

Lesson Title: The Military History of the Indian Wars, 1866-1890: Native American Leaders

Lesson Designed by: Tom Gatson, Chillicothe High School, Grades 9-12, Western Civilization, June 2008

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Lesson Overview: This lesson will present the military strategies and how the approach of war differed between the Native Indians and the US Government. The lesson will present the strategy of three battles and the background leading into these battles.

Objectives: After completing this lesson the students will be able to:

- Describe the army structure and rigid system built around rank
- Describe the western Native American strategy of little formal command and several cultural differences in battles
- Evaluate the term Massacre and why it is related to some battles and not to others.
- Explain how history was determined by the white man because the Native Americans had unwritten languages

Material: The follow material will be needed for this lesson:

- Background information (see attached)
- Detailing of the event as written by the white men
- A dictionary to be used to look up any words the students do not understand
- Maps of the Major tribes in 1850 (Source- The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890: Robert Utley)

Attachment 1: The Military History of the Indian Wars, 1866-1890: Native American Leaders

The Native American approach to war differed significantly from that of the US Army. Unlike the Army's structured and rigid system built around rank, Native American leaders exercised little formal command and control over individual warriors. Native Americans of the western United States represented diverse groups consisting of several culturally related, yet politically separate sub-groups, or bands. Although several of these groups did form alliances with other Native Americans, traditional animosities between some Native American groups limited forming an overall pan of resistance against the US Army.

Throughout the later period of the Indian Wars, four groups, consisting of approximately 100,000 people, represented the primary adversaries of the US Army: the Southern and Northern Cheyenne, the Lakota or Teton Sioux, the Nez Pierce and the Apache. They were the adversaries mainly because the trails that started going through their hunting land. Mainly the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails played major roles in location of the Indian Wars. Many Native American leaders were prominent members of military societies that instilled warriors from a very young age with courage, endurance and military training. They were excellent on horseback. Compared to US soldiers at this time, Native American leaders and warriors were much better adapted to the frontier environment and possessed an advantage in individual combat skills such as individual discipline and courage. These advantages combined with the loose command and political structure made the Army's task of subduing Native American resistance extremely difficult.

Attachment 2: Native American great leaders and warriors:

Black Kettle- Southern Cheyenne Chief. Tried many times peaceful means to co-exist with the white man to no avail. Was killed by Custer's forces at the Battle of Washita in 1868

Cochise- Apache Chief. He and a band of Apache resisted the US Army for more than ten years. He also had many treaties with the US Government that were broken. He escaped in 1872 and settled in native lands in Arizona and died in 1874

Crazy Horse- A legendary warrior of the Oglala Sioux and is considered the finest guerilla fighter in history. He was at the Fetterman Massacre, the Battle of the Rosebud and the Battle of Little Big Horn. He was murdered at Fort Robinson after he had brought his band in 1877.

Geronimo- Apache Warrior. Geronimo and his warriors proved most difficult to subdue and represented the last group of independent Native Americans to cease hostilities. Geronimo died in 1909 at Fort Sill without ever returning to his native Southwest.

Red Cloud- Oglala Sioux. His tribe continue attack the Bozeman Trail and the gold fields in Wyoming and Montana. Red Cloud tried and failed to negotiate with the Army and retired and died at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota

Sitting Bull- Lakota Sioux Spiritual Leader. He participated in many battles with the white man. He surrendered in 1881 and died by gun shot at the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1890. Days before the Wounded Knee Massacre.

### Attachment 3: Washita Battlefield Example of one strategy in Indian Warfare

Events leading to the attack at Washita River began on November 29, 1864, when troops under the command of Col. Chivington attacked and destroyed Black Kettle's village on Sand Creek, 40 miles from Fort Lyons in the Colorado Territory. At the time, Black Kettle had been pursuing a policy of peace with the whites and believed the village was under US Army protection. Black Kettle survived the attack but around 150 men, women and children were killed and horribly mutilated. It came to be known as the Sand Creek Massacre and resulted in a massive public outcry as well as months of retaliatory raids by Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota warriors.

Because of the fact that the raids could not be controlled the government wanted a treaty with the attacking Indians. By the terms of the Treaty of Little Arkansas, signed on October 17, 1865, the Cheyenne and Arapaho agreed to stop attacking in the area of Oklahoma. Most of the younger warriors disagreed with the treaty and kept attacking. The Congress of the United States gave the sentiments 'punishment must follow the crime.' Now all rules of warfare were over.

