



# “My Mother Told Me”: Nostalgia And Return To Childhood In Zitkala-Ša’s *American Indian Stories*

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**Abstract:** Native Indian writers like Zitkala-Ša have written a great deal about the bad experiences and cultural unrest that occurred in boarding schools under the guise of education and civilization. As she was trained in the customs of the white culture, she had a longing for her Dakota culture. She uses the innocent story of a child, steeped in the trickster tradition, to describe the range of these feelings, evoking from her readers an unanticipated empathy. The author provides context for the broken family dynamic that left her and her mother isolated, with a strained mother-daughter bond and a troubled past. Her schooling causes her to lose her cultural connections, and she becomes distant and disinterested in her family. Her short stories in the book illustrate her sense of identity loss, discontentment, and melancholy as a result of her displacement. This research paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the compelling themes of nostalgia, melancholy, and return to childhood found in Zitkala-Ša’s short story collection. That these Native Indian authors of America were subjected to the brutal realities of cultural assimilation and demolition during the height of the twentieth century, shall be a significant underlying theme of the paper.

**Index Terms** - Native Indian, Native American, American Indian, Amerindian, Sioux, Zitkala-Ša, Nostalgia, Childhood.

## INTRODUCTION

Acculturation among Native Indians of America largely focussed on assimilation and the complete removal of ethnic group identities of the tribes. The earliest of Native Indian boarding schools were established as a result of white hostility towards Native Indians, along with burgeoning notions of saviorism. White Americans believed they had a moral duty to civilize Natives through education using curriculums loaded with humiliating assimilation tactics and cultural standards to strip them of their identities. No, they were not teaching political science or sociology in these schools. The brutality of this process can be summarized in the slogan employed by the educators to rationalize their initiative to “Kill the Indian in him and save the man” (Pratt 2). The compulsion to forcibly assimilate Natives into a “civilized” identity, while eliminating those unable to conform, is characterized by Ernest Stromberg as a “response to difference as division,” signifying that individuals cannot integrate into society “until they have been changed, the differences eradicated” in support of embracing whiteness (Stromberg 99).

The boarding schools emerged from the intention to apply these pedagogies broadly, promoting ideals of cultural erasure through humiliating tactics, including cutting their hair, enforced English language use, prohibition of cultural practices like the Sun dance, and emotional and physical abuse. Thomas Wildcat Alford of the Absentee Shawnee tribe, was among the first ones to attend a boarding school, and he talks about it in his book *Civilization* that how education of the natives would “enable [them] to use the club of white man’s wisdom against him in defence of [their] customs” (73). Authors such as Zitkala-Ša compel readers to confront the brutality of the assimilationist agenda by taking them through a spectrum of emotions to comprehend the magnitude of the harm it has inflicted on Native culture.

In addition to the individual repercussions of these acculturation tactics, Indigenous peoples on reservations endured significant territorial, economic, and physical losses. Furthermore, numerous advocates of assimilation via education perceived American Indian bilingualism as a detrimental factor that obstructed proficient communication in English—a pretty absurd viewpoint given the multilingual demands for government officials. Many treaties were signed in the guise of misinterpretation of or barrier of language. Still, nineteenth and twentieth centuries gave us many English-speaking American Indian authors who represented their tribes, like Zitkala-Ša, Winnemucca, Mourning Dove, George Copway, Leslie Marmon Silko, and more.

In these “cultural purgatories”, several youngsters acquired and re-acquired misconceptions regarding their diminishing agency and linguistic deficiencies in the English-speaking realm (Susag 3). These Native Indian authors who went to the boarding schools and wrote about their experiences, reflect the numerous students in our classrooms who navigate daily across geographical, economic, language, and cultural boundaries, precariously balancing assured losses against uncertain gains. To reach the opposite side, people often have to sacrifice aspects of their personal and collective identities. Nevertheless, in the pursuit of equality, they transform the chaos and stress of their existence into productivity. One such author is Zitkala-Ša, a Dakota-Sioux writer, famous for her autobiographical narrative *American Indian Stories*.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ZITKALA-ŠA**

Like millions of other American Indian children throughout the continent, Zitkala-Ša struggled under the post-colonial consequences of dislocation, deculturation and acculturation. She was one of the pioneers in documenting the experiences of Native Indian children under the U.S. Indian boarding school program for an English-speaking public. Zitkala-Ša, as a writer and political activist, employs emotional pleas and cultural concepts acquired from her white education to critique the boarding school institutions that educated her. Another author, Winnemucca, also talks about the experiences in her book *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883).

