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2023-2024 Book-in-Common Teaching Guide

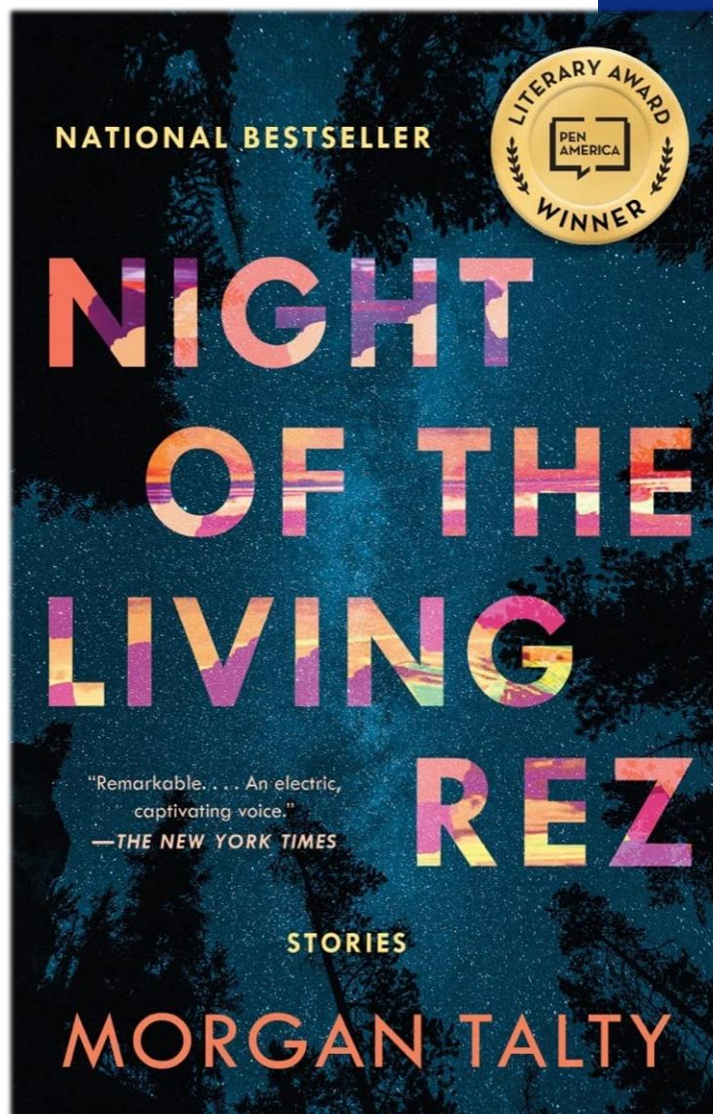
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BOOK-IN-COMMON TEACHING GUIDE

2023-2024

Collin College Book-in-Common Committee



2023 – 2024 Book-in-Common

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10/09/2023

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INTRODUCING THIS YEAR'S BOOK-IN-COMMON

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

As always, the *2023-2024 Teaching Guide* exemplifies the Collin College Book-in-Common Committee's commitment to the goal of a year-long, college-wide engagement with an important book and its author. Highlights of this year's Guide include:

- Resources for connecting with local Native American History and Heritage
- Responses to the text including original artwork, explorations of the major themes in *Night of the Living Rez*, and connections to political science and social science concepts.
- Videos on modern-day reservation life and interviews with the author.
- Classroom, lab and library resources including Videos on modern-day reservation life, interviews with the author and extensive library and historical references.
- Support for a variety of teaching modalities including class discussion, journaling and reflection, extended student research, essay and research paper assignments, annotated bibliographies, and creative assignments.

The materials contained here will deepen our thinking and strengthen our teaching. Please join me in thanking the contributors who have generously made this year's *Guide* a reality.

--Marta Moore

FROM THE PUBLISHER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morgan Talty is a citizen of the Penobscot Indian Nation where he grew up. His story collection *Night of the Living Rez* is forthcoming from Tin House Books (July 5th, 2022), and his work has appeared in *Granta*, *The Georgia Review*, *Shenandoah*, *TriQuarterly*, *Narrative Magazine*, *LitHub*, and elsewhere. A winner of the 2021 Narrative Prize, Talty's work has been supported by the Elizabeth George Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts (2022). Talty teaches courses in both English and Native American Studies, and he is on the faculty at the Stonecoast MFA in creative writing as well as the Institute of American Indian Arts. Talty is also a Prose Editor at *The Massachusetts Review*. He lives in Levant, Maine.



BOOK SUMMARY

Set in a Native community in Maine, *Night of the Living Rez* is a riveting debut collection about what it means to be Penobscot in the twenty-first century and what it means to live, to survive, and to persevere after tragedy.

In twelve striking, luminescent stories, author Morgan Talty—with searing humor, abiding compassion, and deep insight—breathes life into tales of family and a community as they struggle with a painful past and an uncertain future. A boy unearths a jar that holds an old curse, which sets into motion his family's unraveling; a man, while trying to swindle some pot from a dealer, discovers a friend passed out in the woods, his hair frozen into the snow; a grandmother suffering from Alzheimer's projects the past onto her grandson; and two friends, inspired by *Antiques Roadshow*, attempt to rob the tribal museum for valuable root clubs.

A collection that examines the consequences and merits of inheritance, *Night of the Living Rez* is an unforgettable portrayal of an Indigenous community and marks the arrival of a standout talent in contemporary fiction.

REFLECTIONS AND RESPONSES

LESLIE RICHARDSON – PORCUPINE CARVING



GARY WILSON – THEMES AND ASSIGNMENT SUGGESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONAL OVERVIEW

Night of the Living Rez **explores themes** such as drug addiction, mental illness, and economic insecurity that haunt the characters in the novel. The novel also touches on themes such as family, community bonds, and the characters' struggle to come to terms with their individual painful pasts and uncertain futures.

The novel's narrative—its characterizations, dialog, themes, and plot--conveys an all-encompassing experience that the characters are isolated and alienated within the broader American society. Added to this aspect of isolation is another key theme: the characters also feel isolated and alienated from the broader Native American society as well. They are outsiders among outsiders. This sense of *pervasive alienation* permeates every chapter of the novel.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Importantly, one can argue accurately that the novel is constructed of *standalone short stories* that exist more or less independently of the others; they are connected through the commonality of sharing the same main character and immediate family members. The main character's relationship with his mother is particularly important, but just as the stories are connected by shared characters, so are the lives of the characters connected by shared history. Generations of family members call these Native American reservations "home." Unfortunately, this environment produces a *sense of alienation* from outside society that fosters a continuous progression of the characters' mistakes and unwise choices.

KEY THEMES TO FOCUS CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Drug abuse and its lingering effects: Many of the stories are linked by the common thematic thread of persistent drug abuse—alcohol, heroine, and pot.

Loss of Identity: Most contemporary Native American novels and short stories struggle with the theme of *identity*, particularly the struggle to maintain a sense of cultural identity while contending with the inevitable conflicts and complexities of modern life. Characters often face questions about who they are and where they belong.

Personal Growth and Resilience: Characters in *Rez* undergo personal growth and transformation as they confront challenges. Themes of resilience, adaptation, and finding strength in adversity can be seen in the characters' struggles.

Socioeconomic Challenges: The novel's characters and their interactions with the greater American society foregrounds the economic disparities and challenges faced by indigenous native communities. These challenges can be appreciated as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare.

Community and Family: A positive theme that instructors can emphasize in discussions is the importance of community and family ties. The individual chapters

portray how these relationships provide support, connection, and a sense of belonging for characters.

Social Marginalization: Characters face discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice from the non-Native society around them. This leads to a sense of social isolation and a feeling of being treated as *outsiders*.

Cultural Preservation: The preservation of Native American cultures and traditions is another recurring theme. As critical readers of the novel, we can sense the efforts of characters to retain their cultural practices alive in the face of external pressures and assimilation

Conflicts of the of Modern versus Traditional: Every chapter explores how traditional native beliefs and practices intersect with contemporary life, surfacing an abiding tension about how to adapt while maintaining cultural integrity. Talty's narrative portrays an extended metaphor of the journey toward healing and reconciliation--both on an individual and communal level. Focus in-class discussions on how the characters confront past traumas and strive toward a more hopeful future.

