

A UNIT ON MINNESOTA INDIANS: THE ASHINABE AND THE DAKOTA

By ANNA LEE STENSLAND
University of Minnesota, Duluth

Among the books with Indian themes most often mentioned for use in the high school English class, none seems to feature Minnesota Indians and their cultures. It is true that Indian tribes did not move and settle by states, but Minnesota has had living in its boundaries two of the largest and culturally rich tribes: the Chippewa and the Sioux, or more accurately the Anishinabe and the Dakota.

Most of the fiction dealing with Indian themes and appropriate for high school classes comes from tribes of the West or Southwest: House Made of Dawn, by a Kiowa author; When the Legends Die about a Ute boy; Laughing Boy, Navajo; Fig Tree John, Apache; Man Who Killed the Deer, Pueblo. From the Indians of the northern Midwest, only Black Elk Speaks, an autobiography of an Oglala Sioux holy man, has been used in some classes.

There are materials available, however, from the Chippewa and Sioux which might very well be combined into a very useful unit. If we assume that for the very young, we begin with what is familiar and near at hand, an English teacher might consider such materials especially appropriate on the junior high school level, with a senior high school unit broadening out to include more general Indian materials. The following materials are suggested because they seem appropriate, especially for the junior high school level but with variations for senior high level as well, and also because they are available.

Charles Alexander Eastman, whose Indian name was Ohiyessa, was born in 1858 in what is now Redwood Falls, Minnesota. In his book, Indian Boyhood (Dover, 1971, paper, \$2.00), he tells about what he calls his "thrilling wild life," his early life in the Sioux tribal society. We learn in this autobiography about the recreation, training, and life of a young Indian boy, as well as about the tribe's flight from the white man following the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota of 1862, the danger in traveling across the country of attacks by hostile tribes, and the periods of famine and severe cold. Eastman describes customs such as the annual sugar-making, the Midsummer Feast on the banks of the Minnesota River, and the boy's first offering to the Great Mystery and what it meant to him. The fascination the boy feels as he listens to the tales of Smoky Day, who was the tribe historian, gives a modern student a small idea of what it was to grow up as an Indian during the last century. In short, Eastman's boyhood story is crammed with Indian lore enough to challenge the imagination of any junior high school student. In a book about his later life, which unfortunately is out of print, From the Deep Woods to Civilization, the author continues his

story, in which under the influence of his father, who was convinced that the Indian must learn the white man's ways, Eastman attended school at the Santee Agency School in Nebraska, Beloit College, Dartmouth, and finally medical school at Boston University. He was a doctor at Pine Ridge during the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.

A third book by Dr. Eastman, which is useful and available in paperback, is Soul of the Indian (Fenwyn Press, 1970, paper, \$2.95). It is not primarily narrative, but rather a short, simply written explanation of the religion and moral values of a Sioux Indian. For a teacher wanting to emphasize the legends of the Sioux, the chapter called "The Unwritten Scriptures" is helpful. It contains the Creation Story of the First Born and Little Boy Man. Here also is the story of Unk-to-Mee, the spider, a symbol of evil, and a version of the flood. An understanding of the Sioux system of values and moral code is best gained from the chapter "Barbarism and the Moral Code." The author makes some very provocative statements, which could well lead to discussion of Indian values in relationship to values of the white society: "As a child, I understood how to give; I have forgotten that grace since I became civilized" (p. 88). Or: "Other protection than the moral law there could not be in an Indian community, where there were neither locks nor doors and everything was open and easy of access to all comers" (pp. 104-105).

