

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee



By Dee Brown

Copyright Notice

Some or all of these eNotes are an offprint from Gale's *For Students* Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works.

©1998–2002; ©2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design® and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

©2005 eNotes.com LLC

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information on these eNotes please visit:

<http://www.enotes.com//copyright>

Table of Contents

1. [Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: Introduction](#)
2. [Dee Brown Biography](#)
3. [One-Page Summary](#)
4. [Summary and Analysis](#)
5. [Quizzes](#)
6. [Characters](#)
7. [Themes](#)
8. [Style](#)
9. [Historical Context](#)
10. [Critical Overview](#)
11. [Essays and Criticism](#)
12. [Suggested Essay Topics](#)
13. [Sample Essay Outlines](#)
14. [Compare and Contrast](#)
15. [Topics for Further Study](#)
16. [Media Adaptations](#)
17. [What Do I Read Next?](#)
18. [Bibliography and Further Reading](#)

Introduction

Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was first published in the United States in 1970. This landmark book—which incorporated a number of eyewitness accounts and official records—offered a scathing indictment of the U.S. politicians, soldiers, and citizens who colonized the American West. Focusing

mainly on the thirty-year span from 1860 to 1890, the book was the first account of the time period told from the Native-American point of view. It demonstrated that whites instigated the great majority of the conflicts between Native Americans and themselves. Brown began searching for the facts about Native Americans after he met several as a child and had a hard time believing the myths about their savagery that were popular among white people. Brown published his book a century after the events took place, but it was a timely publication, since many U.S. citizens were already feeling guilty about their country's involvement in the Vietnam War. Brown's book depicted, in detail, the U.S. government's attempt to acquire Native Americans' land by using a mix of threats, deception, and murder. In addition, the book showed the attempts to crush Native-American beliefs and practices. These acts were justified by the theory of Manifest Destiny, which stated that European descendants acting for the U.S. government had a God-given right to take land from the Native Americans. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* is Brown's best-known work and has since overshadowed all of his other books.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Author Biography

Dee Brown was born on February 28, 1908, in Alberta, Louisiana. He grew up in Arkansas, where he met many Native Americans. He found it hard to believe the myths of Native-American savagery and read everything he could find about the real history of the American West. Since he was pursuing a career as a librarian at the same time, he frequently had access to the materials he needed. At George Washington University, he studied library science and worked as a library assistant for the United States Department of Agriculture. After receiving his bachelor's degree in library science in 1937, Brown held his first librarian position at the Beltsville Research Center (1940–1942).

In 1942, he published his first novel, *Wave High the Banner*, a historical novel based on the life and adventures of Davy Crockett, the legendary frontiersman. Over the next few decades, Brown wrote several more novels and nonfiction books about the American West and earned his master's degree from the University of Illinois (1952). He also worked as a librarian for the United States War Department and the University of Illinois, ultimately becoming a professor of library science at the university from 1962 to 1975.

However, despite all of these accomplishments, it was Brown's 1970 publication of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* that made him a household name. After that, Brown published several works, including a nonfiction book, *Wondrous Times on the Frontier* (1993); a collection of autobiographical writings, *When the Century Was Young: A Writer's Notebook* (1993); and a novel, *The Way to Bright Star* (1998). However, none of these works received the attention or praise of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, which is still Brown's best-known work. Brown lives and works in Little Rock, Arkansas.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

One-page Summary

Chapter 1: “Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy”

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee begins with an overview of the relations between Native Americans and white settlers from the late-1400s to the mid-1800s. Initially peaceful, these relations become more tense as white emigration from Europe to the United States increases.

Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos

The government wants Navaho land for settlements and mining, so the U.S. Army kills or displaces all Mescalero Apaches and Navahos in the region. Many Navahos die when they are forced to live at the Bosque Redondo reservation. Ultimately, the Navahos sign a peace treaty and are allowed to return to what is left of their land.

Chapter 3: Little Crow's War

Manipulated by deceptive treaties, the Santee Sioux surrender most of their land for money and provisions they mostly do not receive. Little Crow does not want to fight the military might of the United States but has no choice when some of his men kill white settlers. The Santees are ultimately overpowered by the Army and by a Santee traitor.

Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes

White settlers ignore a treaty and begin settling on Native–American territory. After Cheyennes and Arapahos meet with the Colorado governor to try to maintain peace, many Cheyennes are mutilated or massacred in their Sand Creek village. The Cheyennes split, some going north to join the Northern Cheyennes and the Teton Sioux in Powder River country, while others go south, below the Arkansas River, where they are coerced into signing away their land in Colorado.

Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion

The Cheyennes learn that soldiers are building a fort in the Powder River country. A Cheyenne warrior tries to warn some Arapahos of coming soldiers, but they do not believe him, and their village is destroyed by one military column. A group of Sioux chase the half–starved, frozen soldiers of two other military columns and attempt to beat them in battle but are overpowered.

Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War

The government says it wants to buy transportation rights in the Powder River country, but it deploys soldiers even before a treaty is discussed. Angry at this deception, the Sioux fight a successful guerrilla war, cutting off the soldiers' supply lines, trapping soldiers in isolated battles, and derailing a train. Ultimately, the government withdraws its troops and settles for a peace treaty.

Chapter 7: “The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian”

Some of the exiled Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos, encouraged by the Sioux's successes, try to return to their old tribal lands. This action results in a war between the Army and several Native–American tribes, including the Cheyennes, the Arapahos, the Comanches, and the Kiowas. At the end of the fighting, all tribes except the Kiowas surrender and go to reservations.

Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa

Red Cloud finds out that the peace treaty he signed included items he did not know about. Donehogawa, an educated Native American, is Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the time. He invites Red Cloud and several other Sioux to state their case to President Grant in Washington, D.C. Red Cloud is successful, but Donehogawa loses his influence due to political pressure and resigns.

Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas

Several Apaches refuse to live on a reservation and instead they engage in a guerrilla war. Settlers massacre a peaceful band of Apaches at Camp Grant, prompting President Grant to send out a commission to talk to the Apache chiefs. After much fighting, most of the Apaches settle on reservations or live in exile in Mexico.

Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack

The Modocs do not receive treaty provisions from the government and return to their old lands, the U.S. military comes to remove them, and Captain Jack takes his people to a stronghold. Hooker Jim's band kills

some settlers in revenge, then forces Captain Jack into killing General Canby, which instigates a war. Hooker Jim and his men surrender to the soldiers, then track down Captain Jack, who is hanged.

Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo

The Kiowas are forced to go to a reservation. They resolve to leave the reservation to fight the white hunters who are destroying the buffalo but are overpowered. Some tribes choose to go back to the reservation, while others hunt buffalo at Palo Duro Canyon, the last remaining range. The Army destroys their village and forces the Kiowas to surrender.

Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills

A force of several thousand Native Americans fights to save the sacred Black Hills. They win a major battle by destroying General Custer's army at the Little Bighorn, but the government uses the battle as justification for taking the Black Hills. They also send more troops to make most of the Native Americans surrender. Sitting Bull and some of his people escape to Canada.

Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés

The Nez Percés are told to give up their land and report to a reservation. Young Joseph advocates peace but is forced to fight when some of his men kill white settlers. The Nez Percés try to flee to Canada to join Sitting Bull, and some make it. However, after a surprise attack by the Army, most of Chief Joseph's people surrender and are sent to Indian Territory.

Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus

The Northern Cheyennes at Fort Robinson are transferred to Indian Territory, where many die. Some stay, while others attempt to return to their old lands. Soldiers chase the latter, killing several Cheyennes in the process. The Northern Cheyennes split again. Some are captured and sent back to Fort Robinson, where most are killed in an escape attempt. Others spend the winter in hiding, then surrender.

Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person

The peaceful Poncas are sent to Indian Territory with other hostile Native–American tribes. Several die, including the son of Standing Bear, who tries to take the body to their old burial grounds. General Crook captures them but intervenes on their behalf, helping Standing Bear win a court case that gives him the right to stay on his land. Other Poncas try and fail to enforce this new right to return to their land.

Chapter 16: “The Utes Must Go!”

Through the skills of a chief, Ouray the Arrow, the Utes successfully retain one rich portion of their land as a reservation. A new agent, Nathan C. Meeker, tries to convert the Utes to his religion. His efforts instigate a battle between the Utes and the Army. The local government uses the incident as justification for taking the rest of the Ute land.

Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs

Order breaks down following the departure of an agent who has established peace on the White Mountain reservation. Many Apaches leave the reservation and engage in raids. General Crook is sent to establish order. He gets Geronimo to surrender, but Geronimo leaves the reservation again when he thinks he is about to be arrested. Another general and several thousand men are enlisted to hunt down Geronimo and his twenty–four warriors. Geronimo surrenders.

Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts

The government lures Sitting Bull back to the United States under false promises of amnesty. Many Sioux agree to sell their land, under the threat of having it taken away from them by force. The religious Ghost Dance becomes the craze among Native Americans on reservations, and the government tries to suppress it. The government chooses to arrest Sitting Bull, who gets killed in the process.

Chapter 19: Wounded Knee

Following Sitting Bull's death at Standing Rock reservation, many Native Americans there attempt to flee to Red Cloud's Pine Ridge reservation. The Army intercepts them and attempts to disarm them. After a shot is fired, the armed soldiers open fire with heavy artillery on the mainly unarmed Native Americans, killing most of them.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis

1. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 1: “Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy”](#)
2. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos](#)
3. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 3: Little Crow's War](#)
4. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes](#)
5. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion](#)
6. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War](#)
7. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 7: “The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian”](#)
8. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa](#)
9. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas](#)
10. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack](#)
11. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo](#)
12. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills](#)
13. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés](#)
14. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus](#)
15. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person](#)
16. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 16: “The Utes Must Go!”](#)
17. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs](#)
18. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts](#)
19. [Summary and Analysis Chapter 19: Wounded Knee](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 1: “Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy”

New Characters

Andrew Jackson: General of the United States Army who battled Indian tribes of the South in early 1800s and who later enacted a policy of relocating eastern Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River.

Summary

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, written by historian Dee Brown, opens by telling how Christopher Columbus called the Native Americans “Indios.” He proceeds to outline the history of European and American discovery and settlement of North America from 1492 to 1860, and its effect on the Indians. In his outline, Brown describes the arrival of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts and how, even though the Indians helped them survive their first winter, the Pilgrims steadily encroached on Indian land. In 1675, the colonists defeated Wampanoag chief King Philip and his people. Brown goes on to describe the ongoing white encroachment on Indian lands throughout the eastern part of America in the 1700s and early 1800s. This encroachment included the defeat of the Five Nations of the Iroquois, the slow defeat of the Miami Indians of the Ohio Valley from 1795 to 1840, and the forced deportation of the Cherokees from their tribal lands in the South to the Indian

Territory west of the Missouri River.

The second part of the chapter is devoted to short sketches describing the status of diverse Indian tribes in the West as of 1860, with a focus on specific chiefs and warriors of the tribes. These tribes include the Santee, Teton, and Hunkpapa branches of the Sioux nation, the Cheyennes, the Apaches, and the Navahos. (NOTE: Brown uses the variant spelling of “Navaho” throughout the book.) At the chapter’s close, Brown gives a brief mention of the “end of Indian freedom” in 1890 at Wounded Knee, which provides the title of his book.

Analysis

Chapter 1 gives readers an overview of white–Indian relations from 1492 to 1860 and offers a foreboding sense of what the fate of the Indians in the Western United States will be when the book closes with events in the 1890s. By not even mentioning the American Revolution, and giving the brief notice to the War of 1812 and the war with Mexico, Brown immediately sets the stage for a history book that will skip over many of the “standard” (i.e., “white”) details of traditional American history to focus on the concerns of the Indians. Their history is a grim one: the Wampanoags and Narragansetts of Massachusetts, the Raritans of New York, the Iroquois, and the Miamis of the Ohio Valley are only a few of the tribes Dee mentions that were destroyed or vanquished by white settlers.

Brown’s outline of the position of diverse western tribes in 1860 does not include a description of their fates thirty years later. However, by focusing not on the steady growth of white civilization westward from the Atlantic Coast but on the equally steady decline of Indian civilization, Brown signals his intent to make his history of the West tragic rather than celebratory. This focus on the fate of the Indians of the West was very unusual; Brown’s book was one of the first histories of the West to give its readers the Indians’ perspective on how the West was won or, as he would probably say, how the West was lost.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos

New Characters

Manuelito: Navaho chief, led attacks against the Army and resisted being sent to Bosque Redondo reservation before finally surrendering.

Colonel Edward Richard Sprigg Canby: Army colonel at Fort Fauntleroy who is later killed by Captain Jack.

General James Carleton: Ruthless Army general, commanded New Mexico Army in campaigns against Navahos.

Kit Carson: Former trader, negotiated with Navahos before successfully campaigning against them.

Summary

In 1860, Manuelito and his fellow Navahos are in conflict with both the American soldiers, who stole his livestock and burned his hogans, the log structures in which the Navahos lived, and the Mexicans, who stole Navaho children to be used as slaves. When the Americans build Fort Defiance and take possession of the pasture land around the fort, the Navahos, who are upset by this seizure and the slaughter of their animals by a company of mounted soldiers, raid the fort on April 30, 1860. After a time of minor scuffling between the Navahos and the Army, a horse race between Manuelito and an Army lieutenant is held at the new Fort Fauntleroy in September, 1861. The lieutenant wins the race by using trickery, and when a dispute over the

race arises, the Army massacres the Navahos who had gathered to watch. General Carleton then pushes the Mescalero Apaches into the Bosque Redondo reservation and orders the Navahos to go to the reservation as well. When they refuse, the Army's scorched-earth campaign forces many Navahos to surrender and go to the reservation. Navaho resistance continues to weaken as more and more Apache surrender, but Manuelito and his band of warriors remain defiant. Manuelito finally surrenders in 1866, and the Navahos sign a treaty on June 1, 1868, proclaiming that war between them and the U.S. would cease.

Analysis

Brown's history is clearly designed to evoke sympathy for the Indians with readers. The violence the U.S. Army inflicts upon Manuelito's warriors is extensive. Similarly, the fraudulent horse race and the soldiers' subsequent massacre of the Navahos make it difficult for any reader to take the side of the Army. This suspicion deepens when Kit Carson, former friend of many Indians, turns to leading his troops against the Navahos and conducts a scorched-earth campaign throughout the summer and fall of 1863.

Readers learn, too, of General Carleton's ferocity against the Indians and his great hunger for tribal land and the minerals found on it. This, together with the settling of the Navahos on the wretched Bosque Reservation before they returned home to their new reservation and saw much of their best lands taken by the white settlers, makes the readers wonder if things will be any better for other tribes encountered later in the book. Brown strongly indicates that things will not improve by writing that the Navahos "would come to know that they were the least unfortunate of all the western Indians."