***KEY CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS* TO FACILITATE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

1. How does the main characters' Native American heritage influence their identity and actions throughout the novel?
2. How does the novel depict the journey of *self-discovery* and *personal growth* for its characters?
3. What role does *cultural preservation* play in the story? How do characters attempt to maintain their cultural practices and traditions?
4. Are there instances of *cultural conflict* within the novel, such as clashes between traditional Native values and modern influences? How are these conflicts resolved or explored?
5. How does the novel portray the importance of community and family within the Native American context? What examples or scenes in the novel demonstrate this significance? Are there instances of characters seeking a sense of belonging, either within their own community or in a wider context? How do they achieve or struggle to achieve this sense of belonging?
6. Does the novel address historical trauma, such as the impact of forced removal, or other historical injustices? How do characters and communities grapple with these legacies?
7. Are there instances in the novel where characters encounter *stereotypes* or *misconceptions* about Native American people and cultures? How do they respond to or challenge these stereotypes?
8. How does the novel depict the intersection of traditional Native beliefs and practices with contemporary life and values? What are the challenges and opportunities presented by this intersection?
9. Does the story touch on themes of healing and reconciliation, either on an individual or communal level? Do some of the characters work toward these goals?

10. What do we learn from the author's portrayals of the *spiritual beliefs* and practices of the Penobscot people? In what ways do these unique practices seem anachronistic to our modern religious beliefs?

ASSIGNMENT SUGGESTIONS

Class Presentations

- **Cycle of Trama faced by native Americans:** *Rez* offers a compelling case for the impact of intergenerational trauma. What do sociological and psychological research sources (journals, books, and films) have to say on the matter? Empower your students to create a Power Point presentation (individual or group) that uses text and images to share research-backed insights into how the cycle of trauma can be broken.
- **Native American Life on Contemporary American "Reservations":** Guide your students to engage in some research into conditions on today's Native American reservations within the United States. Focus particularly on the first-hand testimony of Native people themselves. Create either individual or group Power Point presentations that use text and images to share with your class the perspectives of Native people on life on a variety of reservations.
- **Media Portrayal of American Sub-cultures:** Native American communities are not the only ones who struggle with often superficial and stereotypical representations of cultures who lives as "outsiders" of mainstream American society. Empower your students to develop Power Point presentations (individual or group) with text and images to demonstrate why representation matters for other historically marginalized groups in our country.

Written Assignments—Essays and Short Research Papers

- Based on most of the stories (chapters) in *Rez*, it is clear that there are drawbacks to being a member of David's family, and that intergenerational trauma has a negative impact on his life. But what are the strengths of this family and of the traditions and values to which they follow? How might David's life have been diminished and his outcomes been worse if the family did not have these strengths to draw on? **Write an essay that demonstrates that David's family and community pass on more than trauma to the younger generation. Support your assertions with evidence drawn from throughout the story, citing any quoted evidence in MLA format.**
- What is the significance of the questions David keeps asking himself throughout the stories in the novel? How is the precise wording of his questions important, including the way this wording shifts during the story? **Write an essay that analyzes the significance of David's repeated questions in "Night of the Living Rez" and that links these questions throughout the chapters (individual stories) in the overall collection.** Support your assertions with evidence drawn from throughout the collection, including quoted evidence focused on the diction (word choice and style) that David employs in "Night of the Living Rez." Cite all quoted evidence in MLA format.

- Select any two characters in the novel and argue in an essay of at least 1,200 words (4-5 double-spaced lines of type) **what these characters learn about themselves or others (or should learn)** based on the experiences they undergo in the stories the student selects. Cite all quoted evidence in MLA format.
- In an essay of at least 1,200 words, have your students react to this writing prompt: **Native Americans (such as the Penobscot people portrayed in the novel) will never fully be able to integrate into mainstream American society due to the strong values and heritage that linger in their collective memories.** Students should argue their stance on the prompt based on doing some current research obtained from the library's online databases of scholarly media. Cite all quoted evidence in MLA format.



JOHN P WILLIAMS – SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SYNOPSIS:

This story recounts one woman's experience of relocating and living on a small Penobscot Indian Island Reservation in Maine. Her effort is complicated since she has left her abusive husband only to take up with a volatile alcoholic. The story is told through a series of twelve interconnected short essays and narrated by David (Dee). It explores how life unspools for his mother and himself over two decades. All told, life on the reservation is not an easy one for all those involved since it is a constant battle over poor finances, drug and alcohol addiction, violence, depression, and indigeneity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Discuss the relationship the author makes between life on the reservation for those who live there and the physicality of the natural world.

Discuss ways in which the author uses humor to defuse the tension that takes place in each story.

Discuss how the reader discerns that the author themselves must be a Native American having gone through some of the trials and tribulations detailed in this book.

Explain how a reader may infer those stories in the book that cover life and death, runaway daughters, infant loss, and cancer as well as beer runs, and porcupine hunts connect to Indian life on a reservation.

Explain the role intergenerational and shared trauma as a thread running throughout the book. Be sure to discuss how this common occurrence explains the fragile and taxing relationship between David and his mother, his sister Paige, his father, and his mother's boyfriend Frick.

Discuss ways in which the author uses themes such as poverty, death, and addiction to connect to his own pain growing on an Indian reservation.

Explain the meaning the jar of teeth plays in the story to help the reader come to understand the Indian way of life and the role tradition plays in deriving meaning in the natural and supernatural worlds.

Discuss ways in which animals are used as meaningful and engaging props throughout the book.

ZACK SHIPLEY – POLITICAL SCIENCE / SOCIAL SCIENCE CONCEPTS

Generally speaking, social science classes engaging with *Night of the Living Rez* will likely be focusing on the nature of the divide between the Rez and the “white” world. Broad themes of the history of Native policy and the creation of the reservations, what constitutes a legitimate Native identity, and the opportunities (or lack thereof) for Native people.

Classes making an effort to pick and choose from the stories should give special attention to the tales of Dee and Fellis, in particular “Get Me Some Medicine,” “In a Field of Stray Caterpillars,” and “Earth, Speak.”

In these stories, it is the character of Fellis who serves to illustrate the tensions facing young adult Natives (and their families) living on the reservation. “Medicine” specifically dives into the nature of identity and opportunity, and Fellis compares himself to Meekew. The character of Meekew is compelling in his own right – given the admitted unreliability and limited perspective of the narrator, we are never offered a full depiction of Meekew, but his various depictions give us an idea this he might be the proxy for the “successful Native” – even as we acknowledge that Meekew is still troubled. “Medicine” also introduces us to Beth and her efforts (supported by Dee) to push Fellis toward school. “Caterpillars” will address more of the social services and programs available. “Earth” adds further detail to the nature of Rez life, in terms of the housing authority, the nature of law enforcement, and, through the introduction of a number of fellow Rez residents, the social structures of the community.

ACTIVITY IDEA: SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Have students go through these three stories and consider the *OPPORTUNITIES* offered to Fellis (and Meekew and Dee/David, etc.) through the reservation and government services. Specifically be looking for examples like food, housing, education, and medical support. Given these supports, many students would likely expect more hopeful outcomes than these stories reveal. SO, as the next step, have students be looking for the reasons that these opportunities are missed, or rejected entirely.

Students will likely find a mixture of explanations that can broadly be grouped into either rejections of support on the basis of pride, independence, identity, or similar concerns; or, barriers to resource accessibility based on the application and legal process involved. This should generate some good discussion regarding distinctions between legal power and social norms. It could also raise interesting discussions of power more broadly, if your classes dig into those themes.

Specific examples I highlighted on this front:

From “Medicine” – Meekew’s schooling, Beth as a teacher, Fellis’ free school / native scholarship

From “Caterpillars” – health services, methadone clinic

From “Earth” – housing services

PROJECT/RESEARCH IDEA: COMPARISON

If a course wanted to continue to build on this social services access conundrum, our neighbors to the north (Oklahoma) is a fantastic case study of these issues. The history and context surrounding the tribes in Oklahoma have made the formal tribes the de-facto governments for many Native people when it comes to accessing health and other social services, and the concentration of Natives in the area have given them the opportunity to have real political power in a way that is non-existent in many other states. Building the comparison between the system described in *Night of the Living Rez* with the reality on the ground in Oklahoma could be an insightful and informative project for a large class project, honors investigation, etc.