The study and comparison of literary sources has always been a favorite activity of undergraduate and graduate classes and is probably not generally appropriate for many junior and senior high school classes. But since an attempt to understand the essence of a culture is one of the main reasons for studying minority literatures, it seems that perhaps a comparison of Longfellow's Hiawatha with the Manabozho legends might lead to some such understanding. The sources of Hiawatha, the Schoolcraft legends, are probably available in most high school libraries, or they should be, but they are not available in paperback so that all students might have a copy. A modern young Anishinabe, Gerald Vizenor, does, however, have a paperback edition of tales, Anishinabe Adisokan (Nodin Press, 1970, paper, \$2.45), which contains a section of Manabozho stories. He tells the tales as they were printed in 1887 and 1888 in The Progress, a weekly newspaper on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota. The purpose in such a comparative study would be to try to ascertain what the differences are between the Indian version and the Longfellow version and what these differences might mean about the values of each society. Why, for example, did Longfellow eliminate the trickster characteristics, which so delighted Indian storytellers and audiences? He maintained the supernatural, in that Hiawatha was given power to fight monsters, magicians and windigos by his father, the West Wind. But Hiawatha never changes himself into a black cloud, an owl, or a rabbit, as

Manabozho does. Why did Longfellow maintain only Hiawatha's goodness, whereas Manabozho is good, but he is also mischievous and revengeful at times? What does it mean about the dominant culture that Longfellow enlarged a simple statement about Manabozho's seeing the beautiful daughter of the Arrow-Maker into the Minnehaha tale, including the courtship, the uniting in peace of the Sioux and Chippewa tribes by their marriage, and the famine and Minnehaha's death? Why in Vizenor's version was Manabozho fathered by the North Wind, "a harsh fellow," whereas Hiawatha was fathered by the West Wind, who was not evil but in truth was watching over his son?

With older students, or very talented junior high school students, more careful literary comparisons might be made between Hiawatha and its true source, the Schoolcraft legends, through the teacher's or one of the student's reading from them, or through oral reports by the students. It is interesting to note that Schoolcraft's original Algic Researches did not sell well, and neither did his attempt to profit from Longfellow's Hiawatha by publishing the Myth of Hiawatha. But Longfellow's publication was an instant success. Although the Longfellow story had greater appeal for the white audience, Schoolcraft's tales, which came from his wife and mother-in-law, granddaughter and daughter of Waub-ojeeg, famous Chippewa chief on Madeline Island, were more truly Indian. Can some understandings be arrived at about basic differences in values and ways of looking at things which will enrich the student's knowledge of his own and another culture?

A three-way comparison also might be fruitful, from Schoolcraft, admittedly a rather Puritanical white man, who completed his Algic Researches in 1838, to Longfellow, who romanticized the stories into Hiawatha in 1855, to Vizenor, an Anishinabe, who edited in 1970 tales originally published in a reservation newspaper in 1887 and 1888.

Reading Indian legends, from whatever source, will soon make students aware of themes running through them which are common to their own backgrounds. Vizenor, for example, tells the story of Manabozho and the Whale, a tale similar to Jonah and the Whale. William Warren, a native of Madeline Island, descendant of Michel Cadotte and his Chippewa wife, in his History of the Ojibway Nation (Ross and Haines, 1970, \$10.00), tells of the people being guided and protected by the light of a sea shell as the Israelites were led by the pillar of fire. Eastman mentions that the Sioux Unk-to-Mee, the spider, served much the same purpose that the serpent in the Garden of Eden served. Both Anishinabe and Dakota legends contain stories of floods. Warren tells that the Chippewas believed that the Red Man had angered the Great Spirit and caused a flood. Only through the intercession of Manabozho did the people survive. Eastman tells the Sioux version of a great snow, which when it melted, became

a flood, which man survived because he had a canoe, but which only a few animals survived who had a foothold on the highest peaks.

A number of works might very well supplement such a unit: Vezenor's collection of songs, Anishinabe Nagamon (Nodin Press, 1970, paper, \$1.95); Mary Eastman's Dahcotah; or Life and Legends of the Sioux around Fort Snelling (Ross and Haines, 1962, \$8.75), in which the wife of an army officer stationed at Fort Snelling describes what she saw of Sioux customs and manners before 1849; the chapter on "Little Crow's War," the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota from Dee Brown's Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (Bantam, 1971, paper, \$1.95); Mentor Williams' edition of Schoolcraft's Indian Legends (Michigan State University Press, 1956, \$7.50), which reviews and documents the relationship between Schoolcraft and Hiawatha. Warren's History, which has been mentioned, tells the history of his tribe from legendary times through historical times, especially those on Madeline Island.