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 3: Little Crow's War

New Characters

Little Crow: Chief of Mdewkanton Santee Sioux who led the struggle against the Army.

Colonel Henry H. Sibley: Army colonel, leader of Sixth Minnesota Regiment in battles against Santee Sioux, who oversaw the conviction and hanging of 38 Santee Sioux.

Summary

In the summer of 1862, the Santee Sioux are suffering from a year of poor crops and little game to hunt, and are seeing more and more of their lands occupied by white settlers. The tribe has become angry at the U.S. government's failure to distribute annuities to them and the fact that they have no control over the credit system the government has imposed as a way to procure food supplies. When four young tribal men kill three white men and two white women, a dispute arises within the tribe: One side wants to fight the whites, while the other wants to seek peace with them. Frustrated by their mistreatment, the Santees decide to attack Fort Ridgely. The attack on the fort fails, but the Santees go on to ravage the town of New Ulm. Colonel Sibley and his Army troops go after the Santees in response to their attacks, and after a debate, the Santees decide not to surrender the roughly 200 white and half-breed prisoners they had taken during their attacks. The Santees fight and lose a crucial battle near the Yellow Medicine River. After their defeat, 303 Santees are condemned to be executed, and the 1700 Santees not condemned are taken to Fort Snelling. President Lincoln orders 39 of the 303 Santees to be executed, and after a reprieve is granted to one Santee, the 38 others are hanged on December 26, 1862. Chief Little Crow is then killed by white settlers on July 3, 1863, and chiefs Shakopee and Medicine Bottle are sentenced by a jury to hang. The Santees are taken to a reservation at Crow Creek on the Missouri River.

Analysis

The chapter opens with a pessimistic tone: by the summer of 1862, nothing was going well for the Santee Sioux. Their crops were failing, and the tribe was largely controlled by the agency traders. Again, readers see whites failing to keep their promises to the Indians, and after the tribe is insulted by trader Andrew Myrick, it's not surprising that the tribe decides to go to war. In Brown's retelling, it is the Indians who tell of their experience of the war, not the whites. American history has traditionally taken the perspective of the white settlers, and defeats for the Indians were seldom causes for dismay. But with Brown's approach, upon reading of the Indian's failure to take Fort Ridgely and gain command of the Minnesota Valley, the readers sense that the Santees' decline is probably inevitable. Then, when 303 Santees are sentenced to death, the question of why these men were to be executed merely for fighting on the losing side of a war arises. Only 38 of the 303 are hanged, but upon learning that the government of Minnesota had put out a 25 dollar bounty for Santee scalps and that the Santee reservation was situated on barren land, one wonders if the whites would have ever accepted living alongside the Santees at all.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes

New Characters

Roman Nose: Southern Cheyenne warrior, leader of Dog Soldiers who is later killed in a battle against Forsythe's Scouts.

George and William Bent: Brothers who are the sons of a Cheyenne woman and white man. They help the Cheyennes negotiate and communicate with the Army.

Black Kettle: Southern Cheyenne chief who sought peace with the Army.

Major Edward W. Wynkoop: Army major on friendly terms with the Indians. He is relieved of post as commander at Fort Lyon.

Colonel John M. Chivington: Commanded Colorado Volunteers and sought to bring Indians under military authority.

Summary

In 1858, the Pikes Peak gold rush brings many miners to Colorado. Many settlers then come to the Platte Valley to build ranches, and they file land claims on Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho territory. This activity prompts treaty talks at Fort Wise. The Cheyennes and Arapahos sign a treaty in which they agree to live within the territory bounded by Sand Creek and the Arkansas River. However, Army soldiers enter tribal territory to hunt for Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, and conflicts between the Cheyennes and Army soldiers prompt three skirmishes in 1864. In late June and late August, Colorado Territory Governor John Evans issues two proclamations authorizing Territory citizens to make war on hostile Indians and kill them wherever they are found. This causes the Indian chiefs to negotiate for peace with the Army. At the peace talks, Evans displays great hostility to the Indians, and Army Major Anthony and Colonel Chivington prepare an attack on them. The attack, carried out at the Cheyenne's Sand Creek camp, kills 105 women and children, and 28 men; in the attacks, 9 Army soldiers are killed and 38 wounded. In January, 1865, the tribes respond to the attack by raiding and plundering South Platte trains, stations, telegraph wires, and military outposts. Black Kettle's band of 400 Cheyennes then decides to go south, where they would find many buffalo to hunt. During the spring and early summer of 1865, the remaining Cheyennes prepare for an attack,

and on July 24, they rout soldiers at a military post on the North Platte River. After negotiating with a commission, the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos signed a treaty in which they agree to live south of the Arkansas River, thereby abandoning their claims to the Territory of Colorado, and they promise perpetual peace with the whites.

Analysis

The chapter title, “War Comes to the Cheyennes,” inverts the stereotype that it is Indians who are warmongers and, instead, implies that it was whites who initiated conflict with the Cheyennes. This implication is borne out by the chapter’s opening section, which tells how whites flooded over the Indians’ land to dig gold, then began attacking Cheyenne camps. As the chapter continues, Brown recounts Governor Evans’ extreme belligerence and his command to make the Indians suffer. Ultimately, it is of little surprise to see the Army first reject peace, then carry out the Sand Creek Massacre.

The situation of the Bent brothers, half–white and half–Cheyenne, who decided that after Sand Creek they had to reject white civilization, is a telling one. Brown presents them as being in the middle between whites and Indians for some time before finally concluding that the Indians were better than whites, so that when they do decide to abandon white society, their action seems to carry more weight and helps heighten sympathy for the Cheyennes. As the chapter ends, even though the Cheyennes and Arapahos are forced to leave Colorado, the Cheyenne victory against the Army near the North Platte on July 24, 1865, shows that Indian resistance is far from over.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion

New Characters

Red Cloud: Oglala Sioux chief who fought and won a war against the Army.

General Patrick E. Connor: Army general and the leader of the Army’s campaign in Powder River country.

Summary

In late summer 1865, after the Army had decided to hunt down the Indians north of the Platte River like wolves, soldiers move into the Powder River country to invade that land. After learning that a privately organized column is moving into the country to pass through to the Montana gold fields, the Sioux and Cheyennes briefly harass the wagon train before letting it pass, but a nearby Arapaho camp, taken off guard by the Army’s presence, is annihilated by its soldiers. The Arapahos retreat, and after a Sioux truce party is shot at by soldiers, conflicts between Sioux and the Army ensue. The Sioux, led by Roman Nose, attack the Army in September and continue harassing soldiers through September. The Army retreats to Fort Connor and remains there throughout the winter, during which time half of the so–called Galvanized Yankee troops die from disease and malnutrition. The newly confident Indians deploy some warriors to keep guard over the fort while the other Indians move into the Black Hills.

Analysis

Again, the chapter title, “Powder River Invasion,” leads the readers to see the conflict between the Army and Indians from the Indians’ perspective, as it is the Indians who are being invaded. And again, the story of Indian land being invaded by a group of whites seeking gold is told, although this time the whites were merely passing through to Montana. The Indians’ initial disbelief and naiveté over the news of Army invasion shows that they have yet to learn the gravity of the threat whites present to their lifestyle. The victorious Army seems

not satisfied by the defeat it inflicts: General Connor is described as hungry to destroy more Indian villages. The low morale of the Army's Galvanized Yankee troops, however, makes the readers wonder how widespread this hunger really was. The Indians' successful resistance to the Army troops is impressive, but given the difficulties that must be overcome to ensure continued success, Red Cloud's boastful words at the chapter's close ring a little hollow.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War

New Characters

Colonel Henry Maynadier: Army colonel, engaged in treaty negotiations with Red Cloud.