ACTIVITY IDEA: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

There are a variety of criminal situations that get described in these stories. The two that most stand out to me are the fight with Meekew in "Medicine" and the situation with Daryl in "Earth".

The Meekew fight is described in sufficient detail that a criminal justice course (or a course making an effort to tap into criminal justice issues) would dissect many elements of the crime to evaluate. Dee, especially, is put into a predicament when Fellis pretends Meekew has a knife. Issues of self-defense, stand-your-ground expectations, the intersection of violent crime and non-violent criminal behavior (the predicament of the drug dealer who was severely attacked).

Similarly, we are given just enough information about Daryl to begin to discuss treatment of people with mental limitations and the dual avenues of vigilante justice and organized police response in this community. The interactions with Daryl, and the subsequent search for Fellis and Dee, give a multitude of examples to work with in exploring the limited power of the state and police forces within this largely closed community. Astute students who have read the full book will likely make the connection between the police power on the reservation and the power of Paige's caseworker in "The Name Means Thunder"

BARBARA STERN – FRAMING QUESTIONS

The reader may find it somewhat simple to think of David as an individual with a specific and particularly traumatic past. Research articles often discuss the effects of early childhood trauma on development. In addition, problems experienced during adulthood have often been associated with trauma suffered during childhood. Certainly, this body of knowledge should not be discounted. However, a psychological approach is not the only perspective that should be considered.

Rather than framing David as suffering from one or many psychological disorders, all due to trauma, how can the reader better understand David's behavior at a deeper level? What social, cultural, historical, and biological factors contribute to the development of this human being? By looking at the broader contexts of development, the informed reader can more fully understand the complex nature of any person's life trajectory.

SCOTT FARRIN – EXPLORING MAJOR THEMES

Instructions:

In "Night of the Living Rez" by Morgan Talty, we encounter a collection of short stories that delve deep into the lives of characters on the Penobscot Indian Nation reservation in Maine. These stories are rich in their exploration of various themes and motifs that shape the characters' experiences. Your assignment is to conduct a thorough analysis of the major themes in this collection. Please follow the instructions below:

PART 1: IDENTIFYING THEMES (20 POINTS)

1. Intergenerational Trauma (5 points): Discuss how the theme of intergenerational trauma is depicted in the stories. Explore the characters' experiences and provide specific examples that illustrate the impact of trauma on their lives.
2. Connection and Interdependence (5 points): Examine the theme of interconnectedness among characters and events. How do the stories show that seemingly unrelated events are linked? Provide examples from the text.
3. Nature and Symbolism (5 points): Analyze the role of the natural world in the collection. How do animals and natural phenomena serve as symbols or metaphors? Highlight specific instances where nature plays a significant role in the narratives.
4. Cultural Identity (5 points): Discuss how the characters' cultural identity as members of the Penobscot Indian Nation is portrayed. Explore how their identity shapes their experiences and interactions with others.

PART 2: INTEGRATION AND REFLECTION (30 POINTS)

Compose an essay (approximately 750 words) that integrates your findings from Part 1 and reflects on the significance of these themes in "Night of the Living Rez."

Your essay should . . .

- Begin with an introductory paragraph that provides an overview of the collection and its themes.
- Dedicate one paragraph to each of the four major themes identified in Part 1. In each paragraph, delve deeper into the theme, offering detailed analysis and providing textual evidence (quotes) to support your points.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how these themes are interconnected throughout the collection. Discuss how they contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the stories.
- Reflect on the significance of Morgan Talty's storytelling choices and style in conveying these themes effectively.

PART 3: CONCLUSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION (10 POINTS)

Conclude your essay with a paragraph summarizing your main findings and insights about the major themes in "Night of the Living Rez." Additionally, include a brief personal reflection on how this collection has enhanced your understanding of contemporary short stories and the portrayal of complex themes in literature.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

Your assignment should be typed and double-spaced.

Use MLA conventions for in-text citations and a bibliography.

Submit your assignment using the appropriate Turnitin link on the Modules page of Canvas course.

Grading Criteria:

Your assignment will be assessed based on the following criteria . . .

Depth of analysis and exploration of each theme (Part 1).

Integration of themes into a coherent and well-structured essay (Part 2).

Personal reflection on the significance of the themes in the collection (Part 3).

Good luck with your analysis, and feel free to reach out if you have any questions or need further guidance!

TEACHING GUIDES, PROMPTS, QUESTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

CHERYL WILTSE – EVALUATIVE ESSAY

To write a convincing literature essay, one must understand the topic thoroughly. This means you will have to read the story carefully and use examples from the text to support your points. In other words, you will be expected to quote from the story.

Be sure when you quote from the story and your articles that you use quotation marks. (For the story, you will also provide page numbers at the end of the quotations.) Also, a quotation is to support what you say, not make the point for you. Avoid large block quotations. One or two sentences are usually sufficient.

1. Your introduction must provide good background information about the text you are evaluating, and this may require your introduction to be longer in length (1 or 2 paragraphs). Be sure to give the title, date of the work, the author, background information on the author, and ideas he explores. This is a great place to quote from a biographical article.

2. Somewhere in your introduction you must have a thesis statement indicating that you will be illustrating one of the five theme choices. For example, you could argue that “tragedy” colors the stories.

3. Your body paragraphs supporting your thesis must have specific examples from the story. (Be sure to quote from the book). You will be analyzing not summarizing. Do not fall into the trap of just summarizing the plot of the story. We already know the story.

4. Your conclusion should do more than summarize your main idea. You should try to give a realization about the story you have just evaluated.

5. You will also need to quote from the novel and two scholarly articles. 6. You must provide a Works Cited page with your three sources: the novel and two articles. The Works Cited page does not count as a page of text. Essay requirements are a meaningful title, typewritten, conform to MLA style, 3rd person voice (no 1st or 2nd person voice), 3-4 full pages of text in length.

The themes to explore and reflect upon are:

1. Explore the importance of silence in the text. What is not said is important, especially with tragedy. The reader must fill in the blanks.
2. Explore addiction and alcoholism within this community.
3. Explore Native American myths and legends; for example, the jar with teeth, hair, and corn; the creation myth of stone people; the swamp witch; or spirits that come in search of food.
4. Explore the reality of living with curses and how Frick, the medicine man, removes negative energy.
5. Explore the relationships of mothers and children within this community.

KHIMEN COOPER – ANALYZING SHORT STORIES

Consider the following six questions:

- How did the use of short stories work well for this novel?
- Was the common thread throughout the stories enough to bring it all together? Why or why not?
- What ways did the author bring the setting itself to life?
- How did certain authentic details help/hurt the stories?
- What was a story, event, or character you wish had been expanded on further and why?
- In what ways do any (or all) of these stories connect to your own experiences with or understandings of the culture and communities represented?

LATOYA WATKINS – MINI ESSAY PROMPTS

These are mini-essay prompts that use Talty's work:

Mini Essay #1

The book-in-common this year is *Night of the Living Rez* by Morgan Talty. The book deals with themes ranging from addiction to death. This week you'll familiarize yourself with Talty's writing by reading an essay provided by me. Read the essay below (by Talty) and think about the power of language. What does Talty long for in the essay ("Messages") and how does he come to expect that which he longs for? Think broadly about how language is used in this changing world and discuss a specific instance in which language has either connected or divided individuals or groups of people.

Mini Essay #2

You will need to have read at least the first two stories from *Night of the Living Rez* to fully engage in a response here.

If you have begun the reading of *Night of the Living Rez*, you might have already discovered that Talty presents realistic characters who also happen to be living out their lives on a reservation. Think about the first few stories featured in the collection. The first story features a scalping and the second a jar "filled with hair and corn and teeth". Both instances are taken seriously by the characters in the story and handled with what would be considered superstition by those unaware of reservation culture. What do you think Talty is trying to convey about reservation life and people by placing these things in the text? Use examples from the text and consider the supplemental information I've provided about scalping and the Penobscot people below. Feel free to reference that material as well.

Supplemental Material

The Rhetoric and Practice of Scalping

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/09/rhetoric-practice-scalping/>

Penobscots Don't Want Ancestors' Scalping to be Whitewashed

<https://apnews.com/article/penobscots-indigenous-history-scalping-colonial-america-adf590d261599302207b8c377b711169>

Trailer for Bounty (working with Collin College Libraries for the viewing rights to the entire film)

<https://youtu.be/XdX-fJ-1nCY>

Mini Essay #3

Much of our opinions about literature are formed by our individual experiences with books.

