19th Century American Literature.

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**Lecture Notes: Native American Literature.**

Part One: The History of North American Immigration. Historians sometimes break down American immigration into five periods.

1. Pre-Colonial Period: the Native Peoples.
   1. The earliest humans in North America are believed to have come from Asia over a land-bridge that formed between what are now Russia and Alaska.
   2. After Europeans came to the Americas the population of the native peoples fell rapidly due to the effects of disease and war.
   3. In the United States, native American were the subject of systematic oppression. By the late 19th century, most of the native tribes were restricted to small pieces of land called “reservations.”
2. Colonial Period: The First Americans.
   1. French. In the Northern part of the United States and in what is now Canada, the French established trading colonies for the purpose of exporting fur.
   2. Spanish. In the southern and western part of what is now the United States the Spanish had colonies and trading networks.
   3. English
      1. Jamestown (1607)
      2. Plymouth (1620)
      3. Massachusetts Bay (1630). Approximately 20,000 Puritans came to America between 1630 and 1640.
   4. African Slaves: Between 1619, when the first slaves were brought to America, and 1808, when the importation of slaves was outlawed, around 650,000 Africans were forcibly imported into the country.
3. 19th Century: The Golden Dream.
   1. Irish.
      1. During the mid-19th century a huge number of Irish immigrants settled in America due to famine and political trouble in their country.
      2. Between 1820 and 1830 around 4.5 million Irish settled in America. They were poor and uneducated and Catholic and many of them were persecuted as a result.
   2. Chinese and other Asian peoples.
      1. In the 1840’s gold was discovered in California and in South Dakota. Around 25,000 Chinese had settled in America by the mid-1850s. They were often treated poorly by white Americans because of their language and religion.
      2. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1880 restricted the number of Chinese who could enter the country.
   3. Germans. Around 5 million Germans immigrated to the U.S. in the mid-19th century. Many settled in the rich lands of the Midwest and became prosperous farmers. Today, they are the largest ethnic group in the country.
4. The European Wave and Ellis Island.
   1. The Immigration Act of 1924.
   2. Jews. 2 million
   3. Italians. 4 million
5. After the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.
   1. Asian
   2. Latin American

Part Two: Native American Texts.

1. Texts
   1. “The Iroquois Creation Story.”
      1. The Iroquois. A “nation” of Native American people who originally inhabited much of what is now New York state in the U.S.A. They lived communally in structures called “longhouses.” The society was matriarchal, meaning that women held the political power and property.
      2. The creation story shows several common ideas from Native American spirituality:
         1. The earth is a real person: our mother. We should care for her and she will care for us.
         2. Animals are our family and can help us as well.
         3. Good and Bad (as represented by the Left and Right-Handed Twins) are parts of the natural world. We are like the creations of the Twins, a mixture of flowers and thorns.
   2. “Letter to the President…” Chief Seattle.
      1. Chief Seattle: Was born around 1780 in what is now the U.S. state of Washington.
      2. There is some controversy about this letter, which was supposedly sent to president Franklin Pierce in 1855. The letter has never been found and some people say that Seattle didn’t write it.
      3. The letter describes a worldview which is very different from the way we think about nature today.
         1. Seattle says that to his people nature is “sacred,” or holy.
         2. “…the rivers are our brothers…”
         3. “The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth.”
   3. “How the Coyote Stole Fire.”
      1. This story demonstrates the relationship that Native American people had with animals and nature.
      2. The Coyote is a symbol of courage and intelligence in Native American stories.
2. Discussion Questions:
   1. It is obvious that the way that Native American people think about nature and animals is very different from the way that most people do. Do you think that their way of thinking and living is better than ours? Do you think they are happier than people who live in the “modern” way?
   2. If you could go back in time and live the way that our ancestors did would you do it?
   3. Think about the Korean creation story and the Iroquois creation story. How are they similar? How are they different?
   4. If you wrote a letter to the President of Korea what would you ask her to do?
   5. Native Americans believe that each person has a spirit animal who guides them and who gives them their character. What animal would you like for your spirit animal?