Colonel Henry B. Carrington: Head of 18th Infantry Regiment, led Battle of the Hundred Slain/Fetterman Massacre, and was dismissed after losing the battle.

General William T. Sherman: Negotiator at the peace council to end Red Cloud's war and later helped direct anti-Indian campaigns.

Summary

In the winter of 1866, the Army, intent on pacifying the Indians and winning the right to build trails and railroads through Indian territory, sends five Sioux into the Powder River country to convince Indian chiefs to sign treaties at Fort Laramie. The chiefs and 2000 other Indians come to the fort in May. However, treaty talks collapse on June 13, 1866, after the chiefs learn of the Army's intent to build a road through the Powder River country. The Army continues with its plan, and Indians follow the regiment assigned to build the road, called Bozeman Road, and scout for a possible attack at the newly built Fort Kearny.

Upon deciding against an attack, the Indians instead turn to harassing and besieging traffic on the road. Red Cloud then assembles a force of 3000 to ambush Army soldiers at Peno Creek in late December, 1866. All 81 soldiers are killed in the battle, which is called the Fetterman Massacre by whites, even though the Indians suffer nearly 200 dead and wounded. The Army's response is to send in reinforcements and dispatch a new peace commission, but the commission fails to accomplish anything. Indian attacks on white soldiers near Fort Smith on August 1, 1867, fail badly: These two engagements are called the Hayfield and Wagon Box fights. A new peace commission again fails to negotiate a peace treaty. Army soldiers abandon the Powder River country in summer 1868, and a triumphant Red Cloud signs a treaty declaring mutual peace between Indians and the U.S.

Analysis

Brown's continuing use of first-person Indian accounts as prefaces to his chapters is a way to firmly introduce the Indians' perspective. The description of not just Spotted Tail's sorrow over his daughter's death but also of Colonel Maynadier's surprise that Indians could cry highlights the myth of the stoic Indian. Those tears contrast with the fact that most of the chapter describes the Indians' warfare with the Army and the heroic deeds of their warriors. The Indians, although still relying on horses in their fights and still unfamiliar with much of the whites' technology, had managed to devise ways to wreak havoc on the railroads and win Red Cloud's War.

The conflicting attitudes of whites and Indians toward the Fetterman Massacre and the Hayfield and Wagon Box fights show that the goals and expectations of the two sides in Red Cloud's War were deeply divergent.

For example, whites considered the battle at Peno Creek a “massacre” because all the Army soldiers were killed, even though those soldiers also inflicted nearly 200 Indian casualties. This, along with the collapse of peace talks at Fort Laramie in October 1867 and again in the next spring, shows that the Indians and whites were fighting for two very different things. Namely, the Indians sought to preserve their land and way of life, while the whites sought to settle and develop new lands, and profit from that development.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 7: “The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian”

New Characters

General Winfield Scott Hancock: Army general who ordered destruction of Indian camps.

Tall Bull: Southern Cheyenne chief and leader of the Dog Soldiers who was killed in battle with Army soldiers.

General Philip Sheridan: Army general with command of Kansas forts who ordered Custer to destroy hostile Indian tribes.

General George Custer: An Army general who fought many campaigns against Plains Indians before dying at Battle of Little Bighorn.

Summary

In the spring of 1867, the Southern Cheyenne Dog Soldiers go to Kansas to hunt buffalo. These soldiers had previously fought with Red Cloud against the Army, and they are joined up with several bands of Cheyennes and Arapahos. After learning of this, the Army attempts to convince the Indian chiefs in Kansas to sign the previous year’s treaty and join Black Kettle’s people south of the Arkansas. The chiefs refuse, and Roman Nose organizes many warriors to make attacks on a stagecoach line running through the area. But when that plan is foiled by a succession of early snowstorms, the Dog Soldiers make camp for the winter. In the spring of 1867, General Hancock warns the Indians that whites are coming onto their land. An impromptu council of the Army and the Dog Soldiers is formed, and when the Indians leave, an angry Hancock burns the Indians’ camp. The Dog Soldiers respond by making attacks on whites across the plains. A peace council arranged at Medicine Lodge Creek in early October 1867 results in the Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches, and Arapahos signing a treaty under which they would go to a reservation south of the Arkansas River. Roman Nose does not sign this treaty.

In mid–September 1868, Roman Nose and his Cheyennes attack the Army at the Arikaree fork of the Republican River. Roman Nose dies in the attack. General Sheridan and General Custer then respond by attacking Black Kettle’s village on the Washita River. In late December at Fort Cobb, Sheridan receives the survivors of Black Kettle’s band with contempt, and though the Dog Soldiers continue their attacks in the spring and summer of 1869, their numbers are whittled down by the Army, and the surviving group of Tall Bull and roughly 20 others die in a July battle in a ravine at Summit Springs.

Analysis

The title of this chapter, “The Only Good Indian is a Dead Indian,” points out General Sheridan’s thirst for Indian blood and foreshadows his contempt for the Indians who will surrender to him near the chapter’s close. The introduction of General Hancock begins what was a deeply personal confrontation between him and

Roman Nose. Hancock's warning that whites will sweep over the Indians' land will, of course, come true, but an undeterred Roman Nose responded to the provocation by predicting that he would slaughter Hancock. The story of Custer's troops destroying Black Kettle's band, seen in the light of Chief Wynkoop's protest against Black Kettle's death, reminds readers of Wynkoop's earlier remark that he had felt himself inferior to the Cheyennes he met in 1864. As the chapter ends, it is hard not to wonder if Brown is asking the readers to consider whether or not Wynkoop's perceived inferiority was an accurate sentiment.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa

New Characters

Donehogawa/Ely Samuel Parker: An Iroquois who adopted the name Ely Samuel Parker and served as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Jacob Cox: As Secretary of the Interior, he assured the Sioux that they could live outside their reservation and trade and receive goods.

Summary

Donehogawa, an Iroquois who was installed as the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1869, learns of the January 23, 1870, massacre of Piegan Blackfeet three months after it happened. He orders an investigation into the massacre, which had angered many Plains Indians. He also asks Red Cloud to come to Washington, D.C., for talks. Red Cloud and his group of 15 Oglalas meet Donehogawa in June and express the Sioux's anger over the treaty of 1868 which, as ratified by the Congress, puts the Sioux agency on the Missouri River. Donehogawa has Secretary of the Interior Cox explain that the Sioux would still be able to stay in their Powder River country because it was reserved as an Indian hunting ground. The Sioux would also not need to go to the reservation to trade or to receive their goods. Donehogawa's downfall starts in the latter part of 1870. His enemies attack him as being nearly a savage due to his Indian ethnicity, and this prevents his agency from being able to buy supplies for reservation Indians. This eventually forces his resignation, which comes in the summer of 1871 after a House inquiry into his alleged misconduct.

Analysis

The question of how Donehogawa could become Commissioner of Indian Affairs is answered by the explanation that during the Civil War, he had been acquainted with President Grant, who was impressed by his abilities. However, news of the wholesale massacre of Piegan Blackfeet prompts the question of whether Indians could have ever had a place in the white man's civilization. Didn't the utter ruthlessness of the soldiers who slaughtered the Blackfeet show that the Army found it better policy to kill Indians than try to negotiate with them?

