

Native American Assignments

Textbook: Battle of Little Bighorn

For years the Lakota Sioux conducted raids against white settlers who had moved into Sioux lands. In response, the U.S. government ordered all Lakota Sioux to return to their reservation by January 31, 1876. They refused. The situation was turned over to the military.

About 2,000 Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho gathered near the Little Bighorn River. The leader of the Sioux, Sitting Bull, conducted a ceremonial sun dance. He reportedly had a vision of a great victory over soldiers.

The brash leader of the U.S. Army troops, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, predicted victory as well. On June 25, 1876, Custer led his troops into a headlong attack against superior numbers. Custer and his troops were quickly encircled and slaughtered. The Battle of Little Bighorn was a tremendous victory for the Sioux—but a temporary one. Now the U.S. government was even more determined to put down the Indian threat to settlers.

Source: American Anthem, Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 2006, p. 441.

1. According to the textbook, what caused conflict between the Lakota Sioux and the U.S. government?
2. Who started the Battle of Little Bighorn?
3. Why did Custer lose?
4. Do you think this account is an accurate description of the Battle of Little Bighorn? Why or Why not?

Document A: Cameron Report (Modified)

To the PRESIDENT: Washington, July 8, 1876

There have been certain wild and hostile bands of Sioux Indians in Dakota and Montana. I refer to Sitting Bull's band and other bands of the Sioux Nation. These Indians continue to rove at pleasure, attacking scattered settlements, stealing horses and cattle, and murdering peaceful settlers and travelers.

The present military operations are not against the Sioux Nation at all, but against certain hostile parts of it that defy the Government. No part of these operations are on or near the Sioux reservation. The accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the settlement of our people there, have not caused this war. The young Indian warriors love war, and frequently leave the reservation to go on the hunt, or warpath. The object of these military operations was in the interest of the peaceful people of the Sioux Nation, and not one of these peaceful Indians have been bothered by the military authorities.

Very respectfully,

J. D. CAMERON, Secretary of War

Source: The President of the United States asked the Secretary of War, J.D. Cameron, for a report of the military actions leading up to the Battle of Little Bighorn.

1. Who wrote this report? What was his purpose? When was it written?
2. According to this document, what was the cause of conflict between Indians of the Sioux nation and the U.S. Government?
3. Why would Cameron write: "The accidental discovery of gold on the western border of the Sioux reservation, and the settlement of our people there, have not caused this war?"
4. How does Cameron describe the Sioux Indians who he believes are attacking white settlements?
5. What are the similarities and differences between this report and the textbook?

Document B: Kate Bighead Interview (Modified)

Little Big Horn was not the first meeting between the Cheyennes and Long Hair [General Custer]. Early in the winter of 1868 Long Hair and the Seventh Cavalry attacked our camp on the Washita River killing Chief Black Kettle and his band, burning their tipis and destroying all their food and belongings. In the spring Long Hair promised peace and moved the Cheyenne to a reservation. When gold was discovered white people came and the Indians were moved again. My brothers and I left for the open plains where our band of Cheyenne was again attacked by white soldiers in the winter of 1875. We were forced to seek help from a tribe of Sioux. We joined Sitting Bull and the Sioux and decided to travel and hunt together as one strong group. As conditions on the reservations became worse more and more Indians moved west joining our group. Six tribes lived peacefully for several months, hunting buffalo, curing the meat for the winter months, and tanning buffalo hides. In the early summer, 1876 we set up camp near Little Big Horn River. Soldiers were spotted by some hunters to the south of the camp. . .

Source: Kate Bighead, a Cheyenne Indian, told this story to Dr. Thomas Marquis in 1922. Dr. Marquis was a doctor and historian of the Battle of Little Bighorn in the 1920s. He interviewed and photographed Cheyenne Indians.

1. What type of document is this? When was it written? Why was it written?
2. According to Kate Bighead, what caused the conflict between the U.S. government and Native American tribes?
3. What are two differences between Bighead's account and the Cameron report?
4. Which of the 2 documents – the Cameron report or the Kate Bighead interview – do you think is most trustworthy? Why?

Document A: Newspaper (Excerpt)

A NEW SCHOOL FOR INDIANS: CARLISLE BARRACKS CONVERTED INTO AN INDIAN SCHOOL

The Secretary of War today ordered that Carlisle Barracks, Pa., be turned over to the Interior Department to be used as a school for the education of Indian youth, to be modeled after the Hampton (Va.) Normal Institute, and has detailed Captain R. H. Pratt, of the army, to have charge of it. Captain Pratt has had much experience in the work of Indian education at St. Augustine and at Hampton, and is confident of good results at Carlisle. Secretaries McCrary [Secretary of War] and Schurz [Secretary of the Interior] are both much interested in the subject and very hopeful that the successful effort at Hampton will be followed by success at Carlisle, and lead eventually to such action by Congress as will enable the government to establish many such schools. About one hundred Indian youth of both sexes will be sent to Carlisle this fall. . . .

The Secretary of War thinks this is the only way to saving a remnant of the Indian tribes, for so long as the tribal relation is continued they must gradually become extinct. He says the efforts of the government are in the direction of bringing up a class of young men who will be leaders of their people in taking them away from the chase and war as the sole worthy occupation for the hands of men. The rapid extinction of the buffalo and small game and the filling up of the waste places by settlements render this step absolutely necessary to the future interests of the aboriginal population of the country, and it is confidently expected that in time the Indians will be brought from the precarious living of the chase into better ways. . . . Secretary McCrary said he thought it was an interesting fact that Carlisle Barracks, which had been the great school of instruction for so many years for our cavalry employed in fighting the Indians, should have been in this centennial transformed into an asylum for Indian youth, where in future years they may learn the arts of progress.