It is important to remember that Talty's book is not a novel. It's a linked story collection. This form offers compression and vast heterogeneity in one. The stories in this sort of collection may vary widely in style, voice, point-of-view, and scope. Often

they are held together by a single character, or perhaps a place/culture; or both. The "link" can be strong or weak, explicit or implicit. So now that we've established that *Night of the Living Rez* is a linked story collection, let's think about how many of the stories are not presented in a linear way. As a reader, how did you react to time shifting back and forth throughout *Night of the Living Rez*? At times it's easy to identify the reason for this shifting/positioning of the stories as obvious--for juxtaposition. At other times, it's not. Why do think Talty created a non-linear tale with this book? Use examples from the text in your response.

HELEN MCCOURT --DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) In an interview with Powell's Book Blog, Morgan Talty was asked,

What one thing do you hope people take away from reading your book?

My hope is that everyone can find something in this book that heals them, that changes them, that gets them thinking about how they themselves are reflected here, even if the story feels strange and unfamiliar. Because I can assure you: these stories, for however alien they may feel, are not unfamiliar. They are around us all the time, but we sometimes fail to see them. This work is my attempt to bring us all closer together, to help us celebrate our similarities and our differences, to help us learn to love one another more deeply.

<https://www.powells.com/post/qa/powells-qa-morgan-talty-author-of-night-of-the-living-rez>

Discussion Question for students:

How do you see yourself reflected in the stories? What stories/parts did you relate to? Do you feel that you understand yourself or the life experience of others better after having read this book?

2) In an interview with Nicole Chung for The Atlantic, Talty was asked,

Chung: I appreciated the way you incorporated traditional stories in *Night of the Living Rez*—it felt like an invitation to think about what storytelling is, the power it has. And you do this in another way by introducing the documentary crew that shows up to film life on the island; though it's not the focus of the story, it made me reflect on who often gets to tell stories, what sorts of images get promoted over and over, the power those images can have. You make space for readers to think about all of these things critically.

Talty: I was so careful with this book, about not making it performative for a white readership. When it came to storytelling and these stories within stories, I thought a lot about that. I am deeply committed to character, and so I wanted to put that first, put human emotion first, and then build on that. Who are these characters, what do they want, what will they do to get it, what are their relationships?

When it came to the cultural elements, I never sought to dangle it there for the reader as a kind of token. Every place where the Penobscot language was used, it was where

it felt natural to me, where I or someone I knew would say something like that. With the creation stories and myths, I looked for moments where a character might actually think about them. I was so fascinated that the documentary crew were there. They don't know what's going on; they don't understand—they see reactions to traumatic events, but they never get the actual story. The story stays within the family, within the community.

<https://newsletters.theatlantic.com/i-have-notes/6383b74c08bfc30037f5bb53/morgan-talty-night-of-the-living-rez-interview/>

Discussion Question for students:

What are your thoughts on the way family, community, culture, and race are utilized in these stories? Do you feel that boundary between the characters that Talty mentions – the boundary that prevents some from understanding the truth or the full story?

KAY MIZELL --ESSAY PROMPTS

LANGUAGE

1. In an article in the *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language*, researcher Imelda Woa Wene studies “taboo words,” that is “words that are strictly prohibited to be used due to the fact that they may cause misunderstanding or conflict and are not appropriate.” She examines five categories: cursing, profanity, obscenity, epithet and sexual harassment. What are the occurrences of taboo words in Talty’s book? What are the characteristics and motivations in the preponderance of obscenity used by the characters? What purpose does it serve, such as to reflect society, to draw a different reading audience, to follow a growing trend in film, to emphasize the baseness of the lives of his Native Americans, or to achieve other ends? Is it superfluous, distracting, offensive, necessary, informative, etc? Do race, gender, political views, sense of propriety, or even choice of profanity shape our perception of its use? Could Talty written his stories just as poignantly relying on his other literary devices and style?
2. How does the Penobscot language, described on page 281 but sprinkled through the text enrich our understanding that the author is recreating his culture for the reader? Words such as: gwus for little boy (6), “Chagooksis” for “little s—” (15), “Michaganasuus” for “s—ty little thing” (20), pigadees for gas (29), doosis, mom’s name for Paige (31), skeepin as name of their language and them (32), Duna’gak? Fellis asks and calls whites winooches (43), Grammy calls David Woliwoni, (118); Grammy tells David, “Jistowks” and asks him to leave (123); pugwagees as human like creatures (234); and bassus is a kiss (247);

TITLE OF THE BOOK

3. How does Talty use **the reservation**, or the “rez,” to define boundaries and thus identities? “Rob’s apartment off the reservation,” bridge to the reservation (1), “everything we needed —except pot—was on the rez” (2); Fellis starting community college off the reservation 35); they crossed the bridge and left the reservation (41); janitor in hospital bathroom asks David, “You from the rez?” (90); the Crisis Stabilization Unit is thirty minutes away from the reservation (127); Speaking of Grammy’s winnings at a bingo game, David asks, “Didn’t part of that get stolen by some rez rats when she was at church? (181); I made it back to the rez (195); easier to get the code if Daryl hadn’t been banned from the rez (199); “But it was true, the reservation was for the dead” (215); David past the few abandoned houses on the rez. What happens in the chapter by the

same title as the book that warrants entitling the book the same? (227-256).

QUESTION THE NARRATOR ASKS

- Using all or two or three of these questions, write an essay on Talty's presentation of what "here" is. Does my mother know I am here? (139). Do you remember coming here [Fellis asks]. David ruminates, "I was thinking too much into his question. Maybe all he wanted was a memory" (171). *How did we get here?* (174). I am starting to think that each time I ask it, each time I consider an answer, I end up farther away from where I should be, from where I was. Where I had been. I left a lot of things behind. Or maybe that's not it—maybe it's that a lot of things had left me behind. Friends. Family. Relationships. The future (174). I wonder if *How did we get here?* is the wrong question. Maybe the right question is *How do we get out of here?* Maybe that's the only question that matters (178). *How did we get here?* and *How do we get out of here?* sometimes have the same answers (187), (195).

UNDERCURRENTS AND MOTIFS

5. While each of the stories differ, they all use similar motifs or repetitions, which, taken together, throughout the book produce an undercurrent which could be argued to be, if not a theme, at least a major building block. In a short essay, explain the significance of one "motif" to the overall work.

EVIL SPIRITS

The characters in varying degrees but overall live with a keenly developed sense of a spiritual world that may cause harm to them and others. Details of those beliefs emerge in behaviors, such as the David's burning of Fellis' hair in "Don't want spirits after us" (5); of hearing "Goog'ooks" or evil spirits tapping on the window and haunting the house (20); of finding the jar, hearing knocking on the walls, Paige's being bitten, and "smudging" the house and its inhabitants because "it's good medicine" (24); of Frick's smudging them after finding the jar with its "old curse" (11,14) and making them dig a hole after the loss of Paige's baby (32); of Gluskabe's creating people out of rocks [their creation story] (55); of covering dirty dishes with a cloth "to tell the spirits to stay away," that there is no offering (117, 205, 243); of Ralph Nelson's using his sweat lodge with its "sanctity of place" for people to sweat off their woes (217); of going to the woods during the night of the living rez, when Talty introduces the cursed "pugwagees" or "mikumwasos" that JP and Tyson saw (238); of feeling like "the Goog'ooks—the evil sprits—that live in [their] house" was because David whistled in the house (271-272); of believing stone people have hearts of stone (230); of believing pugwagees and swamp lady stay in the woods with crows (234, 238, 239); of dropping a fork causing strangers show up (247).

SMELLS

Each story seems to be in part described through the use of accompanying smells. For example, a passage about Frick and mom's problems being like a river's smell creeping up, the text says, "We all found that smell, literally, and it was not subtle" (81) is followed by a four page description of their family's laughter at a smell coming from a decomposing snapping turtle that died under the house (81-85). Other examples include the heat of the day on dead caterpillars on the road and cigar smoke in the truck cab to ward off the smell (98, 101); a store shut down for the smell of a septic tank (102). David's mom uses Silver Cleaner to shine her old jewelry, so that he says, "the smell of that cleaner —of old pennies—made me wonder if everything was going to smell worse than it actually was" (112); Other smells of minted cigarettes, pine trees, and corn fritters add to the olfactory details of the story as well as woodsmoke from the cabin (200); Pinesol {Daryl keeps his room clean} (205); a stench rolled off the river (217); the explanation no one sweated with him [Ralph] because of the smell of garbage (217); Jane, the principal's secretary at the school on the rez smelled like cinnamon (257); after rain the house smells of wet grass (266); and David says, "I smelled the stinky, milky sweet of the formula roll off his [Bedogi's] breath (273), among other inclusions.