The story of Donehogawa's demise makes that question even more pointed. It is, nonetheless, clearly true that the eager reception of the Indians in the East reflected an enduring fascination with them, even among those whites not on the frontier. The chapter's conclusion, with its story of Donehogawa, the alleged near-barbarian, making a fortune in New York City, shows the readers that apparently Indians could indeed make it in white civilization, but only if they played on the white man's terms.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas

New Characters

Cochise: Apache chief and leader of tribes' fierce resistance against the Army.

Mangas Colorado: Apache war chief imprisoned and killed by soldiers.

Eskiminzin: Chief of Aravaipa Apaches who is sent to Camp Grant reservation and imprisoned by the Army.

Summary

Chief Cochise and his Chiricahua Apaches had allowed Americans to pass through his territory as they traveled to California. They had also helped build a mail stage station in Apache Pass. However, the previously good relations between Apaches and whites are damaged when the Chiricahuas are accused of stealing cattle and a half-breed boy from a white settler's ranch in February, 1861. Cochise is imprisoned by the Army as a hostage to ensure the return of the cattle and boy, but he escapes and, together with his warriors, subsequently kills three white men. Lieutenant Bascom retaliates by hanging Cochise's three male relatives. Conflicts between the Apaches and the Army begin with this series of events.

In January, 1863, Mangas, an Apache chief, is killed by Army soldiers assigned to guard him. Cochise then heads up a band of 300 warriors determined to avenge his death, and effectively keeps the Southwest in turmoil for two years. In spring 1865, overtures from the U.S. government designed to move the Chiricahuas to the Bosque Redondo reservation are rejected by Cochise. The Chiricahuas instead decide to generally retreat from contact with whites, aside from occasional raids to capture cattle or horses from ranchers and miners. Then, on April 30, 1871, an expedition of mixed white, Mexican, and Papago Indians massacres 144 Aravaipa Apaches, but the killers are acquitted by a white jury. Vincent Colyer of the Indian Bureau begins talks with the Apaches to soothe their anger over the massacre, but Cochise rejects a proposal to move the Chiricahua reservation from Canada Alamosa to Fort Tularosa. He retreats to the mountains of southeastern Arizona, then after Army General Howard discussed matters with Cochise, they agree to a Chiricahua reservation in the Chiricahua Mountains and the valley west of those mountains. Cochise dies in spring 1874, and Tonto Apache chief Delshay is killed by mercenary Apaches in July. By spring 1875, most Apaches are either on reservations or have fled to Mexico.

Analysis

The chapter begins on a bad note, with Cochise first telling the government he can not trust Americans. In a conflict following his arrest, three white men are killed and, in turn, three of his male relatives are killed. When the Tucson killers then slaughtered 144 Aravaipa Apaches, the issue of white barbarism and the failure of the government to do anything about that barbarism is raised. The peace talks with Delshay and Cochise failed, and Cochise's somber but defiant speech shows that the Apaches, although eventually forced onto a reservation, were able to retain at least some of their dignity and stature. This is not true of the Aravaipas though: Reading of their constant uprooting and the harassment of Eskiminzin, readers may wonder if the government had developed a strategy of gradually forcing the Aravaipas, and other tribes, into subjugation and, ultimately, extinction.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack

New Characters

Captain Jack/Kintpuash: Modoc chief who sought to keep his tribe in California Lava Beds and was betrayed by Hooker Jim and hanged by the Army.

Hooker Jim: Modoc chief who disagreed with Captain Jack's strategy and later betrayed Captain Jack to the Army.

Summary

The Modocs, a tribe living in Northern California near Tule Lake, are led by Captain Jack. After signing a treaty during the Civil War that situated them on the Klamath reservation in Oregon, conflicts with the Klamaths, who felt the Modocs were intruders on their land, prompted the Modocs to go back south. The Army and the Modocs skirmish in late November 1872, and in the aftermath of the skirmish, the Modocs head for sanctuary in the California Lava Beds. Shortly thereafter, a separate band of Modocs led by Hooker Jim kills 12 white settlers at local ranch houses. The Modocs decide to fight the Army rather than surrender Jim's band, and they defeat the soldiers. A peace commission then arrives, and Hooker Jim escapes arrest. General Canby, who had let Jim's band escape through accidental neglect, came in with his troops, and in the spring of 1873, Army negotiations with Captain Jack fail. Hooker Jim and Captain Jack argue, and under pressure from Jim's supporters, Jack vows to kill Canby if he doesn't let the Modocs have their homeland. Canby does not grant the request, and Jack kills him. Hooker Jim then betrays Jack to the Army, and Jack is hanged on October 3, 1873.

Analysis

The readers see, in the clashes between Klamaths and Modocs on the Klamath reservation, that Indian tribes sometimes put their disputes with each other before their collective dispute with the whites. Indeed, this theme of internal clashes among Indians is present throughout the chapter. Captain Jack's decision to retreat to the California Lava Beds gained the Modocs a stronghold against the whites, but trouble emerged from within after the murders by Hooker Jim's band. Jack, pressured by Hooker Jim's successful push to fight the Army rather than surrender as criminals, and his threat to kill surrendering Modocs, unwisely promised to kill General Canby if his demands weren't met. In that murder, and Jim's betrayal of Jack, the readers see how disunity and treachery could easily push Indians to make unwise strategic decisions in their responses to whites. The members of Hooker Jim's band win freedom through their betrayal, but that individual freedom ensures that the tribe's own freedom will be short-lived.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo

New Characters

Satanta/White Bear: Kiowa chief who led struggle against the Army and was repeatedly jailed. He killed himself in Texas.

Kicking Bird: Kiowa chief who led expedition against the Army.

Lone Wolf: Kiowa chief who led delegation to Washington, D.C., and won release of Satanta and Big Tree.

Summary

In December 1868, after the Battle of Washita in which Black Kettle's village was destroyed by Custer's troops, General Sheridan orders the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, and Comanches to surrender at Fort Cobb. The Kiowas do not surrender, and Custer arrests the Kiowa chiefs, violating a truce in order to do so. Two thousand Kiowas and 2500 Comanches are put on the reservation at Fort Cobb. Then, at a sun dance on the Red River in summer 1870, the Comanches, Southern Cheyennes, and Kiowas consider the possibility of fighting the whites. In mid-May 1871, the Kiowas and Comanches decide to attack Texas, and they kill seven teamsters leading a train of ten freight wagons. Satanta takes responsibility for this raid, and he and other chiefs are arrested for it. As a result, Satanta and Big Tree are sentenced to life in prison in July 1871. But Lone Wolf's diplomacy wins the release of the two chiefs on the grounds that they are needed to make treaty negotiations for the Kiowas. Lone Wolf and the chiefs decide in St. Louis that Lone Wolf would request their release upon arriving in Washington, D.C., for talks. In Washington, D.C, the Kiowas and Comanches are told to assemble at Fort Sill by December 15, 1873. Lone Wolf, though, wins a promise for another release of Satanta and Big Tree, and they are transferred to Fort Sill, then released on parole. The Kiowas and Comanches decide in the spring of 1874 to attack the whites to preserve the buffalo herds. An attack on white hunters at Adobe Walls fails, and the Indians flee to Palo Duro and thus defy Indian Bureau orders to stay on their reservations. The Army sends out troops to conduct reprisal attacks, and they slaughter 1000 horses at Palo Duro and continue to kill many Indians throughout the fall and winter. After Lone Wolf and 252 Kiowas surrender at Fort Sill on February 25, 1875, 26 Kiowa warriors are exiled to Florida.

