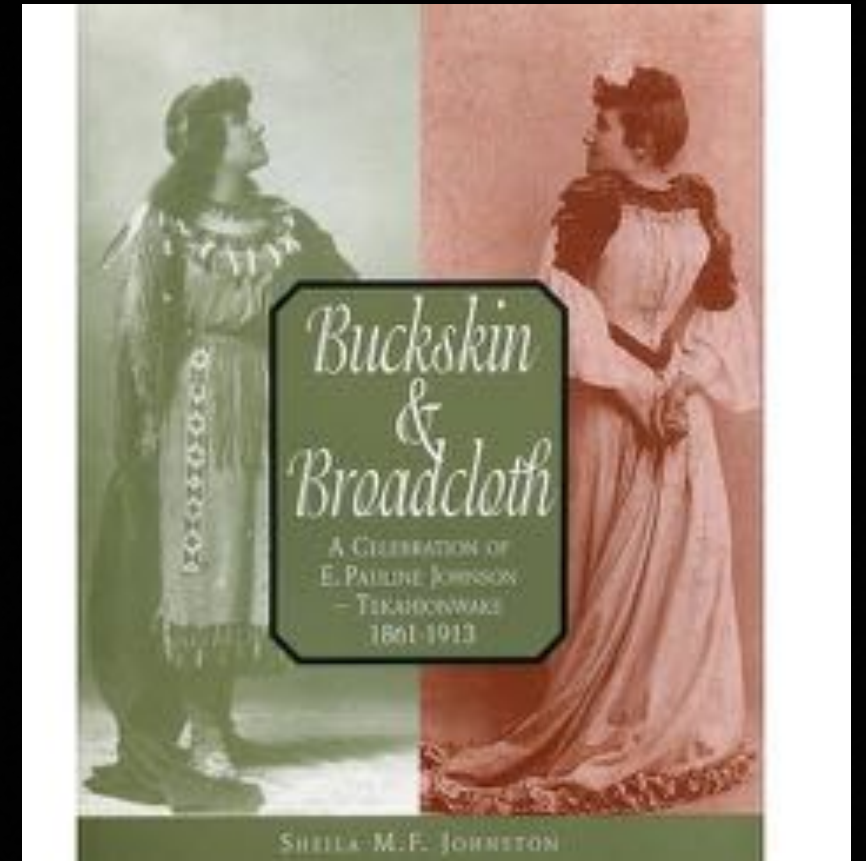
- This collection includes ten short stories about contemporary Native American teens by members of tribes of the United States and Canada, including Louise Erdrich and Joseph Bruchac.
- Fiction; Cultural Studies



10th Grade:

From Buckskin to Broadcloth by Esther Horne (Shoshone) and Sally McBeth

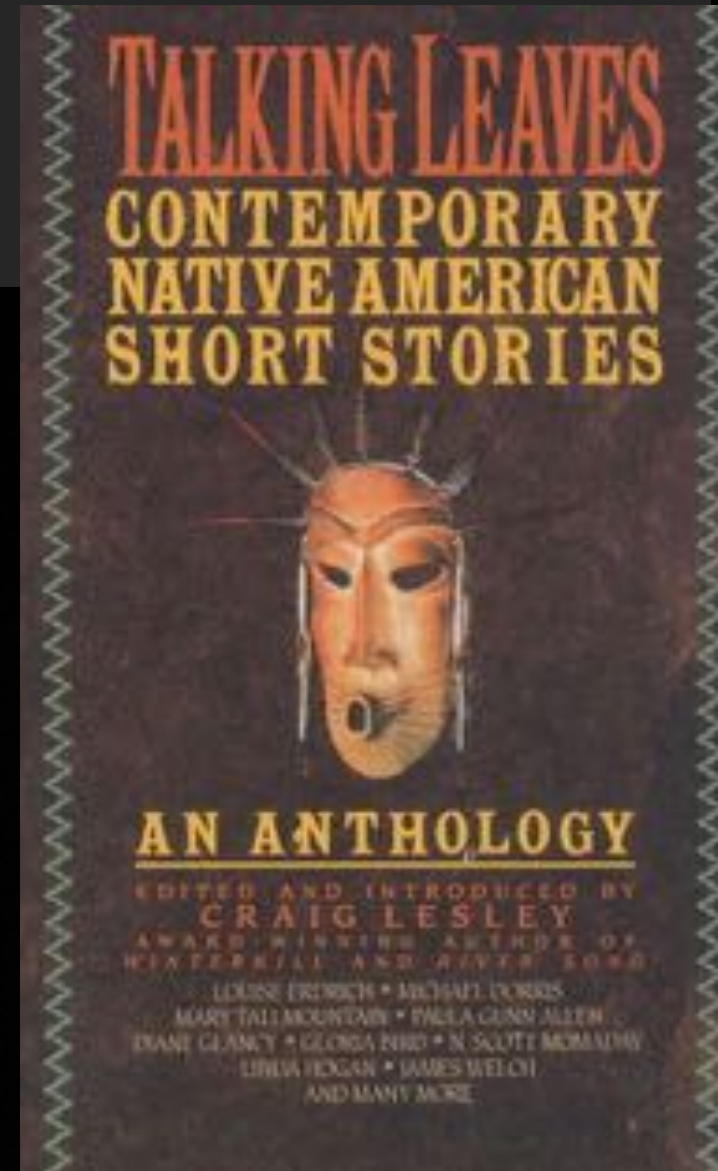
- This is the first generously illustrated biography of the Mohawk poet-performer E. Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake. The author has created an exciting volume of anecdotes, letters and poetry, and illustrated it with period photographs and new illustrations by the Six Nations artist, Raymond R. Skye. This book contains over forty poems that are not part of Pauline Johnson's classic collection of poems, *Flint and Feather*. The "uncollected" poems have been culled from archives, libraries and out-of-print books. They shed light on the development of the poet and enlighten and enrich her life story.
- Genre: Non-fiction; Poetry



11th Grade

Talking Leaves: Contemporary Native American Short Stories by Craig Lesley. Ed.

- Vividly captures the struggle of Native Americans who hope to preserve the wisdom of their ancestors in the face of a white world. Their writing reverberates with a sense of place, generational family loyalty, with the poverty and despair of the present, the power of old beliefs and the resiliency of a yet proud people.
- Genre: Personal Essay; Non-fiction