DRUGS (MEDS)

From the opening of the first story, references to specific drugs, effects, medications, and their withdrawal become a significant part of almost all the characters. For example, the narrator comments they didn't have a methadone clinic (2); Fellis puts Aunt Alice's meds in her mailbox [the wrong med] (101), Beth gives Alice her Ativans after Fellis had mistakenly given Alice' the Adderall, but then Alice also offers her a Klonopin (104-105); Beth was on Adderal and Fellis is on methadone but takes etomidate for his anesthesia when he gets treatments (92); his mom is addicted to cigarettes but on Clonazepam and Benzos [David says, Maybe older Natives have more trauma than younger Natives] (129); David takes pins (195); David's therapist had cut him back when he got on methadone, but he searched for Daryl's Benzos and found a full bottle of Klonopin, so he gave one to Fellis (206); David tells Felix, "We haven't weaned off our doses" (212); Frick takes Ambien for sleep (246); Paige's baby suffered terrible seizures from the methadone withdrawal (259) because Paige's addiction had transferred from one body to the other [her baby] (260): the doctor and let her boy go home after being in ICU, but the baby was given doses of phenobarbital in the mornings (261);

CIGARETTES, SMOKES, BUTTS, FILTERS, RED COALS, TAKING A DRAG

Finding, sharing, scrounging, buying and smoking cigarettes, as well as placating others with them and marking time by finishing a drag or smoking, appears as part of each scene starting on page 3 and continuing throughout the book. Description of rooms are sparse but reference to Grammy's with her ashtrays as well as many other ones are filled with cigarette butts and ashes. The chapter Blessing Tobacco opens as Grammy slides Misty 100s across the table for David to smoke (109), then outlines ways each family member smokes (108-109); and includes Grammy's punishment for David's

stealing the blessing tobacco by getting him to smoke so many cigarettes that he become sick (110-111); ironically, Mom smokes a cigarette before getting ready for work while giving David ginger ale to recover from his having smoked fourteen or more (113); Mom requires David to supply her with cigarettes so often, prompting him to say, "that's why I am here to bring her [his mom] cigarettes" (98); as if part of a greeting, a fat guy says, "You got a cigarette?" (155); Daryl drove with his knee and lit a cigarette (199); and Mom butted her cigarette and was the first to kneel (278).

THROWING UP:

Although many more references to several of the characters becoming nauseous, heaving, or on one occasion vomiting, David throws up in Frick's car (99), (203, 204), as well as after leaving Ralph's sweat house at his mom's when he was coming off methadone (220, 221); Mom throws up when Paige is yelling that Frick came after her. Find other examples and the significance to this behavior.

POIGNANT PASSAGES

6. While not tied to the motifs and not repeated, some lines poignantly reveal what seems to be a truth for the story. Select two or three lines and build a case for how each contributes an insight.
 1. Native damning Natives (2) with example on page 46.
 2. I felt I was slowly forgetting something I needed to remember. Maybe I didn't need to remember. Maybe I wanted to remember (35).
 3. Still I wasn't hungry, at least not for food (65).
 4. "No one's ever going to be happy" (68).
 5. Mom explaining to David that she knows what loss can be like and that "you have to find your own footing, your own balance": David reveals, "I remember ourselves closing in on something, something important, some unnameable thing that like a jointer could straighten the boards on which we walk" (74).
 6. Blood stained my hands and seemed to belong there (147).
 7. Like undone chores, these missed calls [from his father] piled up (149).
 8. Maybe I was even wishing I was a winooh and didn't live on a reservation whose history was a little museum and could be stolen for a buck. Didn't make sense that parts of us were worth so much and at the same time we were worth so little. "You're nothing" (216).

METAPHORS

7. Talty's stories gain meaning through their use of metaphors, serving almost as a rolling snowball. Select two or three metaphors and use them to argue for what the author seemingly wants the reader to take away about the remaining indigenous individuals in the Panawahpshek Nation in Maine.

SHOOTING THE GRAVESTONE:

“as if all our problems weren’t buried cold below but were actually right there on the surface—facing us all “(62).

CROOKED BACK DOOR:

“From the angle I was at in my mother’s arms the door straight like no foundation had shifted over the years, and I believed her that I’d be happy, that she’d be happy, that Dad would be happy, and that even Frick would be happy, and I believed all that made it feel attainable, even if it were only for those brief moments in my mother’s arms even before she stood up and I saw dead on that our door was crooked” (68).

OVERFLOWING RIVER:

David says of his mom's and Frick's problems [inability to have a child with Frick], "I sensed that even though their problems were their own, there was no escaping how those problems shaped us all, no escaping the end like the way the ice melts in the river each spring overflowing and creeping up the grass banks. . . . What remains was a smell, a reminder that the water had come and risen up and would rise up again, in time (79).

EXIT DOORS AT THE HOSPITAL:

"If you got turned around, you could burst through those exits and walk around the sprawling building to the main doors and start over for what it was you were searching for" (87-88).

DEAD CATERPILLARS

I was already around the side of his house, heading to Overtown, and I wondered if there were any way around those dead caterpillars and the smell of s__t, of bait. But I knew there wasn't (106).

SMOKE

I saw smoke, yeah, but I saw Grammy and myself under all of it, all of it hanging over us (117).

GREAT UNCLE ROBBIE

I felt like I had done something terrible like I had been the one doing the terrible hunting, and I wanted to get up and right it all, but I didn't know how. Maybe that was how Great Uncle Robbie had felt like he had no choices, that no right way existed to fix anything at all" (125).

SHIPS ON LIFE

Like human beings are ships, as if they were crafted things Things that rock and bang, or cruise smooth in an unpredictable ocean of salt and froth and depth. Out there is natural extermination (128).

KEY TO THE GRAMMY'S SAFE

But I remembered that I lost it [the drugs]—somewhere—but instead I pulled out that key. I stuck it in the safe, which, like the key, didn't belong to anyone anymore (197).

LIST OF CHARACTERS FOR REFERENCE

David (Dee) the narrator

David's mom
Paige, David's sister
Bedogi, Paige's baby that died
Fellis, David best friend
Frick, the medicine man, Native "doctor," David's mom's partner
Beth, Fellis' mom
Alice, Fellis' aunt
Lily, Alice's daughter
JP Pitch, chubby kid in his class
Tyson, another friend who gets into trouble with David and JP
Meekew, skinny skeejin who lives off the reservation, attending university and on the dean's list and planning to go to med school
Tabitha, David's ex-girlfriend, who gave him some purpose
Cheryl, mom's friend
Joan, the receptionist at the hospital
Corinne, Frick's 13 year old daughter who died
Robbie, Grammy's little brother who drowned in the river at 12
Daryl, banned from the rez and whose father owns a tribal museum

WILL BRANNON – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss and/or evaluate your reaction to one of the stories in *Night of the Living Rez* by focusing on one of the literary devices we have examined:
Plot

Point of View

Character

Setting

Tone and Style

Theme

Symbol

2. Discuss and/or reflect on your personal reaction to any of the stories in *Night of the Living Rez*. What connections, if any, have you made between one of the stories and your own life?
3. Consider a decision you have made in your life. What contributed to you making the decision? Would you still make the same decision today? Why or why not?
4. Consider the depiction of family relationships in *Night of the Living Rez*. How does the depiction of family relationships in Talty's book compare to other narratives you have read?
5. To what extent do you feel that people can be affected by experiences? What are examples in your life where a past experience impacted a future action? What are effective strategies for coping with negative experiences?
6. Discuss and/or reflect about a memorable experience you have had that changed your opinion of either a member of your family or an event involving members of your family. Provide a context for the experience. Convey how the experience had a significant impact on you. Include relevant details and examples
7. Identify a situation where you experienced a personal loss. What were some of the challenges involved in coping with your personal loss? What resources did you draw upon to cope with your personal loss?
8. How did reading *Night of the Living Rez* compare to your expectations? How has reading *Night of the Living Rez* affected your appreciation of short fiction and the novel?