Zitkala-Ša was born in the Dakota tribe, to Ellen Simmons, and a white father who abandoned her before her birth. Her mother nurtured her in the Dakota culture; but, to assimilate into mainstream society, she, like many other Native children of the nineteenth century, was compelled to attend a missionary school to acquire American-English practices. She embodies the lengthy and turbulent history of Native Indians’ cultural upheaval, which she narrates from the perspective of the young narrator in *American Indian Stories* (1921). Through the occurrences and inner thoughts of the narrator, she reflects on her internal struggle to reach toward the white civilization in which she was schooled and the pull toward her native Dakota culture. She utilizes her words to express a spectrum of emotions via the innocence of the child narrator, the trickster archetype, and various events that elicit unforeseen feelings in readers.

Zitkala-Ša combines emotional appeals from Western and Native literature to initiate her critique of boarding school educational practices. Her short stories illustrate how her indigenous history of spiritual strength and narrative prowess serves her in counteracting forces that want to silence the feminine Native Indian voice, express her individual and communal experiences, and condemn those who oppressed her people.

### **AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES**

Zitkala-Ša’s autobiographical book *American Indian Stories* (1921) gives a unique viewpoint on the problems Native Indians of her day had while adapting into the rising Western society of post-colonial America. The author elucidates how the assimilation of the Native Indian individual into a society governed by Western culture engenders psychological conflict, diminishes the original culture, and fosters a profound sense of alienation. According to Jesse Morrow, Zitkala-Ša articulates the continual progression of each issue over the three phases of her narrative: her absence, her indoctrination, and her return (3). She begins her life story by abandoning the tribe, an act that the reader might understand as her subconscious perception that her culture is inferior and hindering her freedom to choose and grow as she sees appropriate. However, this notion becomes clear when one reflects on how representatives of western civilization assured her of offerings such as the land of “The Big Red Apples,” and “a more beautiful country,” guaranteeing advantages of an English education (Zitkala-Ša 39). Such enticements play on the young girl’s inexperience and establish a misconceived sense that this new society may provide her luxury that her former culture cannot.

After soliciting her mother’s consent, the young girl receives permission to depart from the tribe and embarks eastward in pursuit of a more promising future. The train she mentions in the story symbolizes her move from a collective culture to an unknown one that prioritizes the individual. Unbeknownst to her, by abandoning her community, she has positioned herself in a state of isolation, emphasizing individual potential over the collective capability of the group. By disregarding her people’s doubts about these schools and

pursuing her personal desire to experience the splendors of Western society, she shifted the focus from the group to herself as an individual, therefore initiating her increasing sense of alienation. Following the train's arrival at night, the young girl is escorted to the school premises, marking the end of her connect to her tribal land and the commencement of her education.

The education of the young Zitkala-Ša encompasses three critical events essential for understanding the gravity of the oppression experienced by her. The first is the psychological trauma inflicted by the severing of the young girl's hair, secondly, the elevation of Western culture above her own, and thirdly, the alienation resulting from conformity-related challenges. The author asserts that her feelings of subjugation were exacerbated by her educational experiences in the classroom. She describes how the youngsters were subjected to rigorous protocols and educational methods, starkly contrasting with her tribe's cultural approach to learning. In addition to this, the description of the education suggests that the educators favored the learning of Western concepts above those of her own Native Indian culture. Because of this, the educators succeeded in diminishing the bond between the two cultures.

Another predicament that the young author experienced is the heightened alienation due to her fellow students' conformity and the challenges of adapting to an authoritarian culture. Eventually, she initiates the returning home part of her narrative by explicitly expressing her sense of alienation. Zitkala-Ša experiences a state of immobility, as she is suspended between two distinctly different cultures. She states, "My brother... did not quite understand my feelings. My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write" (69). The young author attributes her emotions of loneliness and absence of cultural identity to the cultural impact and brainwashing by representatives of Western culture. As is evident in the narrative, her enthusiasm for her ancestral culture significantly declines due to her exposure to Western cultural forms. Their excursion to the east had civilized them as is elucidated from the change in their fashion, "the young men wore the white man's coat and trousers, with bright neckties" and "the girls wore... dresses, with ribbons at neck and waist" (72). Zitkala-Ša contends that, whether attributable to the white man's effective acculturation tactics or the Native Indians' indifferent acceptance to Western hegemony, some individuals who migrated east saw Western behaviors as superior to their ancestral practices.