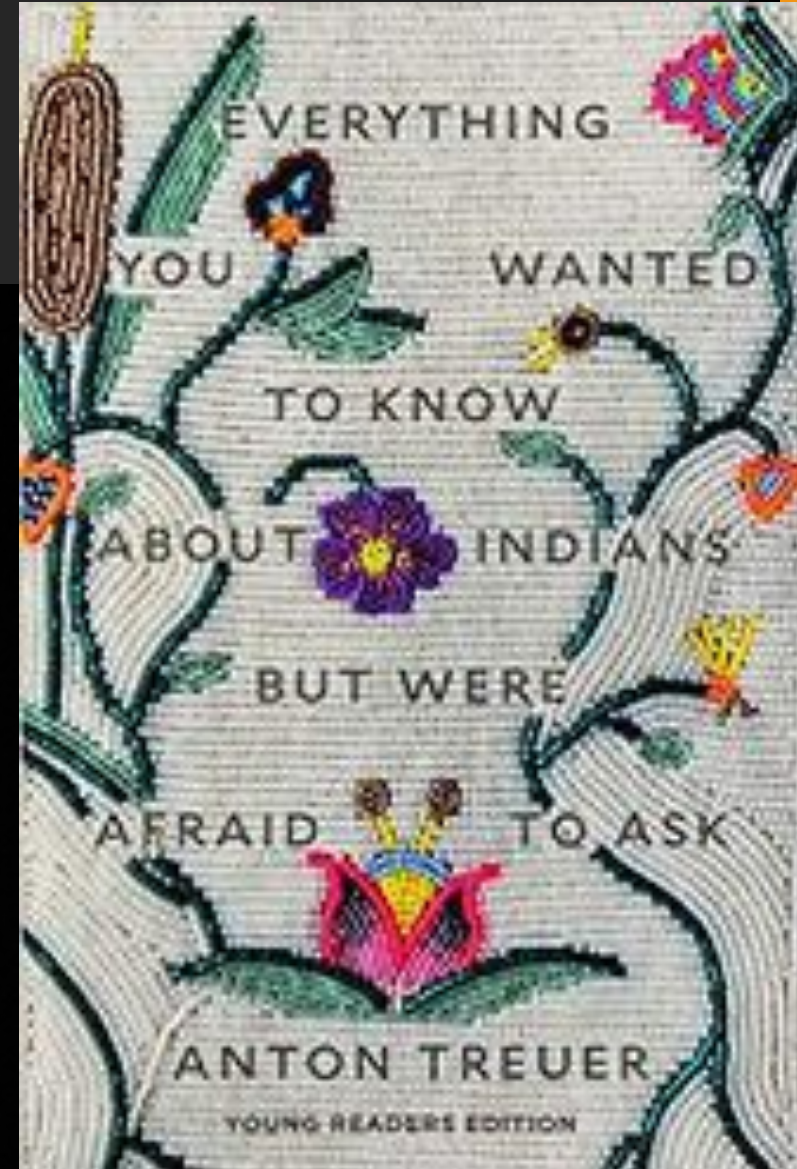


11th Grade

Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask by Anton Treuer

What have you always wanted to know about Indians? Do you think you should already know the answers—or suspect that your questions may be offensive? In matter-of-fact responses to over 120 questions, both thoughtful and outrageous, modern and historical, Ojibwe scholar and cultural preservationist Anton Treuer gives a frank, funny, and sometimes personal tour of what's up with Indians, anyway.

Genre: Non-fiction; Cultural Studies



11th Grade

This Place: 150 Years Retold by Multiple Authors

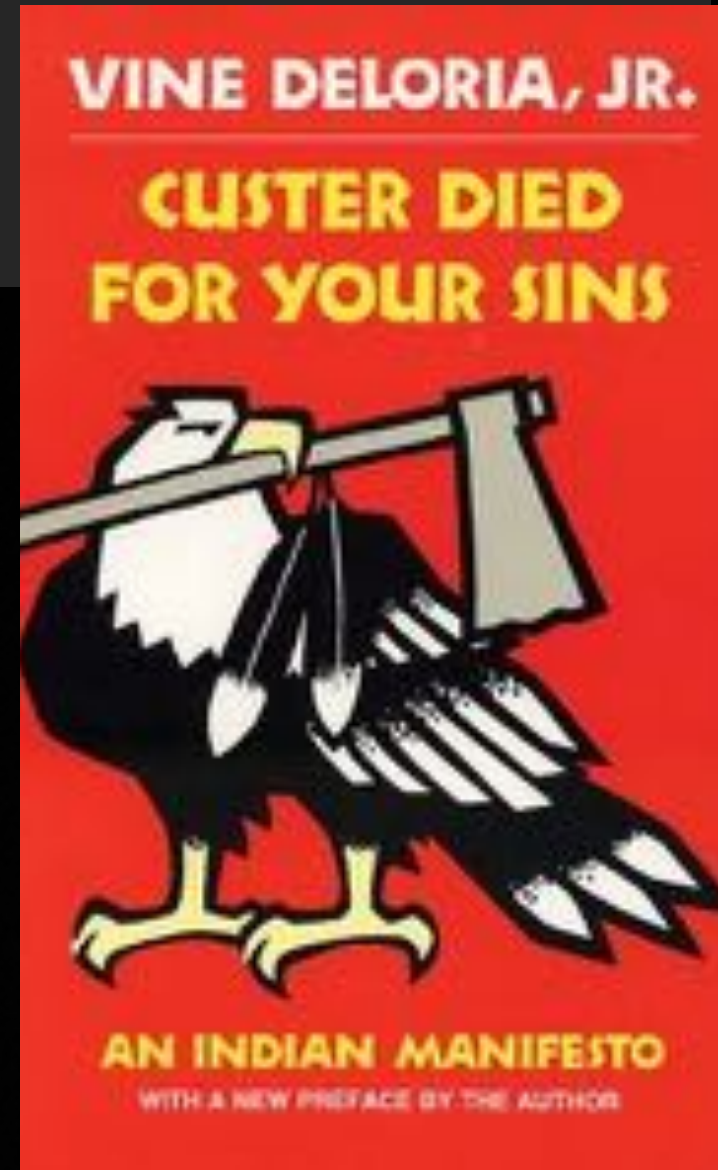
- Ten Indigenous writers contribute unique stories arranged chronologically to create this exquisite graphic novel that centers Native peoples in Canada. It starts in 1850 with Annie Bannatyne's resistance to disrespect that sparked Indigenous activism and resistance and ends with Indigenous presence in an imagined future.
- Genre: Fiction; Graphic Novel; Cultural Studies



