

**Close-Reading Teaching Modules**  
**Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center**  
<http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/teaching>

**Close Reading Assignment for Grades 8-12**

*The Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS) served as the model for off-reservation boarding schools across the U.S. and Canada. Operating from 1879-1918, the CIS enrolled over 10,000 students from hundreds of Nations. Who were these students? Where did they come from? How did they come to be enrolled at CIIS? What was the mission of the school and how successful was this “experiment in educating and assimilating Native American young people?” What were students taught? What methods were used? How was life at the school structured? What forms of discipline were used? How did it affect students’ lives after they left the school? What legacies and lessons remain?*

**Overview:**

This lesson will be used to expose students to close reading of primary and secondary documents. The focus of this close reading module is also to introduce students to aspects of history that are complex, nuanced, and controversial, such that they will be able to understand the difficulties in making concrete or objective assessments about individual experience, as well as moments in time.

**Materials**

The primary documents are sourced from the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center. They include individual student files of members of various Nations who attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, the model for boarding schools throughout the United States that were created during an era of assimilation and experiments by the United States government to “Kill the Indian and Save the Man.”

The student files selected for this particular module are the following:

- [Vincent Natalish \(Na-Tail-Eh\)](#):
  - A member of the Apache Nation, who entered the school on April 30, 1887, and departed on March 11, 1899. The file contains a trade record, newspaper clippings, a former student response postcard, a student information card, a returned student survey, correspondence about his son's enrollment at Carlisle, and a report after leaving indicating he was working as Supervisor of Indian Schools in New York City in 1914 (CIIS website).
  - Key areas of interest: Testimony on Apache-White relations, Language surrounding “adoption of White Man’s Ways”, Government negotiations, Higher education.
  - [Selected documents from Vincent Natalish \(Na-Tail-Eh\) Student File](#)

- [Elizabeth Wind \(Ro-nea-we-ia\)](#):
  - A member of the Wyandotte Nation, who entered the school on September 16, 1885 and departed on January 10, 1895. The file contains a student information card, a news clipping, a returned student survey, a report after leaving, a financial transaction, a trade/position record card, and letters/correspondence. The file indicates that Ms. Wind graduated from the M. E. Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1894, was an assistant nurse for the Carlisle Indian School for two years, and an assistant nurse at the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon for two years. She then worked as a housekeeper and a private nurse in Wichita, Kansas in 1911, an assistant matron at the Phoenix Indian School in Phoenix, Arizona in 1913 and 1914, and a nurse in Ship Rock, New Mexico (CIIS website).
  - Key areas of interest: Work as nurse, Personal opinions on Native American women and the field of nursing, Pride in CIIS, Positive experiences interacting with CIIS, Indian Service.
  - [Selected documents from Elizabeth Wind \(Ro-nea-we-ia\) Student File](#)
  
- [Louise Noheart](#):
  - A member of the Sioux Nation, who entered the school on March 8, 1914 and departed on November 15, 1915. The file contains a student information card, financial transactions, an application for enrollment, an outing record, medical/physical records, and letters/correspondence (CIIS website).
  - Key areas of interest: Sioux benefits, medical concerns, behavioral issues and legal processes
  - [Selected documents from Louise Noheart Student File](#)

## Secondary Sources

- <http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/> - Database of individual student files, images, and publications from the Carlisle Indian School.
- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/indianschools/> - Additional classroom materials/ teaching module on Indian Boarding Schools
- <http://home.epix.net/~landis/index.html> - Additional source of information surrounding the Carlisle Indian School, by Barbara Landis.
- [Carlisle Indian Industrial School Bibliography \(selective\)](#)

## Documentaries

- *In the White Man's Image* (1992)
- *Unseen Tears: A Documentary on Boarding School Survivors*
- [The Lost Ones: Long Journey Home \(Trailer\)](#)
- [The Thick Dark Fog \(Trailer\)](#)

Procedure: Could be adapted to be appropriate for a history or English class for 8-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The original conception of this module was meant to be finished over the course of a three-day period, but can be adapted as necessary.

### **Parts 1 and 2:**

- Introduction to CIIS
  - Discuss an overview to American Indian boarding schools and assimilation policies, including controversy surrounding social “experiments” like the Carlisle Indian School.
  - Provide a base for students to understand what the general experience was meant to be like for students at the school.
    - Younger students- utilize documentary material or brainstorm ideas about how it would feel to be separated from your parents
  
- Introduction to close reading
  - Discuss the purposes and benefits of utilizing close reading as an analytic technique.
    - ie., Using primary documents to support an argument, or gain a new perspective.
  - In the context of these student files, discuss how using close reading can help to give meaning to individual experiences.
  
- Introduce class to student files and CIIS website
  - Brief overview of each file, as described on the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center website.
  - Allow students to pick a particular file, according to their own interest\*
  - Give students a short period of time to read through the file for a general understanding of the documents included.
    - Younger students- provide a more guided reading through of the files, so that they understand more of the expectations\*\*

### **Part 3: Close reading of the individual student files**

- Have students break into small groups based on the file they chose to investigate and have them compare overall impressions from the first look at the file.
- Have the groups of students begin a close reading of their assigned file, making note of themes, key words, and particularly interesting aspects within the student file.
  - Brainstorm these themes in groups
- Again, have small groups discuss their thematic analysis of the student files.
- Bring together the class and have a whole group discussion of common themes found within and between the groups from within the student files.

\*If necessary, adapt close reading to focus on one particular letter from one particular file, if students require more guided work

\*\*Also, present students with a handwriting guide if they require more practice with reading correspondence with older script.

### **Example Discussion Questions**

1. What did you notice on your first read-through of the file and how did this compare to subsequent interactions with the file you chose?
2. What themes did you find across your file in comparison to other groups?
3. What questions are you left with that you want to investigate further?
4. What do you feel you have gained in terms of understanding of the experience of the student at the CIIS from this close reading of the file itself?

**Evaluation** Assign students a reflection paper based on their experience using the student files for close reading. Include in the reflection paper the following:

- Analysis of thematic material within the file, pointing to specific textual examples.
  - Younger students- provide artificial limits of how many pieces of support from the file itself are necessary to justify a supported argument.
- Reflection on the ability to understand the individual experience as a result of looking directly at the student files.
  - Compare/contrast experience of individual student with that described in the overview of the CIIS at the beginning of the teaching module- is this in line with the original goals of the creators of the Carlisle Indian School?
- Professor can also allow the space for independent research for the students based on the interest sparked by the files- could be a long or short-term project.

Appendix

**Compare/Contrast Work Sheet: Guiding Questions Sheet for Close Reading**

1). Provide your initial perceptions of the goals and aims of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School:

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2). While looking through the files, note specific examples that provide support for or against these goals being met. In other words, are the student experiences more similar or more different than what was expressed by the creators of the school?

Similarities

Differences


3). At first look through, what stands out to you about the file?

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4). What themes are emerging as you are looking through the file?

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5). What does the file this tell you about this students' experience at the CIIS?

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6). What would you like to know more about after interacting with this file?

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