The First Americans
• The first migration occurred 20 – 40,000 years ago when Ice Age Hunters traveled from Siberia to Alaska and then south

• When European exploration began, these were the people who were living in the “New World.”
• In 1492, Columbus “discovered” America.
• He wrote about the beauty and bounty of the New World
• Explorers convinced Europeans that America was a land of plenty, a land of great riches

• There was an abundance of land, crops, and gold

• Those seeking freedom, religious or otherwise, saw the New World as a great opportunity.
Exploration – The 3G’s

**Political:** Become a world power through gaining wealth and land. *(GLORY)*

**Economic:** Search for new trade routes with direct access to Asian/African luxury goods would enrich individuals and their nations *(GOLD)*

**Religious:** spread Christianity and weaken Middle Eastern Muslims. *(GOD)*
Misconceptions of Native Americans

• All tribes were the same culturally
• All tribes did not evolve
• Civilizations were not advanced
• Some tribes helped the settlers survive in harsh conditions
• Some tribes formed alliances with settlers against other tribes
• The Europeans brought disease that tribes were never exposed to before
• The Indian Removal Act of 1830 passed under President Andrew Jackson

• Tribes were forced to move to land west of the Mississippi
• Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole
• Removal known as the **Trail of Tears**
There have been some reparations made to Native Americans in modern history, but many tribes continue to struggle today because of the events of the past.
Native American Literature
Native American Literature Characteristics

- Integration of the natural world with the human world
- No separation of spiritual and physical
- Importance of ancestors
- Extremely diverse
Oral Tradition

In the oral tradition, stories are passed from one generation to the next aloud rather than being physically recorded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Oral Tradition</th>
<th>The Written Tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begins earlier in time</td>
<td>Begins later in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires language but not a system of writing</td>
<td>Requires language and a system of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on memory and oral transmission</td>
<td>Based on texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folklore, proverbs, chants, ballads</td>
<td>Printed material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythms and repetition help memory</td>
<td>Memory not essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performer can vary presentation according to audience response</td>
<td>Text does not vary according to audience response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material can change resulting in different versions</td>
<td>Material tends to be fixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Native American Literature: Sacred Narratives
What is a myth?

The word itself comes from the Greek "mythos" which originally meant "speech" or "discourse"
Creation Mythology

Creation myths are stories that explain the formation of the Earth and the formation of human life.
A violent beginning

• Every ancient culture has its own myth of the origin of the world.
• Two points must be noted here:
  • All origin myths describe a formation of the world from a substance that pre-existed.
  • All origin myths describe a formation of the world out of violence, destruction, or death.
• These facts are common to all ancient origin myths—except for the Genesis account.
• Creation from nothing: *ex nihilo*
Origin Myths

Origin myths explain various aspects of the natural world such as wind and stars, and they can also explain the cultural traditions of a people.
Four Functions of Myth

1. To acknowledge and appreciate the mystery and wonder of creation
2. To explain the natural world
3. To pass down morals
4. To teach and guide people through life
Essential Elements of Creation Myths

1. Cultural details that show what is important to the people
2. The place and people of origin
3. Description of what existed before the “creation”
4. Explanation of the “creation” of things or the beginnings of rituals
5. Explanation of who or what did the creating