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| **Portfolio Assignment #1**  **Selected Native American creation stories**  **Response: Oral Storytelling and Reflection** |

Oral tradition is an overlooked but extremely important aspect of the literature of the Americas. Native American groups of North and South America had complex and sophisticated cultures, but they generally did not use writing systems. Instead, they used oral tradition (as well as visual arts, music, etc.) to transmit their history and beliefs. Likewise, Africans who were brought to the Americas as slaves did not generally use writing, and once they were enslaved in the New World they were often expressly forbidden from learning to read and write. Nonetheless, they found ways of preserving culture, and developing a new culture, through stories and songs.

A written version of a story from oral tradition is a pale shadow of itself. Stories need voice and action; they need the special touch that the individual storyteller gives to his or her tale. They need context—the fireside conversation or the work routine that makes the connection between teller and listener. They need to build on one another: one story is just a story, but a dozen stories together can become a belief system, an education, or a culture.

***Part 1:*** ***Find a Story***

Mine your personal and family history for a story—true or not—that you think is a good story. You must have a real, human connection to the story you choose to tell (meaning, it means something to you). Stories can be about family, culture, relatives/ancestors, a “true” family ghost story, explorations of a new land, finding/losing a home, your birth, etc. Think of stories you’ve heard from family in years past, memorable experiences you have had, or dig a little by asking questions of your parents/siblings/aunts/uncles/ grandparents, etc.

***Part 2: Write the Story Down***

The written version of the story does not need to be written/typed in full paragraphs, or even complete sentences, but can be bulleted notes for yourself to remember the key parts and details. However, do write your story down somehow- in the way it will be best for you to remember when re-telling.

* In preparing to tell your story orally keep in mind what changes you will need to make to the language, structure, descriptions, etc., from the written version. How might you play with the pace of your story, or emphasize certain words or phrases?
* Consider your audience & potential setting: is this a campfire tale? Are you sharing wisdom with a person who needs to hear a particular lesson? Whatever audience/setting you imagine, your voice will likely be a less formal than the written voice, and should be authentically yours.

***Part 3: Oral Storytelling***

Here, we explore the life that stories take on when they are told orally, rather than written.

Prepare to share your story with a small group. Your final verbal story should take approximately 2-5 minutes to tell. Practice telling your story before you come into class, adding emotion and movement when appropriate.

***Part 4: Reflection \*\*(This is the part that will be included in your final portfolio)\*\****

Please reflect on the importance of Oral and Storytelling Traditions and write a 1-page reflection on this storytelling experience in our class. This response may include some or all of your answers to following questions.

* Did you like telling your story to the class? Why or why not?
  + How did you choose this story to tell today? Do you think it was successful?
* Is Storytelling important in your personal life? Why or why not?
* What historic or cultural impact might stories have on a culture/people/world? What might they tell us about a group? Reflect on the sharing of stories in class for this, or any other life experiences where storytelling is being practiced.
* Who told the best story in your group today? Why was their story the best?

**Portfolio Assignment #2**

**Selected Poetry of Joy Harjo—Group 1**

**Response: Poetry Pastiche**

For your second portfolio assignment, you will write a pastiche of one of Harjo’s poems we studied in Group #1. ***A pastiche is an artistic work that openly imitates the style of another artist or work***. You can choose any of the poems we have studied so far—choose your favorite Harjo poem, choose the poem that made you think, choose the poem that you enjoyed reading aloud or listening to in class. Your poem must imitate Harjo’s style in some way, but the topic and overall meaning of the poem is entirely up to you.

To help you with this assignment, consider trying some of the following:

* Try using the same first words of each line but completing them with your own words
* Try addressing the same topic or idea but do so in your way
* Take note of the literary features of a poem (use of metaphor, figurative language, symbolism, etc) and use that same literary feature in your own poem
* Choose a poem and write a direct response or rebuttal to Harjo’s message
* Take the overall tone or mood of a poem and write your own poem mimicking that tone or voice but about a topic that is meaningful to you

\*\*Your final pastiche should be very close to the length of the original Harjo poem you are imitating.

\*\*Please include the title of the Harjo poem that you use as the basis of your pastiche.

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| **Portfolio Assignment #3**  **Selected poetry of Joy Harjo—Group 2**  **Imagery Study** |

While the deeper meanings of Harjo’s poetry can sometimes be difficult to discern, her poetry is also remarkably simple in her use of setting and imagery. In other words, the surface story of each poem is usually pretty straight-forward and easy to understand. And once you understand the characters and plot of the poem, you can then dive into some of the deeper meanings beyond the literal ones.

As a way to explore this group of poems further, you will create a visual representation of the most important images from (1) of the Harjo poems in Group 2 in your packet. You can create a storyboard (think—comic strip or panels from a graphic novel), or you can be creative about the way you present the most compelling and and important images from your chosen poem. In addition, you should include quotations from the poem to show where you found the inspiration for your images-- include words from the poem only. The quotations can be incorporated into, below, or above the picture. You can choose to color your images or leave them black and white—think about what makes sense based on your understanding of the poem.

Have fun with this activity, and let it guide your analysis of the poem! After you’ve finished, write a 1-paragraph reflection answering the question, *“What do you better understand about this poem after studying the imagery?”*

Your final portfolio should include the both the visual representation AND the 1-paragraph reflection. Use paper that is 8 ½ x 11 so that it fits into your final portfolio.

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| **Portfolio Assignment #4**  **Selected Poetry of Joy Harjo**  **Reader Response (using Readers, Writers, and Texts)** |

This year, we will be studying literature through (3) areas of exploration as defined by I.B.—Readers, Writers, and Texts; Intertextuality; and Time and Space. These areas of exploration are meant to help deepen our understanding of the text, the author’s purpose and message, the intended (and unintended audience), the importance of time and place of when it was written (compared to how it is understood today), and connections between texts and authors.

For this portfolio, you will focus your attention on **Readers, Writers, and Texts**. A brief explanation of this lens is as follows:

*Students will learn to understand the aesthetic nature of literature and come to see that literary texts are powerful means to express individual thoughts and feelings, and that their own perspectives as experienced readers are integral to the effect of a literary text. This study includes the investigation of the response of readers and the ways in which literary texts generate meaning. The focus is on the development of personal and critical responses to the particulars of literary texts.* *At the same time, study will focus on the role readers themselves play in generating meaning as students move from a personal response to an understanding and interpretation that is influenced by the community of readers of which they are a part. Their interaction with other readers will raise an awareness of the constructed and negotiated nature of meaning.*

\*\*Choose (2) of the Harjo poems from your packet and write a 2-page reader response (dedicate approx. 1 page for each poem). As always, use MLA format. This reader response should address some the following:

* How did this poem affect you as a reader? In other words, how did this poem elicit particular emotional responses from you?
* What aspects of the poem did you find most compelling? You can address specific literary features, or overarching ideas that the poem made you think more about.
* How do your own personal experiences and perspectives affect how you understand this poem? In other words, what do YOU as the reader bring to the poem that affects your understanding of it?
* Did our discussions in class (either whole group or small group) affect your interpretations or understandings of the poem? How was your experience with the poem influenced by the community of learners around you?
* What is your critical response to this poem? Do you find Harjo’s choices as a writer effective? You can focus your critique on a few of the literary techniques we discussed in class, or focus on the meaning of the poem as a whole.