DULCE DE CASTRO – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The characters in *Night of the Living Rez* have very limited knowledge of their ancestral language. What functions does the use of Penobscot language words may serve in the book in terms of cultural heritage, identity, cultural resilience, and language preservation and revitalization despite historical challenges and assimilation pressures?
2. Can you provide examples of how some of the Penobscot language words used in the book are associated with specific ceremonies, practices, or rituals that underscore their cultural significance?
3. What role does the reservation play in shaping David's and other characters' indigeneity and identity and how does it influence their interactions with the outside world?
4. In an NPR interview, Talty mentions the challenge the characters face in expressing their indigeneity without conforming to stereotypes. To what extent do the characters, particularly Dee, succeed in preserving their cultural identity while avoiding stereotypes and preconceived notions that others may have about Indigenous people?
5. In that same interview, Talty says that despite the characters' struggles with addiction, trauma, violence, pain, and poverty, "there is that same level of hope and caring and love and forgiveness for them." Can you provide specific instances from the book that exemplify this underlying theme?
6. How does Morgan Talty's depiction of the natural world, from the landscape of Indian Island reservation to the rotting snapping turtle and the carpet of caterpillars strewn on the road, contribute to the overall atmosphere of the book? What symbolism or metaphors do you see in these descriptions?
7. In what ways do the creatures and animals in *Night of the Living Rez*, whether mythic or real, serve as metaphors or symbols for the challenges faced by David and other characters? Can you provide specific examples from the collection that illustrate this connection?
8. In an interview in the *Down East* magazine, Talty states that he treats places as he would a character. Can you identify specific places in the book that stood out to you and share examples where the setting influenced the narrative and played a role in shaping the plot, the characters' experiences, or their development?
9. By treating places as characters in his writing, Talty underscores the significance of the physical environment in storytelling. How does this narrative approach help readers connect more deeply with the world of the Penobscot Indian Island Reservation and deepen their understanding of the themes explored in the book?
10. Some readers consider *Night of the Living Rez* a novel while others see it as a story collection. Explain what these differing views reveal about the nature and structure of the book. How would you categorize the book?

11. *Still They Remember Me: Penobscot Transformer Tales* is a collection of thirteen stories that Newell Lyon, a Penobscot raconteur, recounted to anthropologist Frank Speck over a century ago. The stories, presented in Penobscot language and English side-by-side and published in 1921, deal with the childhood and coming-of-age of Gluskabe, a Penobscot culture hero. How does this bilingual story collection may contribute to a deeper understanding of the Penobscot language as a vital component of Penobscot cultural heritage as compared to the use of Penobscot language in *Night of the Living Rez*? How could reading *Still They Remember Me* in conjunction with *Night of the Living Rez* shed light on the Penobscot people's adaptability and preservation of their culture over time?

INTERVIEWS WITH MORGAN TALTY

'Night of the Living Rez' chronicles one tribe's struggle with poverty and addiction

<https://www.npr.org/2022/07/02/1109558031/night-of-the-living-rez-chronicles-one-tribes-struggle-with-poverty-and-addictio>

Morgan Talty on Night of the Living Rez with Ashleigh Bell Pedersen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgP2zIsW6_g

Night of the Living Rez with Morgan Talty

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/video/2022/12/20/bostoncom/video/book-club-night-of-the-living-rez-with-morgan-talty/>

'Ultimately the Story Will Have Its Own Say': A Conversation With Morgan Talty

<https://newsletters.theatlantic.com/i-have-notes/6383b74c08bfc30037f5bb53/morgan-talty-night-of-the-living-rez-interview/>

Stories About Growing Up on the Reservation

<https://electricliterature.com/night-of-the-living-rez-by-morgan-talty-short-story-collection-book/>

Q&A: Morgan Talty on his book 'Night of the Living Rez'

<https://www.boston.com/culture/books/2022/09/08/qa-author-morgan-talty-book-night-of-the-living-rez/>

Making Something Inexplicable Happen: An Interview with Morgan Talty

<https://therumpus.net/2022/07/20/with-morgan-talty/>

Night of the Living Rez Looks at Penobscot Identity in the 21st Century

<https://downeast.com/arts-leisure/morgan-talty-night-of-the-living-rez/>

Night of the Living Rez, by Morgan Talty: "An impressive debut filled with brilliant stories to revisit." Rachel León on Morgan Talty's Night of the Living Rez.

<https://fictionwritersreview.com/review/night-of-the-living-rez-by-morgan-talty/>

Morgan Talty on Indigenous Literature, Penobscot Culture, and the Villain of Colonialism. <https://lithub.com/morgan-talty-on-indigenous-literature-penobscot-culture-and-the-villain-of-colonialism/>

POWELL'S Q&A: MORGAN TALTY, AUTHOR OF 'NIGHT OF THE LIVING REZ'

<https://www.powells.com/post/qa/powells-qa-morgan-talty-author-of-night-of-the-living-rez>

PODCASTS

Night of the Living Rez: A Conversation with Morgan Talty

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/night-of-the-living-rez-2>

Night of the Living Rez

<https://maineboost.podbean.com/e/night-of-the-living-rez/>

Debutiful Podcast: Morgan Talty – Night of the Living Rez

<https://debutiful.net/2022/07/07/debutiful-podcast-morgan-talty-night-of-the-living-rez/>

REVIEWS

Beer Runs, Porcupine Hunts, Jars of Teeth and Much More

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/books/review/night-of-the-living-rez-morgan-talty.html>

Haunted by the Past: A Review of Morgan Talty's Night of the Living Rez

<https://porterhousereview.org/articles/haunted-by-the-past-a-review-of-morgan-taltys-night-of-the-living-rez/>

6 takeaways from Book Club's 'Night of the Living Rez' author discussion

<https://www.boston.com/community/book-club/6-takeaways-from-book-clubs-night-of-the-living-rez-author-discussion/>

Penobscot Language Resources

How Did a Self-Taught Linguist Come to Own an Indigenous Language?

<https://www.boston.com/culture/books/2022/09/08/qa-author-morgan-talty-book-night-of-the-living-rez/>

Language resources from the Penobscot Cultural and Historic Preservation Department

<https://www.penobscotculture.com/language-resources>

Penobscot (panawahpskewi). <https://omniglot.com/writing/penobscot.htm>

ANNA GENNEKEN -- PROMPTS

Instructions: Respond to each prompt in no fewer than 250 words. If you use outside sources, make sure you cite them using an appropriate style (MLA or APA).

LANGUAGE:

- The author uses profane language in many of the stories. How does this affect the reader's experience with the text? Do you believe this is a conscious or unconscious choice. Defend your answer.
- Read the author's note about the Penobscot language at the back of the book. Identify three times that you noticed this language in the stories. What impact did this have on the individual story in which each one can be found? What impact did this language have on the stories as a whole?
- Many communities use language unique to their group. From Talty's use of Penobscot to professionals in the field of education's use of three-letter acronyms, groups use language as a way to unify their membership making it easier to identify outsiders from "those in the know." Discuss a community of which you are a part and the role that language plays in that group. You could tell a story of when you felt out of place for not knowing the appropriate discourse in a group setting. Or you can tell a story of someone trying to use language that that person didn't use correctly for the community/audience (I.e. parents using current slang with their teenage children, etc.).
- Talty's use of metaphor is legendary. Find at least four powerful metaphors and emphasize their importance to the stories in which they appear.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

- What role does substance abuse play in the stories? Choose one story and explore the way that Talty deals with substance abuse in a unique way?
- Using the library databases, research the role of alcohol and drugs in Native American communities across the country. Write a report on your research.
- Research the Chinese Opium Wars. How might the Native American struggles with substances mimic the Chinese struggles over opium? What role did the government play in each conflict?

MENTAL HEALTH:

- How does Talty write about mental illness? What reaction is the reader supposed to have to these depictions of the mentally ill? How do you know?
- In what ways does the author address loss and the reaction to loss? Is there an example of healthy grief? If so, explain how that character demonstrates healthy grieving. If not, why do you think Talty chooses not to include such an example?

POVERTY:

- Talty portrays the impoverished world of his characters in stark detail. What is the purpose of placing such emphasis on squalor? What details stood out to you as being unique to poverty? What purpose do these details serve in the text?
- Is smoking cigarettes directly correlated to poverty? Argue one side or the other using evidence (both from the text and from outside research) to support your position.