In addition to the above, materials for special projects about the two tribes might be drawn from the following:

Anishinabe

Coleman, Sister Bernard, Ellen Frogner, and Estelle Eich. Ojibwa Myths and Legends. Ross and Haines, 1961. \$4.50. Tales collected in the late 1950's from Minnesota Indian reservations.

Dewdney, Selwyn and Kenneth E. Kidd. Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes. University of Toronto, 1967. \$6.75. 1000 drawings from about 100 sites, mostly west of the Lakehead area of Lake Superior.

Hickerson, Harold. Chippewa and Their Neighbors: a Study in Ethnohistory. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970. Paper, \$2.65. A scholarly study.

Lyford, Carrie. Ojibwa Crafts. U.S. Department of the Interior, 1943. Paper, \$1.10.

Ritzenthaler, Robert and Pat. Woodland Indians of the Western Great Lakes. Natural History Press, 1970. Paper, \$1.95.

Black Elk. Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux, recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown. Penguin, 1971. Paper, \$1.45.

Blish, Helen H., ed. Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux. University of Nebraska, 1967. \$17.95. Bad Heart Bull made over 400 drawings between 1890 and 1913 to provide a visual record of the Sioux.

Deloria, Vine, Jr. Custer Died for Your Sins: an Indian Manifesto. Avon, 1970. Paper, \$1.25. A statement by a modern Sioux of the clash of values between whites and Indians.

_____. We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf. Macmillan, 1970. \$5.95. The author's statement of what the Indians can contribute to America's life and culture.

Hyde, George E. Red Cloud's Folk: a History of the Oglala Sioux Indians. University of Oklahoma, 1968. \$7.95.

_____. Spotted Tail's Folk: a History of the Brule Sioux. University of Oklahoma, 1961. \$7.95.

Landes, Ruth. The Mystic Lake Sioux: Sociology of the Mdewakantonwa Santee. University of Wisconsin, 1968. \$10.00. A historical and sociological study of the Sioux who in the first part of the nineteenth century lived near the present city of Faribault and around Lake Pepin.

Miller, David Humphreys. Ghost Dance. Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1959. Out of Print. The incidents which led to the Battle of Wounded Knee.

Nelson, Bruce. Land of the Dacotahs. University of Nebraska, 1946. Paper, \$1.60. A history of the region around the upper Missouri River.

Sandoz, Mari. These Were the Sioux, illus. by Amos Bad Heart Bull and Kills Two, Oglala artists. Hastings House, 1961. \$3.50. A personalized story of the author's neighbors.

Standing Bear, Luther. Land of the Spotted Eagle. Houghton Mifflin, 1933. Out of Print. A Dakota chief, both in the late 1860's tells about the customs, religion and life of his tribe.

_____. My People the Sioux. Houghton Mifflin, 1928. Out of Print. The author's memories of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the Battle of Wounded Knee, and his life at the Carlisle School.

White Bull, Joseph. The Warrior Who Killed Custer, ed. by James H. Howard. University of Nebraska, 1969. \$6.95. The story in pictures of the personal exploits of the man who claimed he killed Custer.

The following books could be recommended for recreational reading:

Anishinabe

Arnold, Elliott. White Falcon, illus. by Frederick T. Chapman. Knopf, 1955. \$3.74.

An easy junior high story of the white boy, John Tanner, who spent most of his life among the Chippewas.

Fuller, Iola. Loon Feather. Harcourt Brace, 1940. Paper, \$1.95.

A fine story of a Chippewa girl who faces problems of a racially mixed society on Mackinac Island in the 1800's.

O'Meara, Walter. Last Portage. Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Out of Print.

An adult documentary of John Tanner's life among the Chippewas.

Sun Bear. Buffalo Hearts: a Native American's View of Indian Culture, Religion and History. Naturegraph, 1970. Paper, \$3.00.

A modern Anishinabe, editor of a national Indian magazine, Many Smokes, tells about Indian legends, beliefs, and Indians he admires.

Dakota

Annixter, Paul and Jane. Buffalo Chief. Holiday House, 1958. \$3.95.

The parallel stories of a young Sioux and a young buffalo frowning up before the coming of white men. For junior high.

