

The Search for Identity in Native American Literature

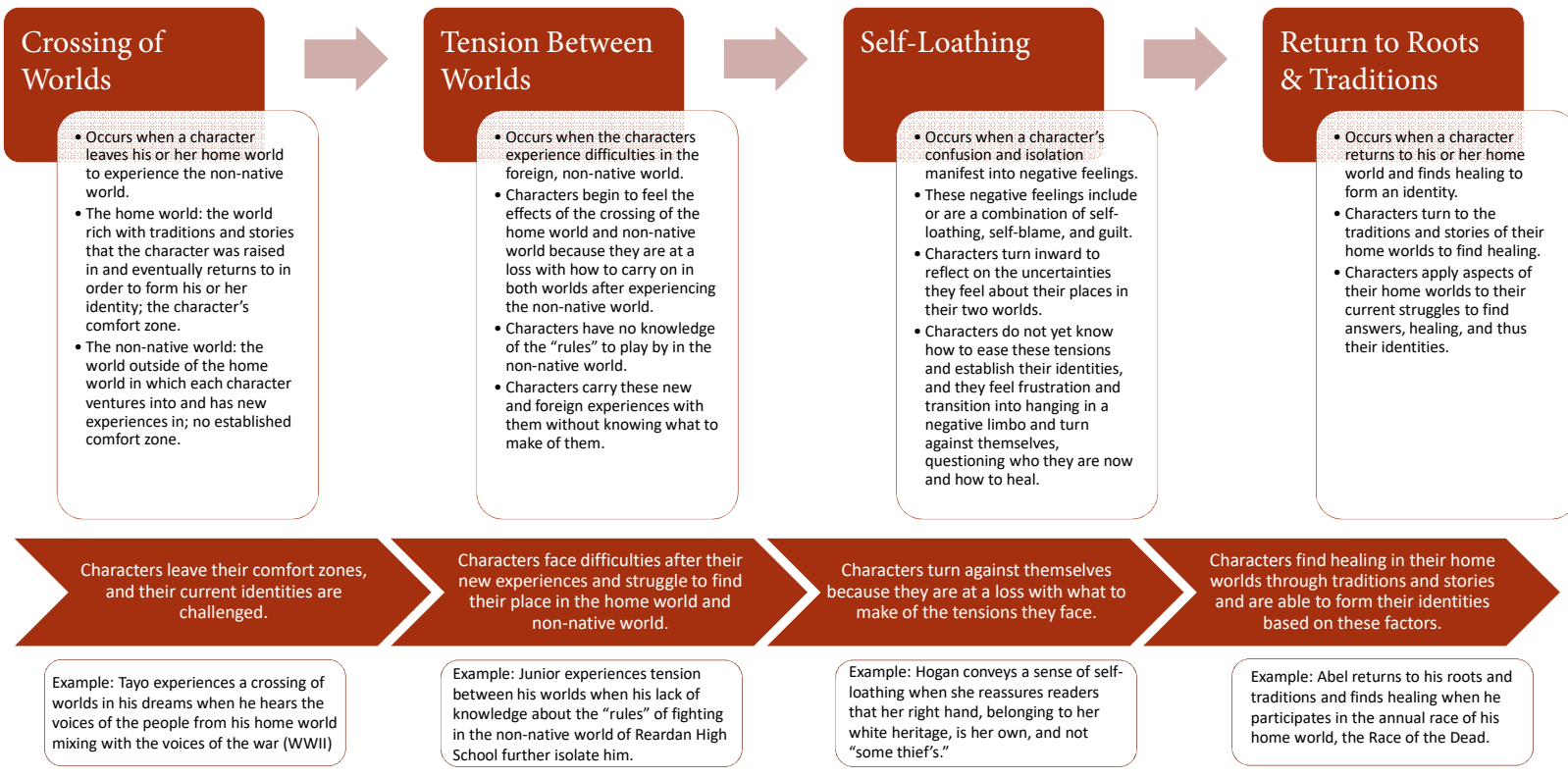
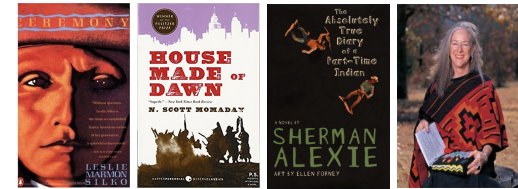
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Introduction

The topic of identity is central not only to literature, but also to human existence, for everyone has a unique identity that is formed in different ways. My research follows the journey of identity for the main characters in four Native American literary works of fiction and identifies a four-step process of identity through these characters' journeys that can speak to the topic of Native American identity today.

The Characters and the Works

- Tayo from *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko
- Abel from *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday
- Arnold Spirit, Jr. (a.k.a. Junior) from *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- Linda Hogan as herself from "The Truth Is"



Conclusions

A character's identity is challenged when he or she enters an unfamiliar world, the non-native world. Characters are forced to find inner peace and acceptance through an understanding of their new experiences in this world and how they have changed from them. Characters' identities become heavily rooted in the home world, the world of traditions, because they find peace and form their identities in this world. The Native American identity makes itself apparent through this final step. Because these are works by Native American authors and because Native American people today similarly must traverse between two worlds with different cultures and histories, the final step in the journey of identity for these characters parallels that of the real world. Through these works of fiction, a truth is heard; a voice is given to the Native American identities that have historically been silenced.

Citations

- Photos:
Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko book cover: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Leslie_marmon_silko_-_ceremony.jpg
House Made of Dawn by N. Scott Momaday book cover: <https://www.amazon.com/House-Made-Dawn-Scott-Momaday/dp/0061859974>
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie book cover: <https://yalitgourley.wikispaces.com/>
 Linda Hogan: <http://english2350project.wikispaces.com/Linda+Hogan>