

Questions to Ask (Checklist ²)

When selecting books or materials, when teaching about American Indians, for either the classroom or recreational reading, one might ask the following questions:

- What purpose do I want this book to serve in the library collection?
- What was the author's purpose in writing it?
- What perspectives does the author bring to it? Are his/her ethnic affiliations identified?
- Do ethnocentric biases distort the value of the book for potential readers?
- Is there appropriate identification of a specific tribe or tribes? Does the author avoid a generalized portrayal of American Indian peoples as being all alike?
- Are tribal diversities recognized? Among these could be diverse homes such as hogans, tipis, wigwams, long houses, pueblos, and diverse water craft such as birch bark canoes, dugouts and rafts.
- Are American Indians portrayed as individuals?
- Are degrading adjectives—*bloodthirsty*, *primitive*, *pagan*, *savage*, and so on—avoided?
- Is the vocabulary biased? For example, does the author use words such as *squaw* and *papoose* for *women* and *baby*?
- Is the portrayal of native cultures as *vanished* or *assimilated* avoided? Is there appropriate recognition of enduring traditions?
- Does the author seem to have a patronizing attitude? For example, are American Indians portrayed as needing to be *rescued* by a *higher civilization*?
- Is there evidence of respect for native values such as, for example, harmony with nature and respect for elders?
- Are there omissions? For example, does the book ignore the existence of long-established tribal homelands in describing the western expansion of white settlement?
- Do authors avoid presenting American Indians as having limited language skills?
- Are illustrations authentic as to tribe and historic period?
- Are contemporary American Indians shown in contemporary clothing except when participating in traditional activities where special clothes are appropriate?
- What do American Indian reviewers or readers say about this book?
- Should I wait to purchase it or withdraw it until someone with more knowledge (about the subject) has given an opinion?

Evaluation: Books and Printed Materials

Title: _____ Hardback: _____

Author: _____ Paperback: _____

Publisher: _____ Fiction: _____ Non-Fiction: _____

Pub. Date: _____ Age Level: Children _____ Intermed _____ Second _____ Adult _____

1. Would this material help American Indians identify and be proud of their heritage? Yes__ No__ N/A__
2. Would the materials encourage a negative image for the non-Indian reader? Yes__ No__ N/A__
3. Are both sides of the issue, event or problem presented? Yes__ No__ N/A__
4. Are there important facts omitted? Yes__ No__ N/A__
5. Is the American Indian stereotyped in this material:
 - through the illustrations? Yes__ No__ N/A__
 - through the content? Yes__ No__ N/A__
6. Are the contributions of American Indians to Western civilization given accurate representation? Yes__ No__ N/A__
7. Would this material assist in establishing a positive image for the American Indian? Yes__ No__ N/A__
8. Considering the time period of setting of this material, do the illustrations/situations authenticate the Indian way of life? Yes__ No__ N/A__
9. Does the material perpetuate the myths about the Indian? Yes__ No__ N/A__
10. Is the author biased against American Indian persons? Yes__ No__ N/A__
11. Is the author qualified to write a book dealing with the American Indian? Yes__ No__ N/A__
12. Could this material be used in a school classroom or library to increase the awareness and understanding of the American Indian? Yes__ No__ N/A__