12th Grade

Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto by Vine Deloria Jr.

- This “manifesto” provides valuable insights on American Indian history, Native American culture, and context for minority protest movements mobilizing across the country throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Originally published in 1969, this book remains a timeless classic and is one of the most significant nonfiction works written by a Native American.
- Genre: Non-fiction; Cultural Studies



Crashing Thunder

The Autobiography of an American Indian


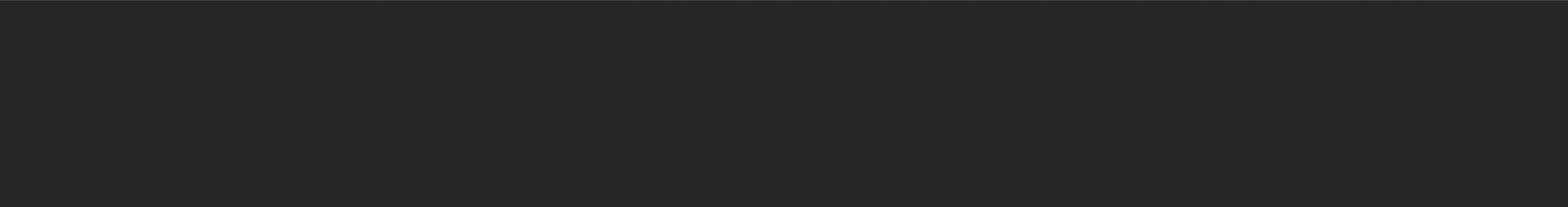
Edited by Paul Radin Foreword and Appendix by Arnold Krupat



12th Grade

Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian by Paul Radin, ed.

- One of America's first and most reputable professional anthropologists, lived among the Winnebago Indians for years, and for years he tried without success to interview the notorious younger son of the Blow Snake family, the Crashing Thunder of this book. At last Crashing Thunder agreed to tell Radin his life story, one that Radin calls "a true rake's progress." Speaking through Radin, Crashing Thunder told of his childhood, stories of Winnebago gods, his appetite for women and beer, and his extraordinary friends and relatives, including his brother-in-law, Thunder Cloud, then in his third incarnation. Crashing Thunder also told of his redemption through his new religion, peyote.
- Genre: Non-fiction



Recommended Texts by Indigenous Teachers & Organizations

Boarding School Themes

For example, the picture book, *I Am Not a Number*, about the Canadian residential school experience is based on the true experiences of the author's Anishinaabe grandmother. The book shows the active resistance of both parents and children to assimilationist actions.

A chapter book entitled, *Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret-Olemaun Pokiak-Fenton labeled "a true story" about Pokiak-Fenton's experiences at a Canadian residential school is a compelling read for upper elementary students.

