

What To Look For

1. **Is the vocabulary demeaning?**
Are terms like "squaw", "papoose", "chief", "redskin", "savage", "warrior" used?
2. **Do the Indians talk like Tonto or in the noble savage tradition?**
See *Indian in the Cupboard* and *The Legend of Jimmy Spoon* for examples.
3. **Are the Indians all dressed in the standard buckskin, beads and feathers?**
Again, see *Indian in the Cupboard*, and any book in which any character "dresses like an Indian".
4. **Are Indians portrayed as an extinct species, with no existence as human beings in contemporary america?**
This is the whole "vanishing Indian" concept.
5. **Is Indian humanness recognized?**
Do animals "become" Indians simply by putting on "Indian" clothes and carrying a bow and arrow? Do children "dress up like Indians" or "play Indian" as if "Indian" was a role that one could assume as one can dress up like doctors or cowboys or baseball players? For comparison, do animals or children also dress up as African- Americans or play Italian?
6. **Do Native Americans appear in alphabet and counting books as objects that are counted?**
7. **Do Native American characters have ridiculous imitation "indian" names, such as "Indian Two Feet" OR "Little Chief"?**
8. **Is the artwork predominated by generic "Indian" designs? or has the illustrator taken care to reflect the traditions and symbols of the particular people in the book?**
9. **Is the history distorted, giving the impression that the white settlers brought civilization to native peoples and improved their way of life? Are terms like massacre, conquest, civilization, customs, superstitions, ignorant, simple, advanced, dialects (instead of languages) used in such a way as to demean native cultures and achievements to indicate the superiority of European ways?**
10. **Are Indian characters successful only if they realize the futility of traditional ways and decide to "make it" in white society?**
11. **Are white authority figures - teachers, social workers - able to solve the problems of native children that native authority figures have failed to solve? (Are there any native authority figures?)**
12. **Are the perceptions of women as subservient drudges present? Or are women shown to be the integral and powerful part of native societies that they are?**
13. **Finally and most importantly, is there anything in the book that would make a native american child feel embarrassed or hurt to be what he is? Can the child look at the book and recognize and feel good about what he sees?**