Brown, Vinson. Great upon the Mountain: Crazy Horse of America, illus. by Adelbert Zephier, a Yankton Sioux. Naturegraph, 1971. Paper, \$2.25.

A short biography emphasizing the visions.

Chapman, William M. Remember the Wind: a Prairie Memoir, illus. by Douglas Gorsline. Lippincott, 1965. \$5.95.

A personal story of a family who lived and worked on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.

Eagle, D. Chief. Winter Count. Golden Bell, 1968. \$4.95.
Story of an Indian and a white girl who marry at the time white men first begin taking gold from the Black Hills.
Written by a Sioux.

Fisher, Clay. Valley of the Bear, illustrated by Eric von Schmidt. Houghton Mifflin, 1964. \$3.25.

A romantic story of an Oglala Sioux woman and her grandson banished from their village. For junior high.

Garland, Hamlin. Book of the American Indian, illus. by Frederic Remington. Garrett, \$12.75.

A series of sketches about Indians in the white man's world, the longest being a fictionalized story of Sitting Bull and his resistance.

Garst, Shannon. Buffalo Bull, illus. by Elton C. Fox. Messner, 1948. \$3.95.

Of special interest here is the white man's side of the arrest and shooting of Sitting Bull.

_____. Red Eagle. Hastings House, 1959. \$3.50.
A young Sioux, Sickly and lame, learns to compete. For junior high.

_____. Sitting Bull: Champion of His People, illus. by Elton C. Fox. Messner, 1946. \$3.64.
A junior high biography.

Kopit, Arthur. Indians: A Play. Hill and Wang, 1969. Paper, 1.95.

Buffalo Bill reminisces with pleasure about most of his life, with the exception of his inability to prevent the murder of Sitting Bull.

Lott, Milton. Dance Back the Buffalo. Pocket Books, 1968. Paper, \$.75.

The story of a Sioux family and some white friends at the time of the Massacre at Wounded Knee.

Lovelace, Maud Hart. Early Candlelight. University of Minn, 1929. Out of Print.

The daughter of a Canadian voyageur lives near Fort Snelling with her family, which includes her half-Indian half brothers. For junior high.

McCracken, Harold. Great White Buffalo, illus. by Remington Schuyler. Lippincott, 1946. \$4.25.

A young Sioux has to prove himself to his tribe. For junior high.

Manfred, Frederick. Conquering Horse. Signet, 1959. Paper, \$.60.

A young Sioux searches for his vision.

Meadowcroft, Enid LaMonte. Story of Crazy Horse, illus. by William Reusswig. Grosset and Dunlap, 1954. \$2.95.
A junior high biography.

Neihardt, John G. Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux, illus. by Standing Bear. Morrow, 1961. Paper, \$1.50.
A Sioux holy man tells of his disappointment in being unable to fulfill his vision.

_____. Twilight of the Sioux: The Song of the Indian Wars; The Song of the Messiah. University of Nebraska, 1953. Paper, \$2.25.

In a lengthy narrative poem the poet tells of the struggle of Indians and whites for the bison lands.

_____. When the Tree Flowered: A Fictional Autobiography of Eagle Voice, a Sioux Indian. University of Nebraska. Paper, \$1.65.

The story of a Sioux who lived through the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Massacre at Wounded Knee into the present century.

Sandoz, Mari. Crazy Horse: the Strange Man of the Oglalas. University of Nebraska, 1961. Paper, \$1.95.
A scholarly biography.

_____. Story Catcher, illus. by Elsie J. McCorkell. Westminster, 1963. \$3.50.

A young Sioux who wants to be a story teller and historian of his tribe proves himself.

Vestal, Stanley. Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux. Univ. of Oklahoma, 1969. \$6.96.
An adult biography.

Voss, Carroll. White Cap for Rechinda. Ives Washburn, 1966. \$3.75.

A young Sioux girl faces some difficult times in nurses training. For junior high.

Warren, Mary Phraner. Walk in My Moccasins, illus. by Victor Mays. Hale 1966. \$3.24.
A white family adopts five Sioux children. For junior high.

Anna Lee Stensland is currently chairman of the MCEE.