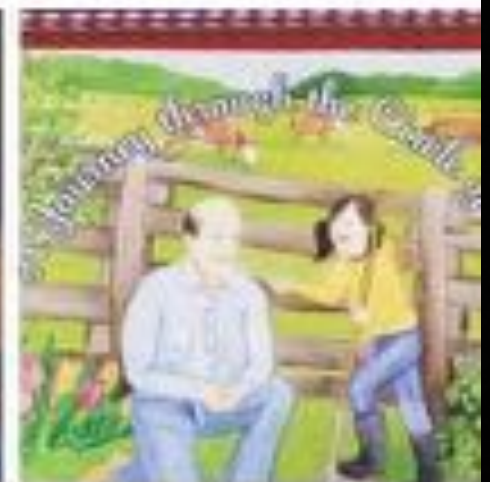
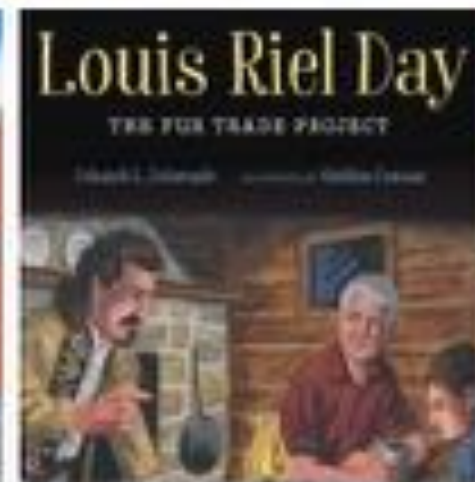
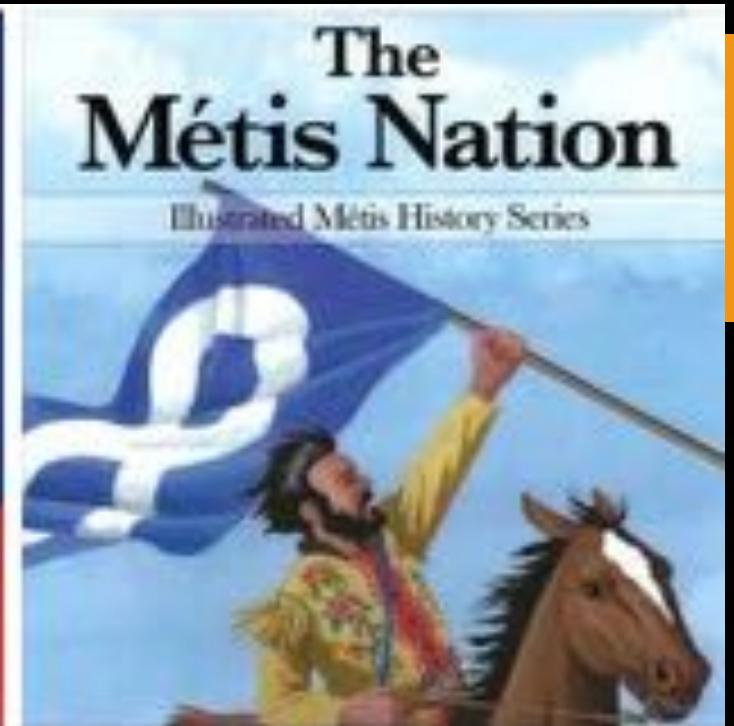
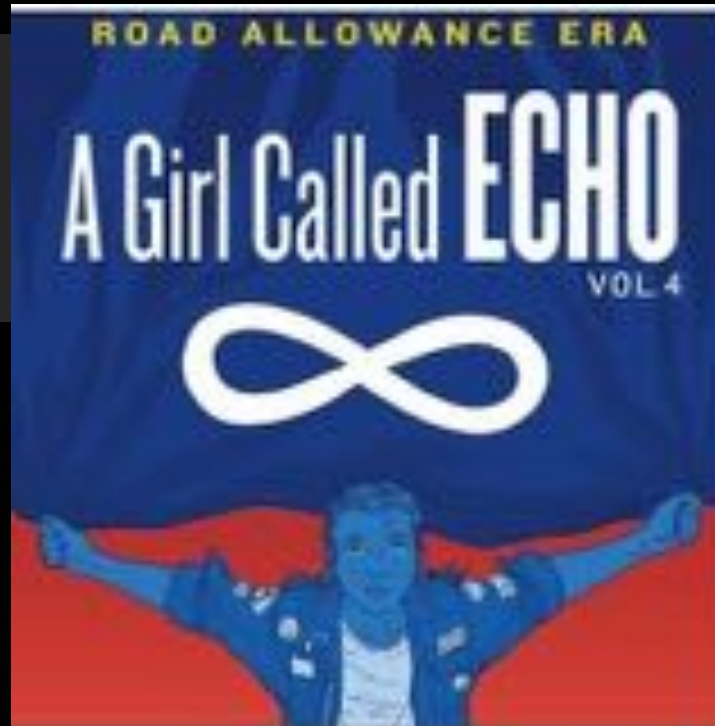
Debby Dahl Edwardson's YA novel *My Name Is Not Easy* (2011), suitable for middle and lower high school students, is set in Alaska from 1960-64 at a fictional Catholic Boarding School.

