The Indian Wars

From the very beginning of colonialization in North America in the early 1600s, so-called "American-Indian Wars" were fought between settlers and various tribes. Alliances between tribes and even between tribes and colonial powers shifted continually. Naturally there were casualties on both sides, but most historians agree that in the end it was the Native Americans who suffered the greatest whether by death, disease or loss of land, culture, identity and ultimately what they knew as home. In the year 1918, a mere 100 years ago, there was a battle fought in Bear Valley, Arizona, between Yaqui Indians and



Custer's last stand at the Battle of Big Horn

the United States Army 10th Cavalry Regiment. At the time, it was regarded as just another minor skirmish with a group of aggressive Indians. In retrospect, it became a major milestone because it went down in the history books as one of the last of its kind, the last battle of the Indian Wars.

A Historical terms and events you should know about

Read these short texts and match them with the correct term or event. Research and write two more short summaries for the last two terms.

Custer's Last Stand	Chost Dance	Trail of Tears	Wounded Knee Massacre
1.		2.	
The discovery of gold in the Black Hills of		On December 29, 1890, a group of Lakota	
South Dakota in 1875 seemed reason enough		Sioux Native Americans celebrating tribal	
for the US government to ignore earlier		rituals was surrounded by the US Army's 7th	
treaties guaranteeing the Sioux Indians their		Cavalry. The gathering made the soldiers	
land and to invade the region. In defiance of		suspicious and they demanded that the	
US orders, 10,000+ Native Americans of the		Indians relinquish their weapons. At some	
Sioux and Cheyenne tribes led by the chiefs		point a scuffle between a soldier and a Lakota	
Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse gathered in		ensued and a shot was fired. Because tensions	
Montana. The general leading the US troops		were already running high, this single shot was	
made a fatal choice when he decided to		enough to cause pandemonium. Both sides	
continue ahead to where the tribes had		started shooting at close range and within	
camped and not wait for reinforcements.		an hour the "battle" was over. In the end, an	
The unavoidable battle ensued at the Little		estimated 150 Indians were killed although	
Bighorn River. In less than an hour, the 3,000		some historians say it could have been as	
Native American warriors had defeated the US		many as 300. Included in these numbers were	
battalion, killing almost 300 including the		at least 60 women and children who had also	
general. Unfortunately, immediately after the		been attending the ritual ceremonies.	
battle and for a long time to come, the Battle of		The US Army suffered around 30 dead.	
the Little Bighorn was used to portray Indians		This unnecessary tragedy, this bloodbath was	
as uncivilized and bloodthirsty, whereas the		the last major conflict between the United	
soldiers were celebrated as heroes.		States and the Plains Indians.	

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Since the arrival of the "White Man". Native Americans have suffered greatly. By the late 1880s many Native Americans had already been confined to reservations where conditions were far from favorable. Many lives had already been lost and the Native Americans' way of life changed radically. In January 1889, a Northern Paiute Indian had a dream in which all Native Americans were taken up into the sky while below them the Earth opened up to swallow all the Whites. The Earth was then returned to its natural state, including the return of the plentiful buffalo herds which would ensure the survival of the tribes. The Indians then peacefully descended back to Earth.

In order to hasten this time of renewal and the demise of the White Man, the Indians were to gather every six weeks and perform a circular dance lasting five days and four nights, during which some of them would fall into a trance. These gatherings and the new movement made US officials very nervous.

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Despite the Native American tribes from the Southeast being considered "civilized" by the white European settlers, they were unwelcome in the region because the settlers wanted and needed the land for agriculture, for example for cotton fields. In 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, designating what would later become the state of Oklahoma as Indian Territory. The first "removal" took place in the winter of 1831 when the Choctaw tribe unwillingly embarked on foot. They were poorly equipped with no assistance or compensation from the US government for the journey. In 1838 the largest "removal" took place when more than 20,000 Cherokee were forced to leave. Thousands died along the way, either beforehand in internment camps or after their arrival in Oklahoma due to disease. Altogether an estimated 125,000 Native Americans were forced to leave their native lands and about 15.000 of them died during the resettlement.

5. Buffalo Soldiers	6. Crazy Horse Memorial

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B Questions on the texts

- 1. Explain the two names for this battle Battle of the Little Bighorn and Custer's Last Stand.
- 2. Why do you think General Custer didn't wait for reinforcements?
- 3. Why is this confrontation usually not referred to as a "battle"?
- 4. Explain which term prophet, messiah or savior you would use to describe the initiator of the Ghost Dance and why?
- 5. Why did the Ghost Dance Movement make the US government nervous?
- 6. The text doesn't say, but how do you think the settlers defined "civilized"?
- 7. How would you describe the purpose of the Indian Wars?
- 8. How do you imagine the Indian Wars were justified in American society at the time?

C Research, review and summarize

Divide into groups. Each group reads one of the following texts: http://www.cowboysindians.com/2018/01/the-last-battle-of-the-american-indian-wars/http://www.cowboysindians.com/2017/11/clever-warriors-horrible-violence/

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Report back to the entire class.

D Analyze and interpret this quote

"Please note that Yaquis and other American Indians are living people with a present and a future as well as a past." ((Source: http://www.native-languages.org/yaqui_culture.htm))

Explain this emphasis. How do you interpret this quote?