

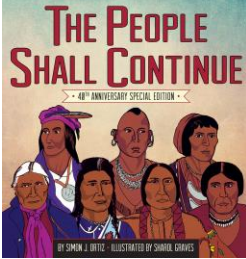
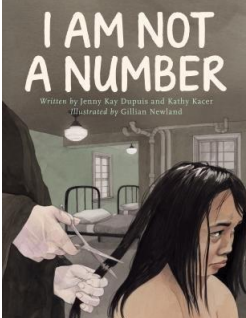
## **Family Book Club: Stories of Native American History and Experience**

**This month's book club goal:** It is through my work as a third-grade teacher that I am charged with the daunting work of facing Native and Indigenous people's history, and naming the facts that are so often erased from the story of America's past and present. What does that mean for our future? Challenging the narrative of the "First Thanksgiving" complete with the fairy tale of pilgrims and colonizers being best friends. November has been designated Native American Heritage Month. As we near the end of the month of giving thanks, we are given the chance to offer gratitude for the multiple voices and alternatives to the narrative we may have incorrectly grown up with.

The books in this collection offer stories through multifaceted lenses and include accounts detailing familial happiness, cultural celebrations, and deep friendships. November, and all the months ahead, offer the ripe opportunity to learn of our country's complex and meaningful stories.

**See following pages for suggested book list with discussion ideas.**

<p><b><u>First Laugh</u></b>  <b><u>Welcome Baby</u></b> by  Tahe, Flood, &amp;  Nelso</p> 	<p>The First Laugh Ceremony is a celebration held to welcome a new member of the community. As everyone--from Baby's <i>nima</i> (mom) to <i>nadi</i> (big sister) to <i>cheii</i> (grandfather)--tries to elicit the joyous sound from Baby, readers are introduced to details about Navajo life and the Navajo names for family members. Back matter includes information about other cultural ceremonies that welcome new babies and children, including man yue celebration (China), sanskaras (Hindu) and aquiqa (Muslim).</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Extensions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we welcome babies into our community?</li> <li>• What are some special names we have for our family members</li> </ul>	<p>Written for ages 2-5, but can be extended through conversation, for ages 6-8.</p>
<p><b><u>We Are Grateful:</u></b>  <b><u>Otsaliheliga</u></b> by  Traci Sorell</p> 	<p>This picture book introduces readers to <i>otsaliheliga</i>, the word that members of the Cherokee Nation use to express gratitude. The expression is used to celebrate the small joys of family life and the beauty of the natural world throughout the year, as well to show appreciation of loved ones.</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Extensions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Cherokee Nation say the word <i>otsaliheliga</i> to express gratitude. They use it as a reminder not just for one celebration or day, but throughout the year. What are some ways we express gratitude?</li> <li>• What are some special activities and foods that bring our family together?</li> </ul>	<p>Written for ages 3-7, but can be extended through conversation, for ages 8-10.</p>
<p><b><u>Tallchief:</u></b>  <b><u>America's Prima</u></b>  <b><u>Ballerina</u></b> by  Maria Tallchief</p> 	<p>Growing up on the Osage Indian reservation, Maria Tallchief was a gifted pianist and dancer. According to Osage tradition, women are not permitted to dance, but Maria's parents recognized her gifts and allowed her to break the rule. Then when Maria reached the age of twelve, her father told her it was time to choose between her two loves. Maria chose ballet. It was a decision that would change not only the course of her life, but the face of classical ballet in America.</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Extensions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did Maria Tallchief's success probably change opinions about American ballerinas?</li> <li>• What do you think was the most important event that shaped Maria Tallchief's career?</li> <li>• Maria Tallchief refused to change her last name because it was part of her heritage. What is one thing about you that you would not change?</li> </ul>	<p>Written for ages 5 plus.</p>

<p><b><u>The People Shall Continue</u></b> by Simon J. Ortiz</p> 	<p>The announcement of a new 40th-anniversary edition of Ortiz’s classic was welcomed by many, as this book’s clean, lyrical language and “unembroidered” art make it a valuable teaching tool and wonderful read-aloud. Serving as a counterpoint to common Thanksgiving tropes, young readers will gain perspective on the long history of Indigenous people in North America and the various ways in which they have endured despite European colonization. Consider reading the Author’s Note prior to reading the book. The Author’s Note contains important background information and language that students can use in the discussion during and after reading the book.</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Extensions</u></b> Read to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the People’s message throughout the book</li> <li>• the history of the People, how it changed over time, and what factors affected their livelihood</li> <li>• the impact of colonialism</li> <li>• the effects of greed and power</li> <li>• the importance of appreciation for nature and natural resources</li> <li>• how the People demonstrate kindness and respect</li> </ul>	<p>Written for ages 6 and up,</p>
<p><b><u>I Am Not a Number</u></b> by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer</p> 	<p>Based on the experiences of Dupuis’s grandmother, I Am Not a Number tells a story of the boarding schools that the United States created to “civilize” Native children. The children were often punished for speaking their own languages, physically abused, and forced to give up their very identities. Kirkus writes that “I Am Not a Number is perfect to get the conversation about residential schools started with your children. It opens the door for them to ask questions about the subject and the story is relatable in a way they can follow.”</p> <p>Consider reading the Author’s Note prior to reading the book. The Author’s Note contains important background information and language that students can use in the discussion during and after reading the book.</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Extensions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to discuss what residential schools were.</li> <li>• What are some similarities and differences between residential schools and schools today?</li> </ul>	<p>Written for ages 7 plus..</p>

**Additional readings on the topic:**

- [Teaching Kids the Wonderful Diversity of American Indians](#)
- [Understanding Prejudice: Teaching About Native American Issues](#)
- [How To Tell the Difference: A Guide for Evaluating Children’s Books for Anti-Indian Bias](#)
- [A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children](#)
- [American Indians in Children’s Literature](#)