The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe provides a series of sketches of his experiences at a Presbyterian mission school that make a useful support to reading YA novels about boarding schools.

Lajimodiere's Five Boarding School Themes

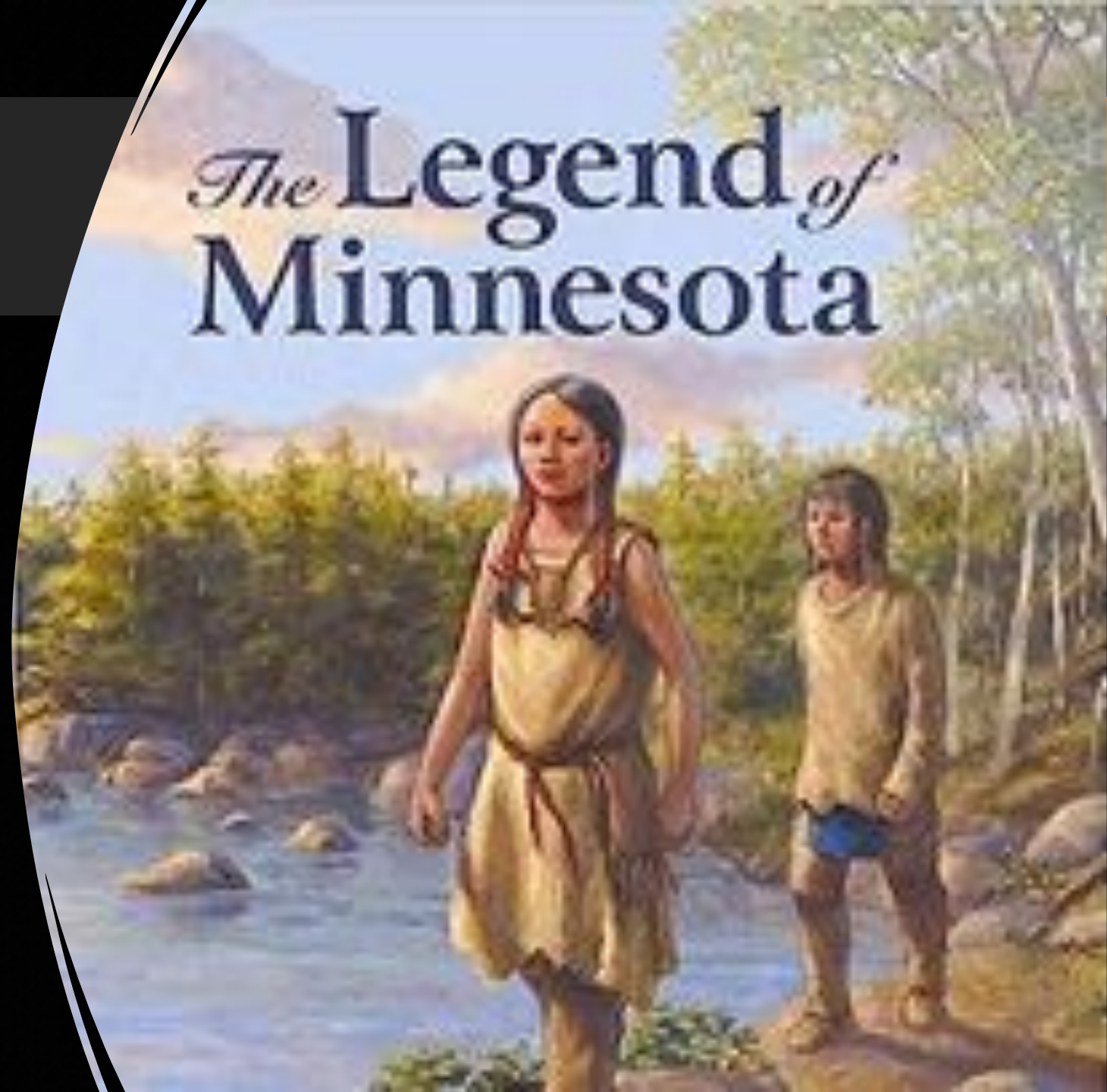
| Loss | Grief | Inferior Education | Abuse | Community and Personal Healing |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -loss of language, culture, ceremony, tradition and self-esteem -loneliness due to loss of parents and extended family -feeling of abandonment -feeling lost and out-of-place when they returned home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -feeling unresolved grief -experiencing mental health issues and relationship issues -alcohol abuse and dependency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -only half day of instruction -vocational curriculum -long working hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -corporal punishment -forced child labor -hunger, malnourishment -sexual and mental abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -government apology -returning to traditional spiritual practices -forgiveness -therapy |

