

Halfbreed Girl in the City School

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Close Reading Activity:

STEP ONE: Annotate for where you see her being asked to assimilate (color one), conflicts she feels because people are telling her different things (color two), stereotypes she alludes to (color three), literary devices (color four).

are you Mexican
are you Italian
are you Chinese
are you Japanese

spic wetback greaseball slant-eye
you are dark enough to question
you are light enough to ask
you have near black hair brown eyes
and speak slow-english
we are blonde blue eyed
and wear store bought sweaters skirts or pants
you are in homemade clothes out of style
we circle round you and your sister
you hug your sister close she's small and even darker
we kick we tug at braids and coats
we pull "I'm Indian!" out of you

the social worker wants
you to describe your family
she asks
does your father beat you
does your mother
does your father drink
does your mother
do you hate your parents
do you cry
tell me tell me do you
like the reservation better
are you ashamed in the classroom

when you wet your pants
why don't you speak up
why don't you get excused
why don't you go at recess
tell me tell me speak!

you stare out the window
turn an alphabet block in your hands
speak english speak english
the social worker caws
outside Canadian geese pass through your
immediate sky
six in an arc going south
if you were a Changer like Star Boy
you could fly with those long-necks
but you must stay and look out this window

Grandma's words pound in your head
they want to strip us of our words
they want to take our tongues
so we forget how to talk to each other
you swallow the rock
that was your tongue
you swallow the song
that was your voice
you swallow you swallow
in the silence