Hi! My name is Betsy Damon and I have almost completed the LMS/ETI dual certification program. I am happy that I am being forced to take this course so I don’t have to find a way to fit it in as an elective! I am the new Library Coordinator at Pittsfield Elementary School and swing from exhilarated in my new position to completely overwhelmed and then on to doubting myself and then back towards self-confident and energized again. I’m feeling less like I need to spend every waking moment at work but really could use a few more weeks to get my library in better shape and for me to become better acquainted with the collection. Unfortunately, most of the books in my collection will not be used for any reviews in this class since my collection is quite dated, but I look forward to trying to find new resources to add to the list of potential new purchases. One of my favorite books from a young age was “The Bunny Book” from Golden Books. I just loved how the daddy bunny put all the baby bunnies to bed at night and that all the grownups had dreams for the baby but what he wanted most of all was to grow up and be a good daddy bunny.

I couldn’t pick just two topics and I feel strongly about a subject that wasn’t on the timeline so I’ve included that for discussion as well. My topics are:

* 1994 Zlata Filipovic's *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* •
* 1994 Eve Bunting's *Smoky Night* (illustrated by David Diaz), a picture-book response to the Los Angeles riots of 1992
* 1993 Lois Lowry's *The Giver*
* 1880 Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus, His Songs and Sayings, the Folk-lore of the Old Plantation*, the first collection of fables of black Americans
* And the establishment of Indian boarding schools like Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania beginning in 1879 until its closure 39 years later.

Zlata Filipovic did not begin September of 1991 with the plan to write a diary that, in translation, “has given young people a much-needed window into the tragic conflicts that have torn apart the former Yugoslavia.” I think this is an amazing work to use with kids as a companion work for Anne Frank’s diary. Children can see the struggle during wartime and realize that war still happens and children still experience the conflict. On the plus side, Zlata and her family move to France to create a new life which is a much more hopeful message than the demise of Anne Frank.

I chose Smoky Night because I watched the 1992 riots on tv and remember to this day how traumatic it was for me and I was clear across the country without having any personal connections to those being affected in LA. This book won the Caldecott Medal in 1995 and “tells the [story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoky_Night) of a [Los Angeles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles) riot and its aftermath: two people who previously disliked each other working together to find their cats. In the end, the cats teach their masters how to get along.” I think it is important to have a repertoire of resources to help begin conversations or assist children in understanding and/or dealing with similar tragedies that continue to occur in this world.

The Giver is one of the typical reading assignments for young adults. I, however, was not lucky enough read it as a youth since I was almost thirty when the book came out. I have since read the story, most recently as a paraprofessional working with an 8th grade student. It was very interesting to discuss with him because he had a somewhat atypical view of the world. I remember asking him if he would want to have any of his experiences erased from his memory and he said that all those experience, good or bad, made him who he was. It was interesting to learn that “Lowry came up with the idea of a scary, sterile world where nearly everyone takes drugs to suppress their memories and emotions after her father was put in a [nursing](http://www.npr.org/2014/08/16/340170478/lois-lowry-says-the-giver-was-inspired-by-her-fathers-memory-loss) home.” Since the publication of The Giver, Lowry has published three more books that are loosely tied together with the latest, Son, being published just 2 years ago in 2012. There has been a resurgence in interest in the original story with the release on August 15, 2014 of the film adaptation starring Jeff Bridges and Meryl Streep. The film opened to mixed reviews including this from Rotten Tomatoes: “the movie doesn't dig deep enough into the classic source material's thought-provoking ideas.” The film finished in 5th place at the box office in its opening weekend and Lowry “hopes it won't take quite as long to see the three other books in The Giver series become movies, too.”

Three events from the 1990’s timeline and then I switch to the 1880’s. It may seem strange but I have a soft spot for Uncle Remus since as a child my grandmother took me to the cinema to see Walt Disney’s “Song of the South” and I vividly remember “Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah.” These stories were “not seen as [racist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racist) by many among the audiences of the time,” but that view has changed over time as “the dialect and the "old Uncle" [stereotype](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype) of the narrator was considered overly demeaning by many African-American people, on [account](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncle_Remus) of what they considered to be racist and patronizing attitudes toward African-Americans” The Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia performs some of the Uncle Remus stories as part of their program offerings and the stories themselves often serve as discussion starters on the African-American oral storytelling tradition. Just today, one of the third grade classes in our school, participated in such a discussion while the other third grade class is scheduled for tomorrow. At the time of writing, author Joel Harris did not necessarily understand the cultural service he was providing as “[m]any of the stories that he recorded have direct equivalents in the African oral tradition, and it is thanks to Harris that their African-American form is preserved.”

While the establishment of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School is not included in the Norton’s timeline, I think it is extremely important to recognize the impact this event and the societal beliefs that drove it had on the “literature” of an entire collection of peoples. Native Americans did not have a written history but instead passed down stories orally for generations and though we refer to them as if they are all one group, the truth is that using the term Native American is more like using the term European which encompasses many individual and sometimes diverse nations. Since the victors (or majority) record history from their viewpoint, the evidence of the success of these Indian schools tacitly implies that adoption of the controlling culture’s norms and expectations, including hair style, dress, language, and religious customs, is a step up into civilized culture while explicitly denying the value of the minority culture including customs, language, and oral storytelling traditions. In “Indian Education and the Carlisle Experiment” (http://nativeamericanhistory.about.com/), author Dina Gilio-Whitaker states: “The goal of the assimilation policy was to strip Indians of their traditional cultures and replace them with the values and customs of the white European settlers. At Carlisle this was accomplished in numerous ways and can be thought of as a technology of assimilation.”

One famous writer may have been helped by the Indian School experience:

One of the first [Native American](http://nativeamericanwriters.com/zitkala-sa.html) women to publish traditional stories derived from oral tribal legend was Zitkala-Sa, whose real name was Gertrude Simmons. She was born at the Yankton Sioux Agency in South Dakota, from a white father and a Dakota Indian mother. Her writing was full of imagery and emotion and frequently harangued on the white oppression of Native Americans….Zitkala-Sa lived within the Sioux culture until 1884 when missionaries came to recruit students for a Quaker boarding school for Indians in Wabash, Indiana. Next, she attended Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana and became a school teacher at the Pennsylvania Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

Through her experiences, connections, and vocational ventures, “Zitkala-Sa wrote to revise the dominant white assessment of tribal culture and she was able to do that and more,” but many of the stories of many Native American nations were lost or severely endangered due to the policies enacted during the time of the Carlisle Experiment. Many of those belief systems regarding Native Americans are still prevalent in governmental decrees and Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations. Even something as open-minded as Norton’s Literature timeline begs the question of where are all the Native American writers and events? I found lots of information here: <http://nativeamericanwriters.com/index.html> and there is a very informative article: <http://www.graphicclassics.com/pgs/American%20Indian%20Boarding%20Schools.pdf> which is co-authored by Joseph Bruchac and John Smelcer which goes into great detail about the impact as well as providing a substantial reference list for further research.

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