Consequently, she retreats to the boarding school and ultimately seeks a college education, which she views as her sole alternative to escape her dilemma. She states that upon departing for college, her mother urges her to return, although she intentionally disregards this advice. In her quest for identity, she remains "homeless and heavy-hearted" and "began anew [her] life among strangers" (76). Zitkala-Ša, like other Native Indians who have endeavored to integrate into Western civilization, recognizes that she embodies neither an unchanged Native Indian tradition nor a thorough Western education; rather, she is a fragmented embodiment of both. Armed with a newfound comprehension of her personality, Zitkala-Ša embarks on a journey amid unfamiliar faces to achieve self-actualization via engagement with both cultures, yet ultimately finds no true belonging in either.

## CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Indigenous populations have frequently been mythologized, resulting in the appropriation of both their territory and their voices. There are some renowned tropes that describe the idea, such as the Noble Savage, and the Demonic Savage (Stanley 65). The works of Native Indian writers have been examined by many critics across different periods. The scholars who have analyzed these autobiographical works have concentrated on Zitkala-Ša rhetorical techniques to challenge the boarding school institutions. Deborah Welch's assertion that Zitkala-Ša "felt pulled towards the Anglo world" has disparaging undertones as it seems like the indigenous author wilfully moved away from her tradition, and built faith in the alien culture (qtd. in Susag 5). From the *American Indian Stories*, it can be claimed that this is not the case. This sentimental narrative profoundly embedded in the author's early memories exemplify her connection to her people and her land. She states, "Oh mother, it is not that I wish to leave you", declaring her innocent wish to see the new land of the east (Zitkala-Ša 43). In continuation, she explains that watching her mother vanishing away while leaving for the school "a sense of regret settled heavily upon [her]" (44-45). These nuances of her emotional connection to her mother and her motherland are worth considering and should not be partially dealt with.

In a similar manner, the theories of renowned post-colonialists such as Homi K. Bhabha, when applied to indigenous writers, result in a skewed perception of their autonomy as authors and, to a degree, as individuals. The discourse swings to production of hybridity, imitation, and third space in writers like Zitkala-Ša and fundamentally undermines the tension that they are seeking to express. Thus, lopsided evaluations like Welch's come forward. In her thesis titled "The Transformation of Tradition: A Study of Zitkala Sa and

Mourning Dove, Two Transitional American Indian Writers,” Alice Poindexter Fisher contextualizes Zitkala-Ša within the framework of assimilation, asserting that she “had abandoned, even betrayed, the Indian way of life by obtaining an education in the white man’s world. To those at the Carlisle Indian school . . . she was an anathema since she insisted on being Indian” (14). Fisher emphasizes Zitkala-Ša’s position as a liminal character, refraining from categorizing it as either a strength or a weakness of the author. Unfortunately, writing when interpreted in such a way, has devastating results, as sources that are often misread to downplay the importance of the versatility and richness of the author, and these are the ones which hold the essence of their writings. The literature of the native, read and interpreted in a socio-political milieu, is the most relevant in view of ascertaining their side of the situation.

## NOSTALGIA IN AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES

The term ‘nostalgic’ is sometimes employed interchangeably with terms such as conservative, regressive, ahistorical, or uncritical to belittle or reject writers and their research, and often cultural works due to the contentious nature of subjectivity. However, nostalgia should overcome such restrictions. It is imperative to rejuvenate nostalgia, to enhance and redefine its many narrative potentials, and to utilize it for the advancement of more progressive writing. Literature serves as a formidable friend in this endeavor. Literature implicitly defines nostalgia as both a story—a tool for authors to use language, drive plot, develop characters, and influence readers—and an emotion—felt by readers, shared by groups, maintained by institutions, and implanted by both narrative and by lived experience. Similarly, my study examines nostalgia as both an emotion and a narrative—a yearning for home that may be experienced, utilized, controlled, and recounted in diverse manners.