Analysis

In the Kiowas, Brown offers another example of the warrior ethic that drove many Indian tribes. Upon seeing the herds of buffalo become depleted, the tribe disputed "following the white man's way" and his allegedly effeminate, agrarian lifestyle but decided that hunting buffalo was essential to Kiowa existence. It may have been the warrior ethic that inspired Satanta to take responsibility for the May 17 raid on the freight wagons. Satana is described as a bold, rough, vigorous chief, which may have prompted the Army to keep imprisoning him; he was too great a threat to leave alone. It was Lone Wolf's deft diplomacy that won Satanta and Big Tree their freedom to lead the Kiowas, and it seems that the Kiowas relied on more than just brute strength to resist the U.S. It is ironic, then, to read of the failure of Quanah's medicine to protect the tribe's warriors from white bullets. The Kiowas' faith in their traditional resources of physical strength and courage, magical medicine, and their Palo Duro stronghold were simply not enough to effectively defend themselves against the whites.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills

New Characters

Sitting Bull: Sioux chief and leader of the Hunkpapas who led Indians to victory at Little Bighorn.

Crazy Horse: Oglala chief and an advocate of defending the Black Hills who helped win battles at Rosebud and Little Bighorn.

General George Crook: An Army general who defeated the Apaches and led Army soldiers in battle at Rosebud and campaigns against Plains Indians. He later resigned his post under pressure.

Summary

In the early 1870s, rumors of gold in the Black Hills spread through white settlements on the Plains, and

miners begin to converge on the area. After Custer and his Seventh Cavalry go to the Hills in 1874 and come back with the report that they were filled with gold, a flood of white men go there to pan and mine for gold. The Sioux, angry over the invasion of Paha Sapa, as they called the Black Hills, clash with Army soldiers. Red Cloud and Spotted Tail protest the invasions and the Army's failure to protect the Sioux's territory, and a peace council is held in September 1875. The Indians debate whether to demand for the gold taken from the Hills or simply resist the invasion. After rejecting an offer for the purchase of mineral rights for the Black Hills or their outright purchase, the Sioux decide on resistance. The Army responds by preparing for military operations against the Sioux throughout late 1875 and early 1876. On March 17, 1876, troops attack a Cheyenne and Oglala camp near the Powder River, and the camp is destroyed, along with 1200 to 1500 ponies. The Indians then win a clash at Rosebud on June 17. They move on to Little Bighorn, and on June 29 they route General Custer in the famous Battle of Little Bighorn. Whites respond to this defeat with outrage, and a commission is sent out to make a treaty. The treaty removes the Indians from the Black Hills and sends them to lands bordering the Missouri River. On September 9, the Army attacks Sioux chief American Horse's village, and on October 22, Colonel Miles and Sitting Bull meet, but with no results. Soldiers then attack Bull Knife's village in January 1877, and they clash with Crazy Horse's soldiers on January 8. Crazy Horse surrenders with his Oglala band at Fort Robinson in April, and he is stabbed to death by a soldier on September 5.

Analysis

At the start of the chapter, whites are again invading Indian land to search for gold, and again, the Army does little to stop that invasion. However, the government is willing to negotiate for the Black Hills minerals rather than simply seize them by force. The Indians, though, chose to protect their land rather than make money by selling their mineral rights. Brown clearly declares that this refusal led directly to the Army's preparations for a large mobilization against the Sioux. Once again, it seems the whites planned to take by force what they couldn't gain by treaty.

The defeat of Custer, a monumental event in traditional histories of the West, is discussed at some length, but Brown gives greater emphasis to the ultimate defeat of the Sioux. Sitting Bull's decision to flee to Canada, although perhaps a wise move, was made from a position of weakness, and as the story of the subjugation of the Cheyenne and murder of Crazy Horse is told, the Indians' future appears extremely dim. Little Big Man's desertion of his people to become an agency policeman is a small emblem of their fading hopes for an independent existence on their own lands.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés

New Characters

Chief Joseph: Chief of the Nez–Percé tribe who gave a famous speech upon surrendering to Colonel Miles.

Colonel Nelson Miles: Nicknamed Bear Coat by the Indians, he led the Army's campaign to defeat and capture the Nez Percés.

Summary

For 70 years, from their first encounter with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805 until the 1870s, the Nez Percés had enjoyed relatively good relations with whites. In 1863, they sign a treaty sending the tribe to a small reservation in Idaho. Old Joseph, a chief who was deeply angered by the treaty, dies in 1871 and is replaced by his son, Chief Joseph, as tribal chief. Cattlemen and gold seekers move into tribal land in the

Wallowa Valley, and in response, the government tells the tribe to move to the Lapwai reservation. Facing difficulties in the effort to get to Lapwai before the deadline assigned and angered by the command to go to the reservation, the tribal chiefs decide to resist, and they win a battle at White Bird Canyon on June 17, 1877. After holding a tribal council, the Nez Percés decide to flee to Canada to escape punishment for their rebellion, and they retreat. A battle with the Army on August 9 at Big Hole River decides little, and in September after being surrounded by soldiers, the tribe surrenders. A small band of Nez Percés find refuge with Sitting Bull in Canada, but most of the tribe is returned to Lapwai, while Chief Joseph and roughly 150 other Nez Percés are sent to the Colville reservation in Washington. Joseph eventually dies on September 21, 1904.

Analysis

The help given Lewis and Clark in 1805 by the Nez Percés established good relations with the whites, but apparently it was impossible for any Indian tribe to remain on good terms with whites for long. So it is that Brown tells how the tribe's land was reduced by treaty, then by invasion from white miners and cattlemen in the years around 1870. Chief Joseph decided he had to fight the whites rather than simply submit to them, despite having little hope of victory. And indeed, this chapter describes the slow, gradual defeat of the Nez Percés during the summer of 1877. When Chief Joseph says, "I am tired; my heart is sick and sad," the readers' feelings of sympathy for Chief Joseph and his tribe's plight are mixed with an increasing realization that the other Indian tribes are in a similarly grim situation.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus

New Characters

Dull Knife: Northern Cheyenne chief who argued that the tribe should settle down and go to Red Cloud's agency.

Little Wolf: Northern Cheyenne chief who led a band of Cheyennes north to the Tongue River valley.

Summary

As Crazy Horse is surrendering his Oglalas at Fort Robinson in 1877, about 1000 Northern Cheyennes, including chiefs Little Wolf, Dull Knife, and Standing Elk, are also surrendering at the fort. Of those Cheyennes, 937 journey from Fort Robinson to Fort Reno on the Cheyenne and Arapaho reservation. They are displeased by the land at Fort Reno, and so in the fall of 1877, they decide to go north to hunt buffalo and thereby improve their health. In the spring of 1878, the Northern Cheyennes return from their unsuccessful hunt, and back on the reservation, they suffer from measles, fevers, and chills, with a measles epidemic killing many of their children. Some chiefs, including Little Wolf and Dull Knife, decided to go north. These Cheyenne and Army soldiers fight running battles in Kansas and Nebraska, and in the fall, Little Wolf's band, now numbering 130, goes north to the Tongue River, while Dull Knife's band, now numbering 150, goes to Red Cloud's agency. Dull Knife's band discovers Red Cloud's agency has been moved to the Dakota Territory and is redirected by the Army back to Fort Robinson. In January 1879, they rebel against the order for them to be sent back to their reservation in the South because there are no buffalo in the South. In the ensuing battle at Fort Robinson fought in resistance of the order, over half of Dull Knife's warriors die, 65 Northern Cheyennes, most of them women and children, are taken prisoner, and 38 escape. They move north under Army pursuit. Of those 38, a party of 32 are trapped in a wallow, and all but 9 are killed. Meanwhile, Dull Knife's party of 6 goes north to Red Cloud's reservation at Pine Ridge. Little Wolf eventually surrenders in 1880, only to be subsequently transferred to Fort Keogh, then on to a reservation on the Tongue River.