Metis Federation



Exceptions to the Rule: Teacher Recommendations

A popular book among my students this year is here: [Amazon.com: Legend of Minnesota: 9781585362622: Wargin, Kathy-Jo, Geister, David: Books](https://www.amazon.com/9781585362622/Wargin-Kathy-Jo-Geister-David/dp/9781585362622)



Tips for Using these Texts with Students

Curriculum content: Using the history, community/national figures, literature, etc. that particularly identifies with indigenous people—which directly relates to the texts mentioned in this presentation.

Learning context: Understand the students as an ethnic group before conducting your methods. Do you live near a boarding school site or near/on a reservation? Do you have students who represent this historically silenced group? This may lead you to choose boarding school texts to reflect the cultural needs of your students.

Classroom climate: Students are more vocal when they feel a sense of belonging. Inclusion in the curriculum and connecting with characters in texts would benefit the overall classroom climate.

Student-teacher relationships: We cannot assume the cultural identities of our students or always recognize right away when intergenerational trauma affects a student in our classroom. Therefore, it is important to build positive student-teacher relationships in order to create a trusting environment.

Providing additional support: Boarding school texts can be challenging, but allowing time to share perspectives and bringing in a counselor if needed can go a long way when teaching boarding school texts.

Instructional techniques: Building on the cultural strengths and preferences of the group to allow them to use their own personal experiences and resources for teaching and learning purposes (i.e., creating a recommended reading list instead of a required one).

Performance assessments: Allow the students to actively be part of the evaluation process (Gay, 2000). Student-led assessment strategies that pair well with boarding school texts would be post-discussion reflections, reading journals, or student-teacher interviews.

Questions?



Helpful resources

Helpful Lesson Plans for ELA & History

- <https://teachingsofourelders.org/tie-conference-home/lesson-plans-aligned-to-the-ndnaeu/>

Helpful Resources for Mighty Girls (Indigenous Women/Girls Texts)

- [50 Children's Books Celebrating Native American and Indigenous Mighty Girls | A Mighty Girl](#)

Dr. Johnson's Google Spreadsheet:

- https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cyQLvN3Hr59eD2k_DLsAA39Rnfj7ytN5/edit?usp=sharing&oid=108479863124951027916&rtpof=true&sd=true