1 Introduction to Native American Culture and Literature

2 The First Americans

3 • 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.”

4 American Indian Origins
• Two popular opinions:
  – Land bridge migration from Asia
  – Originated in the New World

5 American Indian Diversity
• Impossible to describe “typical” American Indian

6 Uncovering History
• Western scholars rely on historical documents to study our history
• Historical documents not available for many non-western societies

7 Oral Histories
• Some are thousands of years old
• Give insights into values and traditions

8 Understanding The Past
• Archaeologists study material remains of past humans
  – Artifacts
  – Features
  – Ecofacts
9  **A Sample of American Indian Nations**
   - Navajo, Iroquois, Cherokee, Lakota
   - Only a tiny glimpse of American Indian diversity

10 **Southwest: The Navajo**
   - Navajo = Dinè (“the people”)
   - Migrated to the Southwest (1000-1500 CE)
   - 1863-64: Forced migration to reservation in Eastern New Mexico
   - Eventually allowed to return home

11 **The Navajo**
   - Largest Indian reservation in the United States
   - One of the most economically diverse
   - Largest tribe

12 **Navajo Code Talkers**
   - Navajo language = “secret code” used for U.S. military communication during WWII
   - 400 Navajo “code talkers” implemented communication

13 **Navajo Code Talkers**

14 **Eastern Woodlands: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois)**
   - Haudenosaunee = “people of the longhouse”
   - Longhouse symbolized unity of extended family and the League of the Iroquois

15 **The Haudenosaunee Iroquois**
   - Coalition of six tribes
   - Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Senega, and Tuscarora
   - Common government
   - Similar but
distinct cultures

16  The Haudenosaunee Iroquois

• Women held authority
  – Controlled tribe’s wealth
  – Prevented war by not providing necessary supplies
  – Nominated and unseated the men of the Grand Council

• Still practice their traditional form of government

17  The Haudenosaunee Iroquois

• Women
  – Gathered, planted, harvested, and fished

• Men
  – Hunted, fished, and cleared land

• Children
  – Chased away bugs and animals

• “Three sisters” agriculture = corn, beans, and squash grown together

18  The Haudenosaunee Iroquois

• Interacted and traded with European colonists

• Dragged into colonists’ wars with each other

19  The Cherokee

• Homeland in Southern Appalachians

• One of “five civilized tribes”

20  Indian Removal Act (1830)

• Indian removal justified for western expansion
• Ordered Cherokee (and other tribes) to relocate west of the Mississippi

21

• The Indian Removal Act of 1830 passed under President Andrew Jackson

22 The Trail of Tears

• Forced removal in 1838
• 2,200-mile journey to Oklahoma
• Thousands of Cherokee died on the trail

23

• Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole affected

24 The Cherokee Today

• Cherokee Nation reestablished in Oklahoma
• “Eastern Band” thrives in North Carolina
• Second largest tribe

25 Great Plains: The Lakota

• Otherwise known as the Sioux
• Originally woodland people, displaced onto plains during fur trade
• Adopted “plains culture” and buffalo economy
• Built portable homes called “tipis”

26 The Lakota

• Social status was achieved differently for men and women
• Men practiced acts of bravery during raids
• Craftsmanship valued in women

27 The Lakota

• Lakota survival
• 1870s: U.S. hunters decimated
the bison populations, destroyed the Lakota way of life

28 **European Contact**
- Violence, theft and sabotage

29
- In 1492, Columbus “discovered” America.
- He wrote about the beauty and bounty of the New World

30
- 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.

31 **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)

32 **Settlers and Native American tribes**
- Some tribes helped the settlers survive in harsh conditions
- Some tribes formed alliances with settlers against other tribes

33 **Old World Germs**
- Epidemics of smallpox, measles, plague, influenza, etc.
- Killed 90% of the American Indian populations

34 **Declining Population**
- Pre-contact population in the millions
- Only around 500,000 remained in 1900
New World Politicians
- Tribal governments were in place before European contact
- Provided for the overall welfare of the people
- Nations had powerful economies and militaries

Political Innovators
- Democratic structure of the Iroquois impressed Benjamin Franklin
  Iroquois influenced U.S. government

Creative Economies...
- Tourism and conservation
  - Wildlife conservation consultants
  - Hydropower dam, timber

Creative Economies...
- Industrial competitors
  - GM car parts, American Greeting cards
  - Coca-Cola® bottling company

Creative Economies...
- Utilizing the Midwest soil
  - Menominee National Forest timber
  - Black Angus beef, Macintosh apples

Creative Economies
- Tribal gaming
- California v. Cabazon (1987)
- Revenue used to support tribal communities

Urban American Indians?
- Lack of opportunities brought
American Indians to urban areas
• 75% of American Indians live in urban areas

43 The Birth of the Pan-Indian Identity
• Tribal people joined together in urban areas
• American Indian centers offer support

44 The Powwow
• Most dramatic expression of the Pan-Indian identity
• Drumming, singing, dancing, honoring ceremonies, contests, food, and giveaways
• Drumbeat = heartbeat of Mother Earth
• Found across the country

45
• 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.

46 Summary
• Long history
• Distinct cultures
• Endured despite tremendous challenges
• United under a Pan-Indian identity

47 Native American Literature

48 Native American Literature Characteristics

49 Oral Tradition
In the oral tradition, stories are passed from one generation to the next aloud rather than being physically recorded.
The Oral Tradition
- Begins earlier in time
- Requires language but not a system of writing
- Based on memory and oral transmission
- Folklore, proverbs, chants, ballads
- Rhythms and repetition help memory
- Performer can vary presentation according to audience response
- Material can change resulting in different versions

The Written Tradition
- Begins later in time
- Requires language and a system of writing
- Based on texts
- Printed material
- Memory not essential
- Text does not vary according to audience response
- Material tends to be fixed

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: \textit{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; supernatural beings

### HERNAN CORTES (1485-1547)

> “We Spaniards know a sickness of the heart that only gold can cure.”

### AZTECS-MEXICO

- Nahuatl
- Quetzacoatl
- Tenochtitlan
- Montezuma II takes power (1502)

### TENOCHTITLAN
62  **HUMAN SACRIFICE**

- To collect live prisoners for sacrifice = capture from warfare
- Huitzilopochtli represented the sun, the warrior and ensured the Aztecs' survival – preferred food was human blood

63  **HUMAN SACRIFICE**

- Aztecs believed that the continual offering of blood through human sacrifice will prolong the existence of the universe- to insure the sun’s arrival each day, a steady amount of human hearts had to be offered in holy sacrifice.

64  **CORTES DECIDES TO CONQUER MEXICO**

- 1517—Spaniards begin to explore Mexico

65  **CORTES FINDS A TRANSLATOR AND MISTRESS**

- Dona Marina is also known as La Malinche or Malintzin.
- Dona Marina spoke Mayan and Nahuatl.
- She became Cortez’s translator and mistress