

Guided Notes (Teacher)

South Dakota has been home to countless storytellers through the years. Some of these storytellers were also writers, and many created their stories for young people. Gertrude Simmons Bonnin loved hearing stories of Iktomi—the Trickster—when she was a little girl growing up on the **Yankton** Reservation. As a young woman, she wrote a book of these stories and a book about her childhood.

Iktomi lives alone in a tipi upon the plain. One day he sat hungry within his tipi. Suddenly he rushed out, dragging after him his blanket. Quickly spreading it on the ground, he tore up dry tall **grass** with both his hands and tossed it fast into the blanket.

That curiosity, and Iktomi's trickery, results in disaster for the ducks. The whole story is found in the book, *Old Indian Legends*. As an adult, Gertrude gave herself the name "Zitkala-Sa," which means "**Red Bird**" in Lakota. She used this name when she wrote books and articles.

Another girl, Laura, grew up in South Dakota about the same time as Zitkala-Sa. For a while, she and her family lived in the just-formed town of DeSmet. Later in life, Laura wrote nine books about her childhood and early adult life, and about her husband's. These books are called the "**Little House**" series.

Laura Ingalls Wilder's books have been translated into **26** languages and have sold millions of copies. In 1890, when Zitkala-Sa and Laura were still in their teens and twenties, **L. Frank Baum** was running a newspaper in Aberdeen. Children growing up in Aberdeen at that time might have heard some of Frank's stories in their beginning stages before he wrote them down. He would often gather a group of children around him on the street corner to listen to his yarns. Although his world famous book, **The Wonderful Wizard of Oz**, begins in Kansas, here is a story he set in South Dakota called "The Discontented Gopher."

Why do so many people care about stories, and remember and treasure them all their lives? And what is it about South Dakota's people, animals, and land that makes for good stories? Jean Patrick has thought about those questions. She's a modern-day author, living near Mitchell, who writes for young readers.

Other authors who have written about South Dakota in recent years are Pamela Smith Hill...Janet Howe Townsley...and Nancy Veglahn, who wrote about **bison** being saved from extinction right here in South Dakota.

Badger Clark is another author from the past, best remembered for his **poetry**. Badger made a living traveling the country, sharing poems with audiences. In his travels, he knew people thought life in South Dakota was very hard—more so than was the case—so in this poem he made a joke out of that kind of thinking.

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve is a living South Dakota author both children and adults enjoy. Her books are certain to be read far into the future, here and across the nation. One, *The Trickster and the Troll*, puts a twist on the Iktomi character Zitkala-Sa knew, by putting him into stories with a Norwegian troll. Her writing earned Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve the **National Humanities Medal**, presented by President Bill Clinton in 2000. She was the **first** South Dakotan awarded that honor.

As time moves on, storytellers help us understand South Dakota's remarkable past. And the best stories are as satisfying after a hundred years as they were when brand new.