Source: New York Herald, August 22, 1879.

1. Who seems to be providing the information included in this article? How might the sources for the article influence the content of the article?
2. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

Document B: Richard H. Pratt (Excerpt)

The following excerpt is from a paper written by Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Pratt delivered this paper as a speech at the Conference of Charities and Correction.

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. . . . In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man. . . .

The Indians under our care remained savage, because [they were] forced back upon themselves and away from association with English-speaking and civilized people, and because of our savage treatment

of them. We have never made any attempt to civilize them with the idea of taking them into the nation, and all of our policies have been against citizenizing . . . them.

It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit. . . .

The school at Carlisle is an attempt on the part of the government to do this. Carlisle has always planted treason to the tribe and loyalty to the nation at large. It has preached against colonizing Indians [on reservations], and in favor of individualizing them. . . . Carlisle fills young Indians with the spirit of loyalty to the stars and stripes, and then moves them out into our communities to show by their conduct and ability that the Indian is no different from the white or the colored, that he has the inalienable right to liberty and opportunity that the white and the negro have.

Source: Richard Pratt, "Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction," 1892.

1. Who was Richard H. Pratt?
2. What was Pratt's attitude toward Native Americans? Provide evidence from the document to support your claim.
3. What do you think Pratt meant when he said, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man"? Find two examples from the document showing how the Carlisle Indian Industrial School tried to accomplish this.
4. How were Pratt's goals for the Carlisle School similar to previous federal policies of removing Native American tribes from their lands and waging war against them? How were they different?
5. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

Document C: Ellis B. Childers (Excerpt)

Ellis B. Childers was a Muscogee (Creek) teenager at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. This is an excerpt from an article Childers wrote for the Carlisle School News about the visit of a large delegation of Native Americans to the school.

Inspector Haworth [the government inspector of the Native American schools], with a large delegation of Indians, visited us on Easter week on their way back home from Washington. . . . Inspector Haworth asked some of the delegates to say something to the school. Kihega, the father of Charles Kihega [the Editor of the School News], made the first speech. He made a very nice speech.

Among other things he said to the children: "Here are people trying to teach you. You must try to learn, and when you come back home, your people will be glad to see you, and what you learn will be a

benefit to them.” When he said, “Here are people,” he meant our kind teachers who are trying their best to teach us to live a civilized life. . . .

There were four others [who] made little speeches to us. They all spoke so good that Capt. Pratt said at the close, “I could sit and listen all night to such good speeches as these.”

Henry Jones the interpreter said something before it was closed. He is an Indian but he has learned enough English so as to interpret for his people. Among other things he said, “If we Indians are willing to learn, we can learn. We can learn as well as our friends, the whites. We can do just as well as the white people. If we try. We have muscles, brains and eyes just the same as the whites. If we cultivate our brains and muscles and eyes we can do just the same as they.”

And then closed his speech by saying, “Don’t look back at all that is passed away. This country through here is all improved. You saw when you were coming: cities, railroads, houses, manufactories . . .”

Source: Article by Ellis B. Childers, Carlisle School News, April 1882.

1. Who was Ellis B. Childers? What kind of document is this?
2. What was Childers’s tone regarding the teachers at Carlisle? Provide evidence from the document to support your claim.
3. This article was written in the official school newspaper. How might that have influenced what Childers wrote?
4. How does the description of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in this document compare with the description in Document B? Provide two or three similarities or differences.
5. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

Document D: Luther Standing Bear (Excerpt)

Luther Standing Bear was a member of the Lakota tribe and attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School beginning in 1879. After graduating, he became a Lakota chief and advocated for Native American rights and sovereignty. The following are excerpts from a book he wrote in 1933 about his experiences at the school.

At the age of eleven years, ancestral life for me and my people was most abruptly ended without regard for our wishes, comforts, or rights in the matter. At once I was thrust into an alien world, into an environment as different from the one into which I had been born as it is possible to imagine, to remake myself, if I could, into the likeness of the invader. . . .

At Carlisle . . . the “civilizing” process began. It began with clothes. Never, no matter what our philosophy or spiritual quality, could we be civilized while wearing the moccasin and blanket. The task before us was not only that of accepting new ideas and adopting new manners, but actual physical changes and discomfort had to be borne uncomplainingly until the body adjusted itself to new tastes and habits. . . . Of course, our hair was cut, and then there was much disapproval. But that was part of the transformation process, and in some mysterious way long hair stood in the path of our development. . . .

Almost immediately our names were changed to those in common use in the English language. . . . I was told to take a pointer and select a name for myself from the list written on the blackboard. . . . By that time we had been forbidden to speak our mother tongue, which is the rule in all boarding schools. . . .

Of all the changes we were forced to make, that of diet was doubtless the most injurious, for it was immediate and drastic. . . . Had we been allowed our own simple diet . . . we should have thrived. But the change in clothing, housing, food, and confinement combined with lonesomeness was too much, and in three years nearly one half of the children from the Plains were dead and through with all earthly schools. In the graveyard at Carlisle most of the graves are those of the little ones. . . .

Source: Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, 1933.

1. Who was Luther Standing Bear?
2. What were some of the changes the Carlisle teachers forced Luther Standing Bear and his fellow students to make? According to Luther Standing Bear, what happened as a result of these changes?
3. How does Luther Standing Bear's description of the Carlisle School compare to Ellis Childers's description?
4. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

What was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School? Your response must have a topic sentence and cite specific evidence from at least three of the documents.(6-8 Sentences)