Analysis

The Cheyennes who surrendered with the Sioux were, like many other tribes, placed on a dismal reservation, and although receiving the freedom to go hunting buffalo in the fall, they found there were too few buffalo to support the hunters themselves, much less bring back any meat for the rest of the tribe. When the Cheyennes decided to flee, they found the whites' superior technology, particularly the railroad, too much to overcome. Again, Brown is telling the readers the story of a tribe being slowly driven into the ground. The sympathy shown to the Cheyennes by the soldiers at Fort Robinson may or may not have an entirely unique kindness toward the Indians, but it was too little, too late, as the chapter closes by describing the Cheyennes being shuttled from reservation to reservation.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person

New Characters

Standing Bear: Ponca chief who successfully argued that he was a "person" and a U.S. citizen.

Carl Schurz: Secretary of the Interior, nicknamed Big Eyes by Indians, who returned the Poncas to their reservation.

Summary

The Poncas, who resided near the mouth of the Niobrara River, were a prosperous agrarian tribe enjoying good relations with whites ever since they had encountered Lewis and Clark in 1804. However, they are removed to the Indian Territory in early 1877 by order of Congress, which had decided to send many northern tribes to the territory in reaction to Custer's recent defeat. Ponca chief Standing Bear together with other chiefs stranded in the territory walk back to their homeland on the Niobrara River. Indian inspector Kemble arrests Standing Bear there, and when Standing Bear says that under the government's treaty obligations he and the other chiefs couldn't be moved from their land, he is nonetheless forced with the other Poncas to march to Quapaw reservation in July 1877. Over a quarter of the Poncas die in their first year there, and some of the surviving Poncas are forced to walk to a new reservation on the Arkansas River before returning to the Niobrara in early 1879. An outcry over their condition ensues, and Standing Bear goes to court in April 1879 to protest being forced to be sent to the Indian Territory. He wins his case by arguing that he is a "person" protected by the Constitution, and the Poncas still in the Indian Territory prepare to return to the Niobrara. However, Sherman says that Standing Bear's case is unique and does not apply to the other Poncas. Big Snake, Standing Bear's brother, is killed by a guard of Army soldiers on October 31, and his murder goes unpunished. Standing Bear is the only Ponca for whom justice has been served by the white justice system.

Analysis

The chapter focuses on the attempt of the Poncas, a prosperous and peaceful tribe on the Niobrara River, to avoid being removed from their homeland. It was a decision in far-off Washington, D.C., that set this plot in motion. The point here seems to be that remote actions by people entirely unfamiliar with the tribe were sufficient to completely overturn their way of life. Again, the Indians simply did not have enough power to stop the whites. Standing Bear did gain power through the courts by being granted protection under the Constitution, but the cruder and greater power of General Sherman was enough to render that protection effectively worthless. This theme of the powerlessness of the Indians is underscored by the reluctance of the government to bring Big Snake's murderer to justice.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 16: “The Utes Must Go!”

New Characters

Ouray the Arrow: Chief of the Utes who attempted to placate the U.S. but was forced onto a reservation in Utah.

Nathan C. Meeker: Indian agent who tried to convert Utes to an agrarian lifestyle. His policies set the stage for the conflict between the Utes and the Army.

William B. Vickers: Issued propaganda against Utes and authored the article that inspired “The Utes Must Go!” slogan.

Summary

The Utes, a tribe in Colorado, saw their land steadily invaded by miners during the 1840s and 1850s. They signed a treaty in 1863 relinquishing mineral rights throughout their territory and promising to let U.S. citizens mine in their territory. Then, in 1868, after Colorado citizens push for a reduction in the size of the Utes’ territory, Ute chief Ouray signs a treaty assigning the Utes’ 16 million acres of forests and meadows on the western slope of the Rockies and preventing unauthorized whites from being on Ute territory. Miners persist in trespassing on Ute land, however, and Nathan Meeker, an agent for the Ute reservation, attempts to make the Utes over into a Christian, agrarian tribe with a greater desire for material goods. William B. Vickers picks up on Meeker’s agenda and in 1879 writes a popular anti-Ute tract that inspires the spread of “The Utes Must Go!” slogan across the state by the summer. When Meeker’s agenda sparks friction with the Utes, he calls for cavalry troops to come to the White River agency to arrest Ute chiefs. The Utes hear of this plan, and in September 1879, after a clash with the cavalry begins at Milk River on the boundary of the reservation, the Utes at White River kill all the white men working for the agency. Stories of atrocities at White River spark violent outrage in Colorado, and as punishment in 1881, nearly all the Utes are put onto a reservation on marginal land in Utah.

Analysis

The story of a tribe being pushed off its land by white settlers, gold miners, and an Army first unwilling to keep whites off the tribe’s land, then sending out troops to subdue the tribe, is repeated in this chapter. There is, though, the new element of a chief who, upon agreeing to receive a salary from the government in exchange for keeping peace with it, becomes reluctant to resist that government even as his tribe is pushed off its lands. Another new element is the presence of an agent, Nathan Meeker, who is committed to converting a tribe from “rustic barbarism” to hard-working materialism. It is hard to conclude decisively that Meeker was chosen to be the Utes’ agent because of his zeal to transform the Utes’ lifestyle, but the government failed to discipline or replace Meeker. Indeed, Brown’s comment that Meeker’s pressure had moved everything “in the right direction” for Colorado Governor Pitkin makes the readers wonder if his efforts were, in fact, encouraged by the government.

William B. Vickers’ propaganda campaign against the Utes is one example of the importance of the media in shaping public opinion of the Indians, and shaping public sentiment to support the Army’s actions toward Indian tribes.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs

New Characters

Geronimo: Apache chief who was made notorious through rumors of his atrocities and was forced onto a reservation in 1894.

Victorio: Apache chief, leader of Warm Spring band, who was killed in 1880 after making raids in Mexico and the U.S..

Summary

Cochise's death in 1874 leads to divisions within the Apache tribe, and the Apaches, split into factions, take to raiding white settlements. The government then receives "reports of trouble on the Chiricahua reservation." The Chiricahua Apaches resist ensuing government efforts to remove them from their White Mountain reservation to the San Carlos agency. They flee to Mexico and take to raiding the Mexicans for their cattle and horses in order to buy supplies from whites in New Mexico. Agent John Clum transfers Victorio and most of the other Warm Springs Apaches to the San Carlos agency, but conditions there disintegrate over the summer of 1877 due to insufficient rations and the invasion of a corner of the reservation by miners. Victorio leads his band off the reservation and flees to the Mimbres Mountains with 80 warriors in order to escape capture by the Army. His growing band of warriors take to killing and torturing settlers in 1879, and after the U.S. and Mexico make a joint effort to hunt him down, he and much of his band are killed on October 14, 1880, by Mexican soldiers. Geronimo and roughly 70 other Chiricahuas, afraid of their possible arrest, flee the White Mountain reservation in September 1881 and return to the reservation with substantial arms and equipment in April 1882, intent on freeing as many Apaches as possible. Although their band is caught by the Army's cavalry at Horse Shoe Canyon, many chiefs and warriors successfully escape to Mexico. General Crook then takes command of the reservation and introduces reforms while planning to negotiate with Geronimo and the other Apache guerrillas in Mexico. A negotiated return of Geronimo and his band leads to them arriving at San Carlos in February 1884. However, a group of 132 Apaches flee the reservation on May 17, 1885, perhaps because they are drunk, or perhaps because of renewed fears of their arrest. The steady spread of invented atrocity stories about Geronimo, combined with anger over his band's flight from the reservation, leads to orders for Crook to demand surrender from him, which he does on March 25, 1886. Geronimo takes flight again, though, and is captured by General Miles' soldiers in summer 1886. He and his Chiricahuas are taken first to Florida, then, in 1894, to Fort Sill.

