Then and Now: Seminar: historical and contemporary voices

NBE3U, Unit 3: Writing Back, Lesson 14. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

A century ago, Johnson, Zitkála-Šá and Eastman wrote back to readers who held power over their nations. Today, First Nations, Métis and Inuit writers publish, perform and broadcast for many audiences, including their own. Setting then beside now shows what has changed, what has not, and how much the fight to control one's own story has achieved.

What students do: Students prepare and hold a seminar connecting one historical writer from the unit with a teacher-chosen contemporary text by a First Nations, Métis or Inuit creator, listen and build on others' ideas, and reflect on how writing back has changed.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
C1.5	extend their understanding of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, by making rich connections between the ideas in them and in other texts and to their own knowledge, experience, and insights
A3.1	demonstrate an understanding of the challenges First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals and communities face and have faced in controlling their own narratives and resisting colonialist views, as revealed in text forms studied in this course
B3.3	orally communicate information and ideas related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and/or perspectives in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning to connect historical and contemporary Indigenous texts. • We are learning to communicate ideas clearly in a seminar.	• I can connect a historical writer with a contemporary text using evidence. • I can explain what has changed in who controls the story. • I can speak clearly and build on others' ideas. • I can reflect on my learning in this unit.

© 2026 K9solutions

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Then and Now deck.
- **Handouts:** Seminar Planner (page 1), Unit Reflection (page 2).
- **Texts:** One teacher-chosen contemporary text per group (titles only; from board-approved resources).

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Set up**	Protocols and roles.	Review.	
8–20	**Prepare**	Final notes.	Plan.	
20–60	**Seminar**	Two circles.	Discuss.	Summative.
60–75	**Reflect**	Unit reflection.	Write.	

Differentiation

- **Accommodations:** Written contributions or a recorded statement accepted.
- **ELL:** Sentence starters and a prepared opening statement.
- **Challenge:** Act as discussion lead; summarize the circle's thinking at the end.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment of learning	Then and Now seminar (rubric in the Summative Tasks)	Connections (C1.5), narrative control (A3.1) and speaking (B3.3)
Assessment of learning	Comparative essay submitted	See the Summative Tasks rubric

A strong seminar contribution…

- **Connection:** Names a historical text and a contemporary text and the specific idea they share.
- **Evidence:** Quotes or points to a moment in each.
- **Change:** Explains what has changed in who tells the story, for whom and through which media.
- **Continuity:** Notes what has not changed: land, language, family, justice.
- **Listening:** Builds on, questions or respectfully challenges another speaker.

Teacher notes

- Pair each group with a contemporary text chosen from board-approved resources. Across the groups, include at least one First Nations, one Métis and one Inuit creator, so the seminar hears all three. Possible pairings: Zitkála-Šá with Louise Bernice Halfe's Burning in This Midnight Dream or Michelle Good's Five Little Indians; Eastman with Richard Wagamese's Indian Horse; Johnson's essay with Drew Hayden Taylor's essays; Johnson's stories with Katherena Vermette's A Girl Called Echo graphic novels

© 2026 K9solutions

or Cherie Dimaline's The Marrow Thieves; an Inuit text such as Norma Dunning's Annie Muktuk and Other Stories with any historical writer. Titles only: these texts are under copyright and are not included. Choose from your board's approved resources, preview for content (several include residential schools, violence, sexual content or grief), add local creators where you can, and learn about each creator in their own words.

- Students speak about texts, not on behalf of Nations or classmates. Do not ask Indigenous students to speak for their communities, to share personal or family histories, or to act as experts. Every student's participation in sharing is optional.
- In larger classes, run two circles (fishbowl): inner circle discusses, outer circle tracks moves, then switch.
- We strongly recommend reviewing this unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and, where possible, inviting a First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest speaker following your board's protocols (including offerings and honoraria). Local Nations' own sources come first.
- This course discusses colonization, residential schools and their effects. Some students and families carry this history personally. Support: Hope for Wellness Help Line (for Indigenous people across Canada, 24/7, by phone or online chat at hopeforwellness.ca; English and French, with Cree, Ojibway and Inuktut on request at certain times), 1-855-242-3310; Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868; 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline (call or text 988); National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419.

Coming up

Unit 4, Living Words.

© 2026 K9solutions