ALIENATION/"OTHERING":

- In what ways did you feel disconnected as a reader from the characters and stories? Do you think that was the author's intention? Defend your position.
- In what ways did characters lack connection – to each other, their own identities, their families, their communities, their heritage, the world outside of the reservation, etc.?
- In what ways is this text universal (connecting to experiences all of humanity can share) as opposed to exclusive to the experiences of a member of the Penobscot tribe in Maine? Give specific examples to support your response.

TONI MCMILLEN – RESEARCH NOTES, PROMPTS, AND RESOURCES

Native American Literature:

To get a sense of the content of the short stories we are about to read, it would be helpful to first to look up the following terms:

Native American	Indigenous People
Indian American	Indian Reservation
Native Community	Origin Stories

Research Notes:

As you research, be sure to record the author's names, titles, and website addresses used for each point of information. This will help you to be able to cite your sources if you choose to use this information later.

1. Who is Morgan Talty? Write one to two sentences about the author's past and present. Talty is a member of the Penobscot Indian Nation. Where is this tribe located and what are some identifying qualities of the nation and their people? List five qualities (religion practices, fishing, hunting, eating habits, living conditions, family structures, etc.).
2. Who are tribes included in the "People of the Dawnland?" How many Indian nations are there in the US? How many tribes are in the US? How many indigenous or native individuals? What does it mean to be a federally recognized tribe member? Did this information surprise you in any way? What questions do you now have?

This is a resource section is for Analyzing a Short Story from *Night of the Living Rez* by Morgan Talty who has written a series of 12 short stories centered around Native Americans living on or near reservations. The purpose of this activity is to promote the Book in Common while working in conjunction with other college mission statements such as providing an environment of dignity and respect to diverse individuals while promoting critical thinking.

Story: Get Me Some Medicine by Morgan Talty

Short Story Citation:

Talty, Morgan. "Get Me Some Medicine." *Night of the Living Rez*, Tin House, 2022. 35-59.

3. Characters: Briefly discuss each one with descriptive words:

Fellis	Meekew
Dee	Clara
Beth	Tabitha

4. Why is the first of the story where Dee and Fellis play cards important? What other events in the story does this story foreshadow? Why is it important to notice that they originally begin play cards with Spaghetti instead of coins? As you look around this story, what other indications show or imply poverty? Have you ever played (pretend gambled with spaghetti, beans, or plastic chips)?
5. Why is the theme of education so important to the character Beth? How does Fellis see his educational opportunities? How did he spend his grant? What if anything is symbolic in the fact that Follis now only uses his iPhone as a flashlight?
6. Why is Meekew's character important to the story? How is the author using Meekew to show the reader differences and similarities to Fellis?
7. Why are porcupines important in the story? How are they considered currency in the story? What else is used for currency in the story? What does Meekew use to garner currency?
8. Dee also seems to be avoiding some issues as well. What is your hypothesis as to why Dee will not go to stay at his mom's house? Is there any truth to Dee's idea that Fellis may be "sick in the head"? If so, what are the indications? Why do you think Dee sleeps in the boiler room?
9. What does Fellis's attack on Meekew reveal to the readers? Why does he claim to be stabbed? How does Dee react? What insights does this later give us into the character of Dee and the remorse felt by Dee for hitting Meekew with the beer cans?
10. What antics does the author use to break the tension towards the end of the story?
11. Fellis seems to harbor ill feelings over not having been properly educated. How do we as readers know (what specific textual evidence do we have about) his feelings?
12. Briefly summarize the story did Dee's mother tells him after his father was banned from picking him up for visits? Why is The Stone People story important in the plot of this story?
13. In the last part of the story, we see Dee and Fellis unexpectedly reunited to catch a porcupine in the dark. Why is Fellis afraid neither of them would win a

bet on when the porcupine is coming down? Could the line “neither of us would win” be symbolic of the story as a whole? If so, please explain.

14. Looking at the two main characters Dee and Fellis, based on their age, what do you think they should be looking forward to in life? Even Meekew who is attending medical school is selling drugs to pay for his education. What are some of the tough realities that they face daily? What role has poverty played in their situations?
15. Next, read “Food for the Common Cold,” please note that this story contains the loss of a child, poverty, and the death of a turtle. How does this story contrast from “Get Me Some Medicine”? How does Talty show off his ability to create empathy for difficult characters?

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Mom	Frick	Gwus
Sister	Dad/David	Corrine
Charlie	The Turtle	Grammy

Story: Food for the Common Cold by Morgan Talty

Citation:

Talty, Morgan. “Food for the Common Cold.” *Night of the Living Rez*. Tin House, 2022. 61-86.

1. Begin by reading and annotating the story. In retrospect, how is this story in comparison to the other Talty story we read? What elements possibly make this story more likeable than the story about Dee and Fellis? What is endearing about the young narrator Gwus?
2. Why does Gwus initially (in paragraph one) want to see the graveyard on fire? At that moment in time, does Gwus even know why his family fights over the graveyard? Why is Frick initially upset about the headstone?
3. What do you think Frick means by “the old ways” in reference to the unwanted headstone?

4. Describe the headstone. Why does Gwus compare the crooked headstone to the crooked doorway of his house? How does the symbolism from each one evolve as the story reveals the past of Mom and the past of Frick?
5. What aspects of the story indicates that Gwus is trying to deal with big emotions as a young child?
6. Discuss the way the author physically describes one character. What details does he use to create a full picture of this character? How does the details show Gwus' sense of humor?
7. Mom and Frick have some difficult interactions. The Mom also seems to be strong in front of Gwus, but he knows she cries in private. When she finally does cry, Gwus thinks he has done something wrong. Why are these interactions important to the story?
8. What does Granny initially smell early in the day in the house? Why does the author use a dead animal to express more than just the death of that animal? How is the idea that something "smells bad" or "fishy" correlate with the secrets held by Mom and by Frick? Explain both of their secrets.
9. Why is it important for the characters to end up at Frick's camp? Describe the camp. What does the camp say about the level of income of Frick? What small elements of the story highlight poverty and struggle? What does missing a day of income mean to these families? Who is Corrine?
10. Gwus comes to the idea that everyone would eventually be happy. The story is filled with moments of sadness and glimpses of happiness. What are the glimpses of happiness? When do they occur? Use quotes as needed to respond.
11. How does Talty use humor to break the tension of the secrets and hard lives of our characters?
12. In the end, what is Mom's secret related to the headstone? How do secrets tend to hurt families? Reflect on both Frick and Mom's secret. Describe how Talty leaves the story on a more hopeful note.

Going above and beyond:

Using one of Talty's stories, write a gritty (more like real life) but empathetic story of your own as a creative writing piece. Create a minimum of three pages for this challenge with at least two main characters. Create complicated characters, includes dialogue, vivid settings, and include the five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell). The story should have a clear beginning, middle, and an end. I look forward to

reading your work of fiction based on Talty's style of writing, and I hope you will be willing to rework it to submit to a Collin or other fiction journal. Bonus points for proof of submission to a journal. ***Email me for the bonus points details.***

RESOURCES

BETH ATKINS AND MELISSA BLACKMORE -- LIBRARY RESOURCES

LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDE

Collin College Book in Common 2023-2024 - Night of the Living Rez
Librarians will continue to add sources to this guide throughout the year.
<https://collin.libguides.com/nightofthelivingrez>

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ABOUT MORGAN TALTY – INTERVIEWS, OTHER WRITINGS, ETC.

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Print book: E99.K5 M64 (Plano, Frisco, Wylie)

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Sociologist Beth Redbird's Research Points to Job Loss, Not Education, as a Key Driver"

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MELISSA JOHNSON - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RESOURCES

FIRST PEOPLES: WABANAKI TRADE AND TRANSITIONS

Maine State Museum - <https://mainestatemuseum.org/exhibit/regional-struggle/first-peoples/>

THE PENOBSCOT NATION

<https://www.penobscotnation.org/>

MAINE NATIVE AMERICAN PRE-EUROPEAN HISTORY

Maine Historic Preservation Commission -

<https://www.maine.gov/mhpc/programs/education/prehistoric-archaeology>

HOW DID A SELF-TAUGHT LINGUIST COME TO OWN AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE?