The recovery and development of collective nostalgia, which I elaborate below, indicates that nostalgia should not be regarded as intrinsically conservative or regressive. Collective nostalgia as given in the book *Nostalgia Psychological Resource* talks about outcomes of nostalgic experience that have consequences beyond the individual which can be an experience shared with other (Routledge 121). It will have implication on groups to the extent that the memories are involved with the group. In some settings, nostalgia may serve as a catalyst for social change in a group, a framework for ethical interactions, and a valuable narrative for social and environmental justice. Nostalgia can generate constructive narratives and provide fresh perspectives in theoretical discussions regarding memory and national identity within American studies, rather than merely reinforcing environmental or social narratives. Nostalgia for ethnic groups like to all nostalgic tales, supports many political goals. It may portray both regional and national violence.

Zitkala-Ša’s memoir evokes nostalgia in two distinct manners. First of all, she must regain the authorial voice of the Native Indian identity, claiming to speak for herself and for her people. She has ceased to be mute and affirms her culture not via the narrative of the colonizer, but through the stories of her own people. In the first six chapters she discusses how in her early infancy she was enculturated into Sioux traditions. Her secondary perspective is unequivocal; she critiques the ideology underpinning assimilation, recounting how, as a child, she and numerous Indigenous children were removed from their reservations due to an assimilationist government policy, resulting in separation from their parents and ancestral lands, as well as discouragement from practicing their traditions and speaking their native languages. She becomes the subject of her own critique, as she ultimately recognizes her disconnection from both worlds in the latter half of the narrative. For her, the self is a location of perpetual displacement, in which diverse voices must challenge cultural predispositions.

In the first story in the collection, Zitkala-Ša pays a tribute to her memory of her mother. She remembers her deepest connection with her mother, as she would spend the whole day watching and learning from her mother. Her curiosity and innocence as a young girl are depicted as she asks about her mother’s sadness, which she later realises was about their situation in the reservation, and about the condition of their people after they came in contact with the colonizers. A story within a story follows, as her mother tells her about the tribes’ experiences with the colonizers. This is a classic tale about a mother’s concern for her child and her warnings about the corruption in the world. She learns about the “paleface” and the deceptions with which the colonizers interacted with the Indians, however, as a child, she is unable to completely understand the serious tone of her mother, and ends up being brainwashed despite her mother’s warnings (Zitkala-Ša 9). However, the closeness a child feels with her mother is a constant theme throughout the book. In the earliest stories the author often states, “my mother used to say to me”, “my mother says”, and “my mother told me”, indicating her deep connection to her mother and remembrance of her earliest lessons (13,14,26,33). However, as she moved away from her mother and had difficult experiences at the boarding school, she “grew bitter” and started feeling the “melancholy of those black days” (67). This predicament was collectively shared by

the children who went to these boarding schools, as they were separated from their mothers and subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment at an early age.

A major nostalgic theme which is evident in Zitkala-Ša's stories is her oral tradition. She refers to the stories from her cherished tribal narratives. In the stories "The Legends", "The Coffee-Making", and "The Dead Man's Plum Bush", she refers to the story-telling tradition of her tribe, as she would eagerly wait for nighttime when all the people would gather around the fire and the elders would tell tales. These stories remain deeply rooted in her childhood experience and she remembers them even after going to the missionary school and being educated in the white culture. The earliest stories "The Beadwork" and "The Coffee-Making" reflect upon the rich culture of the Sioux tribe, as they would engage in daily activities like making leather out of buckskin, decorating various articles with beads and making moccasins. Their hospitality in welcoming each other to their wigwams with coffee and bread is elucidated by the writer. As a young girl she would often feel excited to watch and perform these chores. As she writes about these incidents in retrospect, she feels a sense of pride and longing to go back to those simplest days.

The author also depicts the wilderness with sentiments of nostalgia. Her depictions elaborate on the tranquillity and vitality of nature, illustrating the components of the natural world engaging and harmonizing. Yet she takes care to keep a degree of elegance or grandeur in the depiction, calling to mind the divinity of nature. She remembers the tiniest details about the tribe, and her time at the reservation. The beginning lines, "A wigwam of weather-stained canvas" and "the long swamp grasses... on the edge of the Missouri" are indicative of the detailing she puts in the descriptions (Zitkala-Ša 7). From the first story, she depicts her, her mother's and her tribes' close connection with the wilderness, stating, "I was a wild little girl of seven" (8). It is to be noted that this connection with the surroundings is what made her interested in going to the boarding school, as she wanted to see the beautiful land as described by the missionaries. In contrast to her experiences in the wilderness at her reservation, where she would often playfully run in the forest chased by her mother; at the boarding school, she is not allowed to go out in the snow with her friends, and is punished for disobeying orders. It is evident that her descriptions lose the detailing about the wilderness in the stories after she goes to the school, as she loses the natural connection that she had with it after distancing from her tribe. However, she utilized the instruction acquired at the boarding school to save the knowledge of her culture's tradition and document the teachings of her tribe, the Yankton Sioux, in written form.