On one early morning the bugles could be heard around the Washita River where there was an encampment of Cheyenne. Following Sheridan's plan to cripple resistance, Custer ordered the slaughter of the village. He also ordered the slaughter of all animals. An estimated 800 ponies and mules were killed and the soldiers burned all the lodges with all the winter supplies.

The village leader, 67-year old Black Kettle was killed along with his wife along with at least 35 people of the village. 53 women and children were taken captive.

### Attachment 4:-The Battle of Little Bighorn, 1876

In late 1875, Sioux and Cheyenne Indians defiantly left their reservations, outraged over the continued intrusions of whites into their sacred lands in the Black Hills. The Black Hills were about the only place that treaties were being honored until the reported gold strike. They gathered in Montana with the great warrior Sitting Bull to fight for their lands. The following spring, two victories over the US Cavalry emboldened them to fight in the summer of 1876.

Colonel George Custer spotted the village along the Little Bighorn river and made plans to attack the village. Custer at the time had aspirations to become the great Indian fighter and work his way up in the government. Even though he was against great odds and disobeying orders, he was told to wait for support, he decided to attack on June 25th, 1876. He hoped to strike the camp at the northern and southern ends simultaneously, but he was not aware of the terrain. He discovered a maze of bluffs and ravines to attack.

The Indians turned back the forces of Reno and Benteen and were surprised when they saw roughly 210 of Custer's men coming toward the other end of the village, trying to take the pressure off to Reno's men. Cheyenne and Sioux together crossed the river and slammed into the advancing soldiers, forcing them on a ridge to the north. As the Indians closed in, Custer ordered his men to shoot their horses and stack the carcasses to form a wall, but they form little protection. In less than an hour, Custer and his men were killed in the worst American military disaster since the Civil War. The bodies were mutilated and stripped and the Indians were on the move after their greatest victory.

## Attachment 5:- Massacre At Wounded Knee

On the morning of December 29, 1890, the Sioux chief Big Foot and some 350 of his followers camped on the banks of Wounded Knee creek. Surrounding their camp was a force of US Troops charged with the responsibility of arresting Big Foot and disarming his warriors. At this time Big Foot was the only remaining Sioux not on a reservation.

The once proud Sioux found their free-roaming life destroyed, the buffalo gone, themselves confined to reservations dependent on Indian Agents for their existence. The only thing they had left was their spirit. With the old way of life gone they looked for something to revive their spirit and it came in the way of a Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance gave them a ray of hope which had been lost with their confinement.

During the fall of 1890, the Ghost Dance spread through Indians villages of the Dakota reservations, revitalizing the Indians and bringing fear to the whites. A desperate Indian Agent at Pine Ridge wired his superiors in Washington, Indians are dancing in the snow and are wild and crazy. We need protection and we need it now.

When Big Foot was encamped at Wounded Knee some of his people started doing the Ghost Dance which scared the white soldiers. The Indians were told to disarm themselves a pile all their weapons up. Suddenly a shot sounded and within seconds the braves tried to retrieve their weapons. The Army opened the Hotchkiss guns on the Indian encampment and the slaughter was on. When the smoke cleared 300 Indians and 25 soldiers were dead and this was the end of resurrections of the Indians independents

Question for review: The teach should allow students to ask questions in areas of confusion. Any questions the teacher asks should be used to assess students understanding prior to the assessment

Scoring: The student will be assessed by their answer of the following questions. The answers are to be short answers in constructive response form.  
Total Points-50 (10 points on each question) Graded on accuracy and constructive response form.

1. Of the three battles, explain which battles should be called a massacre or just a battle.
2. Why did Custer order his men to kill the animals at Washita River?
3. How did the Army's strategy differ from the Indians?
4. What was the Ghost Dance and why did it scare the white man?
5. Explain why not having a written language was a big disadvantage in the laurel of history?

The answers will vary, they should be graded on effort and logic. The teachers point system may vary based previous assignments.

### References Used:

Webster's American Military Biography

The Oxford Companion to American History

Encyclopedia of North American Indians

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfknee.htm>

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfcuster.htm>