The Penobscot language was spoken by almost no one when Frank Siebert set about trying to preserve it. The people of Indian Island are still reckoning with his legacy.

The New Yorker - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/04/19/how-did-a-self-taught-linguist-come-to-own-an-indigenous-language>

HOLDING UP THE SKY: WABANAKI PEOPLE, CULTURE, HISTORY & ART

Online Exhibit - Maine Memory Network – Maine Historical Society -

<https://www.mainememory.net/sitebuilder/site/2976/page/4665/display?page=1>

DEBORAH CARDENAS – INTERVIEWS WITH THE AUTHOR

1. **Poured Over** produced and hosted by Miwa Messer and mixed by Harry Liang.

36:53

Chapters of the interview:

Intro 0:00

Location 0:30

Childhood 1:02

Reading and Writing 2:09

Structure 5:30

Stories for the Moment 13:11

In a Jar 14:22

Lay of the Land 17:45

Burn 20:29

Representational Politics 24:08

The System 29:08

#PouredOver (Oct 8, 2022). *Morgan Talty on Night of the Living Rez*. YouTube Barnes & Noble. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L7bQty5pCE>

2. **Morgan Talty on *Night of the Living Rez* with Ashleigh Bell Pedersen.**

1:02:30

Chapters of the interview:

Introduction 0:00

Burn 3:03

How to know when a story is done 10:56

Approaching a story 18:40

Reading a passage 22:11

Mythology and spirituality 26:36

Bonus passage 29:11

Details 31:33

Novel format 37:16

Methadone 40:04

History of writing 42:44

Short stories 46:43

Writing for nonwhite audiences 51:16

In person audience question 53:20

Is *Night of the Living Rez* about Penobscot culture 55:36

The Center for Fiction (July 12, 2022). *Morgan Talty on Night of the Living Rez with Ashleigh Bell Pedersen*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgP2zIsW6_g

3. Morgan Talty, *Night of the Living Rez* interview with Sarah Holliday from The New York Society Library.

52:28

The New York Society Library (Oct 3, 2022). *Morgan Talty, Night of the Living Rez*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17UXvmEWgSo>

TONI MCMILLEN – CONNECTING WITH LOCAL NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE

OKLAHOMA CULTURAL INTERACTIVE CENTERS:

Indian Nations (Tribes-free resources) within driving distance of North Texas/DFW Area with Cultural Centers (Learning Centers for the Public)

- The Chickasaw Nation-Oklahoma
<https://www.chickasaw.net/>
- The Chickasaw Cultural Center Website
https://www.chickasawculturalcenter.com/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIxJeM6PatgQMVL5aDBx1wCwJLEAAYASAAEgKqo_D_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds
- The Chickasaw Cultural Center Video (You Tube Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83xHdxESuHY>
- The Choctaw Nation-Oklahoma <https://www.choctawnation.com/>
- Choctaw Nation Cultural Center Video (You Tube Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnyqzGxGLXU>

NORTH TEXAS HISTORY RESOURCES:

- Bullock Museum <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/americanindians#:~:text=Comanches%20and%20Apaches%20ruled%20large,Texas%20looking%20for%20new%20territory.>
- Dallas Morning News-What Happened to the Native American Tribes in North Texas?
<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/curious-texas/2020/09/09/what-happened-to-native-american-tribes-that-once-existed-in-north-texas-curious-texas-investigates/>
- Native American Tribes of Texas (and Languages)
<http://www.native-languages.org/texas.htm>
- Native American Cultures of North Texas Video Presentation- James Everett- Archeological Steward https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tuh_PnER_g
- Texas Almanac <https://www.texasalmanac.com/articles/native-american-in-texas>
- The Portal to Texas History <https://multicultural.utdallas.edu/ut-dallas-land-acknowledgement/>
- Ways to Celebrate Native American Culture in North Texas and Oklahoma
<https://dfwchild.com/ways-to-celebrate-native-american-culture/>

CATIE BROOKS -- RESOURCES AND PRESENTATION TOPICS

Interview with author and link to book, *Project 562*, about all federally recognized tribes (at the time!) -

<https://www.pbs.org/video/project-562-changing-the-way-we-see-native-america-w7i8w7/>



[Amanpour and Company:Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America Season 2023 Episode 06](#)

Matika Wilbur has spent a decade documenting Indigenous culture for her new book "Project 562." She joins Hari Sreenivasan to discuss social and political issues that are affecting Native American life.

www.pbs.org

<https://www.project562.com/#2>



[Gallery - Project 562](#)

Gallery on Project 562

www.project562.com

Movies I am using, both with mostly Native American casts - one of the main cast members of *Smoke Signals* later became a medical doctor and built his practice helping First Nations patients in Canada! The cast of *The Rider* are mostly non-professionals and the director is Chloe Zhao who won the Oscar for Best Director a couple of years later!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQhviwp8j38>



[Smoke Signals - Trailer](#)

Though Victor (Adam Beach, *Flags of Our Fathers*) and Thomas have lived their entire young lives in the same tiny town, they couldn't have less in common. But when Victor is urgently called away, it's Thomas who comes up with the money to pay for his trip. There's just one thing Victor has to do: take Thomas along for the ride! You're in for a ...

www.youtube.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlrWRttLTkg>



[The Rider | Official Trailer HD \(2017\)](#)

Based on his a true story, THE RIDER stars breakout Brady Jandreau as a once rising star of the rodeo circuit warned that his competition days are over after a tragic riding accident. Back home, Brady finds himself wondering what he has to live for when he can no longer do what gives him a sense of purpose: to ride and compete. In an attempt to ...

www.youtube.com

*I am also having my students do small group presentations about topics relating to indigenous people, such as:

- MMIW - Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- The history of media representation of Native Americans and current (more positive, more realistic) representation
- Current legal cases relating to Native people
- Historical issues/people such as boarding schools and Code Talkers
- How tribal colleges (TCUs) integrate culture into curriculum

*I am also putting rotating information on my office door celebrating indigenous achievement, history and culture - for example, vocabulary lessons from different native languages and Janeé' Kassinavoid, the recent Silver Medalist from the Budapest Track and Field World Championships in Hammer Throw from the Comanche Nation!

RYAN FLETCHER – PROMPTS AND VIDEOS ON MODERN-DAY RESERVATION LIFE

Discussion for In-Class or Canvas: Compare the following video or videos to the experiences in *Night of the Living Rez*.

HISTORY OF RESERVATIONS

“What Life on A Native American Reservation Is Really Like”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7sLpPXKNr4>

LIFE ON RESERVATIONS

“Poorest Native American Reservation – What It Really Looks Like”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9Nx3RQkAB0>

“Life on Native American Reservation”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LON6eGikrKk>

“The Awful Reality on Native American Reservations”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjiufIcJ7NI>

RYAN FLETCHER – VIDEOS WITH MORGAN TALTY

Show the following videos in class or post to Canvas for introducing and/or discussing *Night of the Living Rez*.

“Morgan Talty on Night of the Living Rez with Ashleigh Bell Pedersen”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgP2zIsW6_g

“Morgan Talty on Night of the Living Rez”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L7bQTy5pCE>

“Morgan Talty uses humor to tell the story of an indigenous tribe's struggles | Book of the Day”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLAz1TrNOMo>

“New collection of stories by Penobscot writer draws critical acclaim”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt_6VEWt5Eo

“Maine Voices Live with Morgan Talty”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2ISIC2q0S4>

“Author Morgan Talty in Conversation with Lisa Sockabasin of Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD2mqOcCDQ8>

JENNIFER SEIBERT – ART WORK AND PHOTO DOCUMENTATION RELATED TO THE PENOBSCOTT INDIAN NATION

- <https://www.penn.museum/sites/journal/129/>
- <https://www.mainepublic.org/arts-and-culture/2018-08-13/penobscot-nation-and-university-of-maine-chart-future-by-documenting-past>
- <https://www.abbemuseum.org/blog>
- <https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2020/02/21/penobscot-women-and-the-tribal-land-tenure-system-in-19th-century-maine/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQRYkJVKcZo>

RYAN FLETCHER – CHICKASAW NATION RESOURCES FOR TEACHING

Chickasaw Nation Curriculum

<https://www.chickasaw.net/curriculum>

Te Ata (2017) Film and Resources

<https://teatamovie.com/Resources.aspx>