Upon Zitkala-Ša's relocation from the Sioux reservation to the so-called 'civilized' institution in the East, estrangement from her family became unavoidable. Simultaneously, her acceptance in a predominantly white society continued to be contested. The tension arising from her cultural dislocation is manifested, placing her in a conflict between her own culture and its European equivalent, which becomes the essence of the work. From the seventh tale onwards, the shift is evident in the narrative, as it takes a serious tone as compared to the earlier stories. It is as if she has been forced to come out of her nostalgic dreams of her time in the Sioux reservation and face the reality of her experience at the boarding schools.

At the school, Zitkala-Ša is initially received in a manner that really disturbs her. She is hurled into the air like a plaything, something that she insists her mother or other relatives would never do. This demeaning behavior profoundly traumatizes the little Indian girl; she cannot comprehend how two cultures have such varied manifestations of compassion. This comes as a culture shock to her. Not only this, her tears exacerbate the situation by drawing threats from her professors, indicative of the school's overarching teaching methods and the challenges that lie ahead. From the first day, Zitkala-Ša's experience in the realm of crimson apples becomes a cultural ordeal for her. One such incident which stands out is the hair-cutting of all Indian students. After numerous awkward situations, she is contacted by a classmate who informs her that all of the Indian girls' hair would soon be shingled. The young Zitkala-Ša is engulfed by fear, and states, "Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy" (54)

She experiences a strange longing for her home which she had left to see a better place. In her heart she knows this is not what her mother and her tribesmen would want for these children. Another instance depicting a similar predicament is when she states, "Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards" (54). This decision between two ways is challenging for kids to deal with. When persuaded by her friend to succumb to the strong paleface, Zitkala-Ša fiercely exclaims "No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!" (54). Such assertions bolster the reader's apprehensions regarding the increasing distress of the little girl and her profound want to exert control through acts of defiance, indicating that she has been taught to do so by her people. Even though she tried, however, could remain hidden for long and is mercilessly chained and forced to undergo the haircut, so ruining her self-image and pushing her fear over the line.

After her return from the school for a brief interval, she elucidates how the young Indian children had been acculturated into the western ways of life. During tribal meetings, the youngsters would now communicate in English rather than their native language, which many struggled to articulate due to prolonged

absence and enforced repression at the schools. This experience of coming home confuses Zitkala-Ša once more and she starts to exhibit indications of a lost ethnic identity. After detailing her suffering, she relates how her mother gave her the Indian Bible to comfort her saying, "Here, my child, are the white man's papers," (73). She takes the Bible to console her mother, although internally, she is seething with anger and thinks about burning the book. Later in life, she declines to wear Western attire hindering her integration into the mainstream society. However, she also struggles to assimilate into her former culture due to the displacement in the earliest years of her youth. Zitkala-Ša experiences profound anxiety, psychological conflict, a pervasive sense of alienation, and an inability to reconcile with her original Native Indian culture, resulting in significant inner turmoil.

