

Native American Wars Worksheet

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

Guiding Questions:

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?

Source: Indian Removal Act of 1830

An act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That it shall and may be lawful for the President of the United States to cause so much of any territory belonging to the United States, west of the river Mississippi, not included in any state or organized territory, and to which the Indian title has been extinguished [revoked], as he [the president] may judge necessary, to be divided into a suitable number of districts, for the reception of such tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside, and remove there; and to cause each of said districts to be so described by natural or artificial marks, as to be easily distinguished from every other. . . .

1. Explain how the Indian Removal Act of 1830 impacts westward expansion and Native Americans.

Source: — Chief Washakie of the Shoshone tribe from a speech to Governor John W. Hoyt of the Wyoming Territory, 1878

“. . . The white man, who possesses this whole vast country from sea to sea, who roams over it at pleasure, and lives where he likes, cannot know the cramp we feel in this little spot, with the underlying remembrance of the fact, which you know as well as we, that every foot of what you proudly call America, not very long ago belonged to the red man. The Great Spirit gave it to us. There was room enough for all his many tribes, and all were happy in their freedom. But the white man had, in ways we know not of, learned some things we had not learned; among them, how to make superior tools and terrible weapons, better for war than bows and arrows; and there seemed no end to the hordes [huge numbers] of men that followed them from other lands beyond the sea.

“And so, at last, our fathers were steadily driven out, or killed, and we, their sons, but sorry remnants of tribes once mighty, are cornered in little spots of the earth all ours of right— cornered like guilty prisoners, and watched by men with guns, who are more than anxious to kill us off.

“Nor is this all. The white man’s government promised that if we, the Shoshones, would be content with the little patch allowed us, it would keep us well supplied with everything necessary to comfortable living, and would see that no white man should cross our borders for our game, or for anything that is ours. But it has not kept its word! The white man kills our game, captures our furs, and sometimes feeds his herds upon our meadows. And your great and mighty government – Oh sir, I hesitate, for I cannot tell the half! It does not protect us in our rights. It leaves us without the promised seed, without tools for cultivating the land, without implements [tools] for harvesting our crops, without breeding animals better than ours, without the food we still lack, after all we can do, without the many comforts we cannot produce, without the schools we so much need for our children. . . .”

1. According to this document, what were two criticisms that Chief Washakie had against the white man and/or the federal government?