

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

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.



Custer's last stand at the Battle of Big Horn

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

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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?