## RETURN TO CHILDHOOD IN *AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES*

The short stories in *American Indian Stories* deal with the author's return to her childhood memories, first at the Yankton Sioux reservation, then at the Carlisle Indian missionary school. The first part, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," presents evidence that the child independently decided to attend the boarding school, described as a "Wonderland" where Indian children would "pick the red apples" (Zitkala-Ša 40, 42). As discussed in the previous section, the stories begin from the reservation. The author recollects her experiences as a child at her reservation, spending simplest of days with her mother, and her people. This longing for her home is subsequently undermined by her following narratives in "The School Days of an Indian Girl" in which she asserts that her choices to go to the boarding school were predicated on a deceptive reassurance provided by the missionaries. Here she experienced acculturation into the white culture, and felt herself drifting away from her own culture. In this section, the story "The Devil" is a good example of the author's return to her childhood, wherein she elucidates how any incident faced by a child can leave a lasting impact on her mind. She remembers how at the school she learnt about the Devil, an evil of the "white man's legend" roaming about in "material guise" (62). She was disoriented by the stark contrast between what she had learnt back home, and the education that she was receiving at the mission, and as a child, she tried her best to reconcile the two. The hair-cutting incident had a traumatizing effect on her mind, and the stories of the devil had made her fearsome, and she dreamt of being back in her mother's arms. However, being the resilient child, she took her revenge upon the "Stories of the Bible" by "scratching out" the devil's eyes (64). Through this incident the author contrasts between the two realms, one in which she was raised by her mother, sheltered from malevolent forces through spiritual ceremonies, and the world of the palefaces, where evil materializes in the guise of men.

Further in the narrative, when she returns back after three years, the acculturation strategies had intensified and paced up. General Pratt, founder of the Indian Carlisle School attended by Zitkala-Ša, stated that the objective of the missionaries was to "immerse the Indians in [European] civilization...until they are thoroughly soaked" (335). Zitkala-Ša chooses to discuss about this personal and communal experience honestly. Her opinions on fusion of these two cultures is apparent in her writings, most notably in last section, where she writes about it in the story "The Great Spirit". In this section she reflects back once again on her memories of her childhood, when she learnt about her Sioux culture and religion, reconciling it with the teachings at the Christian mission school. In the following stories like "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" and "A Warriors Daughter" we see a bicultural stance, as the author combines both her cultures, and indicates that she cannot be a part of only one of them. The stories are her way of returning to her native land, and her tribe, certainly not devoid of the white-man's teachings, and ways, that she had adopted during her education. These stories represent the Native Indian experience of coming back home, after being integrated into the western culture, trying to create a new identity for themselves. They try to fit into both, often being marginalised from either. The author justifies her stance, stating that "she remembers her childhood days and the stories she loved to hear about" (Zitkala-Ša 156).

Zitkala-Ša acknowledges that the integration procedure she underwent as a child was detrimental to both her white and her indigenous Sioux culture. Through juxtaposition of cultural descriptions and construction of situational irony she argues for a break to the existing integration process, and then provides a better way to mix the two cultures while respecting their distinctions. Through the cultural symbolism of "A Dream of Her Grandfather", she utilizes her poetry to advocate for a new approach to amalgamating European and Sioux traditions, shown by her employment of symbolism in the story. In the short story, the girl dreams of a chest given to her by her grandfather. The chest, characterized as "clean, strong, and durable in its native genuineness", is a symbol of her tribal heritage, which she received from her mother, and her Sioux people (156). Upon opening the chest, she perceives a glimpse of her recollected Indian childhood. Zitkala-Ša employs the symbolism of the chest to depict Indian culture as strong and durable. This indicates that while

she is living in white society, she keeps her native culture close to her heart, and can return back to it anytime. Thus, in the *American Indian Stories*, the narrative moves from the author's nostalgic remembrance of the childhood at the reservation, to a melancholic longing for the lost days, and gradually towards a return to the childhood days at the reservation, in a way, closing the circle towards the point of origin.

## CONCLUSION

Edward Said states that the estranged environment constructed for the native people within a nation distances them from their family, with a lack of "belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage" (176). This is the "exile" that they are put in, as they "left [something] behind forever", and reject belonging to this new world, perpetually identified as the "outsiders", in a land that ironically belongs to them (173, 177). The life and works of Zitkala-Ša must be examined from this viewpoint. She battled against the role that was thrust upon her, opting to hang on to her traditional beliefs as a Yankton Sioux, as well as fight for the right of other Native Indians. She appreciated her traditions as well as her upbringing as a Yankton Sioux. Although, being schooled into the white culture led her to a sense of dissonance with both cultures, preventing her from fully identifying with either; her experience in the white culture facilitated her acquisition of the English language and enabled her to express herself via writing. Nonetheless, it exacted a significant toll since she occasionally found it difficult to reconcile with her mother. In the predominantly white society, she experienced racial discrimination due to her background, irrespective of her education. In obtaining this biculturalism, she was a part of both societies, yet welcome in none. Her narrative, including her life and experiences, should evoke a profound sense of loss in the reader, while honouring her contributions.

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