

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Historical Fiction during the Seminole Indian Wars

Grade(s):

11 or 12

Time (minutes):

2 weeks (10 class sessions, approx. 355 minutes of instructional time)

- 50 Minutes of lesson introduction
 - 80 Minutes of research time (teacher discretion)
 - 225 minutes of drafting, revision, and final drafting time:
 - 125 minutes rough draft writing
 - 50 minutes peer review
 - 125 minutes final draft writing
- Note: These can be adjusted as necessary

Suggested follow-up lesson/alternative structure for creative writing or writing intensive curriculum:

- Remove the 45 minutes of peer review and substitute a cycle of the writer's workshop followed by revision.

Lesson Overview:

Students will require previous modules on narrative structure, historical fiction, dialogue, tone, and mood, making this a lesson at home within any narrative writing unit.

Students will receive instruction on the function of composite characters in historical fiction and the purpose they serve in terms of driving plot and allowing for increased narrative cohesion in shorter pieces with limited numbers of characters.

Students will be using the Veterans Legacy Project Biographies for several soldiers to develop a number of characters, including one composite character (the protagonist) of their narrative which will then be situated in a piece of historical fiction with a feasible narrative given the time period during the Seminole Wars. The student writings will use period-appropriate references to technology, communication, compartment, warfare, politics, and culture, with room for sensible adjustments to the narrative in the name of fiction conventions.

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Driving Question:

Understanding the historical context of the Seminole Wars in the United States and US/Seminole attitudes toward one another, what fictional narratives can be developed that capture the essence of living in that time period as a soldier?

Relevant Next Generation Sunshine State Standards:

- LAFS.1112.RI.1.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
 - Applied to the research portion of this assessment
- LAFS.910.W.1.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- LAFS.1112.W.1.3a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- LAFS.1112.W.1.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- LAFS.1112.W.1.3c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
- LAFS.1112.W.1.3d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- LAFS.1112.W.1.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Required Materials:

- Computers with Internet connections
- Internet website permissions for research purposes
- Microsoft Word or Office 365 access for word processing
- Biographies are available on the Veterans Legacy Project (VLP) Website: <https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu>
- A copy of Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*

Learning Objectives:

Students will use various web resources to synthesize accurate historical data to construct a narrative which would logically fall within the historical period and context of the Seminole Wars. These narratives will be realistic fiction and must be character-driven narratives that demonstrate not only an ability to process historical texts and biographies as artifacts of the past, but demonstrate the ability to

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synthesize the information such that period-accurate historical fiction can be generated in a way that captures the essence, atmosphere, and mood of the wars. Reasonable inferences about soldiers' lives must be drawn from primary sources, and all references to popular figures, generals, politicians, soldiers, etc., must be historically accurate, except where necessary for fictive creativity. Students will be tasked with compiling accurate research, organizing their information, and then drafting a sensible story that obeys the conventions of quality short story writing thereby demonstrating active agency in choosing plot structure, tone, mood, characterization, dialogue, setting, imagery, and figurative language.

Special Vocabulary:

Because each student's narratives will necessitate varied research, students are individually tasked with creating a word bank of at least 15 difficult terms from the period they will use in their narratives. This word bank will contain the word, part of speech, definition, and an example sentence for entry.

Procedure:

****Note:** Students should have already studied or been in the process of studying narrative writing and genre, historical fiction, dialogue, composite characters and convention of the short story.

1. Introduction
 - a. A lesson on the overarching themes of each Seminole War as well as the general time-period itself. Cover:
 - i. Slavery and slave escapes
 - ii. United States / Native American tensions
 - iii. Weapons and technology of the Seminole War
 - iv. Causes of death during the wars (to dispel the notion that all soldiers died vaingloriously on the field of battle).
 1. Encourage students to address the very real horror of the period that not all soldiers died in an actual war. Much drama can be had outside the battlefield.
2. Read and discuss a sample chapter from Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* and emphasize the purpose of historical fiction.
 - a. On the whiteboard, outline the elements of the selected short story, emphasizing:
 - i. Structure
 - ii. Characterization
 - iii. Imagery
 - iv. Themes, both overt and subtle
 - v. Historical references
3. Provide direct instruction on the particulars of the assignment. Each of the following criteria may be adjusted, but can serve as guidelines:

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- a. Students will have time to conduct research into the Seminole Wars. During this time they should become familiar with the history, culture, events, and technology of the war(s) for the story they are planning to tell.
- b. Students should have a cast of at least three dynamic and three static characters of which of the dynamic characters is a composite and inspired by the biographies found on the VLP webpage.
- c. Be a minimum of 2,000 words (about 8 pages).
4. Provide students time to write their narratives using word processing software
 - a. During this time, the teacher should float and observe the student's stories asking questions where necessary.
5. Upon rough draft completion, have students form groups of 3-4. Each student will then peer review *each* of their group members narratives, offering feedback on the following elements:
 - a. Plot
 - b. Character realism
 - c. Dialogue
 - d. Imagery
 - e. Historical accuracy
 - f. Narrative structure
6. Students will then move into final drafting for the remainder of the allotted time and then submit their narratives for grading.

Extension/Follow-up activities (teacher discretion):

7. Do a poll and see where the students selected soldiers died? Did they die in battle? Were most of them in the same battle? What did they learn about the battles?
8. Targeted read-aloud: after students have finished their works, the teacher selects five narratives and puts them before the class to vote. The winner has the reader (or teacher) read the narrative aloud while the class conducts a narrative analysis of the work.
9. Have students swap narratives and reach each other's work (preferably from groups that did not read any originals). Then, have them come up with a piece of cover art for the front of a book jacket and a critical review for the back of the book jacket.

Historical Context:

The Seminole Wars are some of America's least remembered wars, and their veterans, on all sides, rarely receive recognition. Especially for the Florida student, these wars form an important backdrop in the history of the state of Florida.

The three Seminole Wars provide a rich context for pre-Civil War studies and lay some of the cultural frameworks for the time period. Students may be free to focus on the First Seminole War and the attempts by the United States Government to recapture runaway African American slaves living among the Seminole.



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The Second Seminole War centers around forced movement into reservations and the legislation backing such movement, the Indian Removal Act. Seminole Chief Osceola was a central figure in guerrilla resistance in which Seminole families sought refuge and concealment in the Florida Everglades. This was a costly war claiming ~2,000 soldiers' lives and \$40-60 million U.S. Government dollars.

The Third Seminole War resulted from renewed fervor in the tracking and removal of the Seminoles remaining in Florida. There were minimal casualties, but the result was the U.S. paying the most resistant band of refugees to move west.