Analysis

Geronimo, like the Utes, fell victim to media propaganda. It seems probable that the wild rumors about his savagery came from both the plain fact that his escape from his reservation scared whites and from the true savageries committed by Victorio. Brown writes that some whites, such as General Crook, John Clum, and Hugh Scott, aided the Apaches. Brown, though, appears to present those whites as exceptions. Most whites, Brown asserts, were irrevocably hostile to the idea of freedom for the Apaches. Whatever the case, Geronimo was, as Brown writes, "the last of the Apache chiefs." The ongoing themes of separating an Indian tribe from its homeland, ruthless pursuit of the Indians, and steady invasion of a tribe's land are all prevalent in this chapter.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts

New Characters

Kicking Bear: A Minneconjou who had a vision of Christ in Nevada and began the Ghost Dance religion.

Buffalo Bill Cody: The stager of Wild West Show in which Sitting Bull performed.

Summary

After the Sioux are forced off their Black Hills and Powder River country territories in 1876 and 1877, they are put on the Great Sioux Reservation between the 103rd meridian and the Missouri River, in Dakota Territory. Sitting Bull, in exile in Canada with 3000 Sioux, meets with Army General Terry in October 1877, but nothing results from the talks. On July 19, 1881, Sitting Bull and 186 of the Sioux still with him ride into Fort Buford on the Sioux reservation to surrender. After a scheme to get the Sioux to give up half their reservation fails in Congress in 1883, Sitting Bull is transferred in August of that year to Standing Rock, the site of the Hunkpapa agency. After several years of inaction, the Sioux sign a new agreement fragmenting their reservation into many small, disconnected lands in July 1889. Then, in October 1890, the Ghost Dance religion arises.

Kicking Bear, a Minneconjou of the Cheyenne River agency, says that he and ten other Sioux had gone to Nevada by rail, and there they saw the returned Christ, who taught them the Dance of the Ghosts. He also tells them that in the next springtime, new soil would cover the earth and bury all white men, then sweet grass, streams, and trees would cover the ground. The buffalo and wild horses would return, and all Indians dancing the Ghost Dance would go up in the air to wait for the new earth to emerge, at which point they and the ghosts of their ancestors would live on the new earth. The religion sweeps through the Sioux reservations despite resistance from the Indian Bureau. On December 12, 1890, the arrest of Sitting Bull is ordered by General Miles as a way to quell the Ghost Dance “disturbance,” and on December 15, Sitting Bull is killed by Bull Head and Red Tomahawk, two of the Indian policemen sent to arrest him.

Analysis

Sitting Bull, though free in Canada, learned that Canadian whites were not much more willing to help his people than American whites were. Therefore, he eventually decided to come back to America where, again, the Army treated him harshly. It is interesting to note, in the midst of the wrangling between Sioux and the various government commissions, the mention of Reverend Hinman, who thought the Indians needed “less land and more Christianity.” This is exactly what will happen, with the Sioux first adopting the Ghost Dance faith, then being massacred at Wounded Knee in the next chapter.

The juxtaposition of Sitting Bull’s appearances at the council, where the commissioners bluntly criticize the Sioux and state the desire to make them as white men, with his wildly popular appearances in cities across the country, is intriguing. Why did Americans flock in such great numbers to see the unbowed Sitting Bull, “a constant symbol of Indian resistance,” if they also wanted to make the Indians into whites?

The whites’ ignorance of the essentially Christian nature of the Ghost Dance religion may be explained by their focus, not on the Christian tenets of the faith but on its prophecy of a re-emergence of the Indian race and the disappearance of the white race. It seems likely that the government agents were more concerned by that prophecy than they were satisfied to see the Indians finally being brought into the Christian religion. In light of that prophecy, the killing of Sitting Bull by Indian police appears especially tragic. The Indians, rather than coming to live on a blissful new earth, were turning against each other and helping finalize their subjugation before the white man.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Summary and Analysis Chapter 19: Wounded Knee

New Characters

Big Foot: Leader of band of Minneconjous who was killed at his camp at Wounded Knee in 1890.

Black Coyote: The Minneconjou whose dispute with Army soldiers sparked battle at Wounded Knee.

Summary

After Sitting Bull's death and the fight following his death, roughly 100 Hunkpapas flee the Standing Rock agency and meet up with Big Foot's Minneconjous near Cherry Creek. The Minneconjous and Hunkpapas, choosing not to resist the Army due to their belief in the Ghost Dance prophecy, flee toward Pine Ridge, thinking that Red Cloud might give them protection from the Army soldiers. However, they encounter Major Whitside's troops on December 28, 1890, and are told to head to Wounded Knee, where a census is made of them as they camp near the cavalry's camp. The Indians are ordered to turn in their guns the next morning, but when Black Coyote, a deaf Minneconjou, refuses to turn in his rifle, a struggle ensues, and a gun goes off. The Army responds by opening fire, and perhaps 300 of the 350 Indians are massacred. The Army, meanwhile, suffers about 25 losses and 39 wounded. The wounded Sioux survivors reach Pine Ridge after dark that day, and the dead bodies lying frozen in the snow at Wounded Knee are found later by a burial party.

Analysis

The heavy irony of the conclusion, with its "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men" message, underscores the tragedy of Wounded Knee. With their resistance to the Army sorely weakened by their Ghost Dance faith, the vulnerable Sioux were not given charity by the cavalry, but instead were nearly annihilated. Such an ending strongly suggests Brown's belief that the whites were determined to never give anything to the Indians. Even the Sioux' adoption of an essentially Christian religion could not protect them from the soldiers' guns. The readers can hardly help concluding that Brown is telling us that it was the Indians who, in the history told by this book, had justice and righteousness on their side.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Quizzes

1. [Questions and Answers Chapter 1: "Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy"](#)
2. [Questions and Answers Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos](#)
3. [Questions and Answers Chapter 3: Little Crow's War](#)
4. [Questions and Answers Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes](#)
5. [Questions and Answers Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion](#)
6. [Questions and Answers Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War](#)
7. [Questions and Answers Chapter 7: "The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian"](#)
8. [Questions and Answers Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa](#)
9. [Questions and Answers Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas](#)
10. [Questions and Answers Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack](#)
11. [Questions and Answers Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo](#)
12. [Questions and Answers Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills](#)
13. [Questions and Answers Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés](#)

14. [Questions and Answers Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus](#)
15. [Questions and Answers Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person](#)
16. [Questions and Answers Chapter 16: “The Utes Must Go!”](#)
17. [Questions and Answers Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs](#)
18. [Questions and Answers Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts](#)
19. [Questions and Answers Chapter 19: Wounded Knee](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 1: “Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy”

Study Questions

1. What tribe did Christopher Columbus meet upon landing in North America, and where did he meet them?
2. What four Indians gave aid to the Pilgrims, and why?
3. Who led the Indians’ war against Massachusetts colonists?
4. What was the Indians’ nickname for Andrew Jackson?
5. Who was the most powerful Indian tribe in the West in 1860?

Answers

1. The Taino, in San Salvador.
2. Samoset, Massasoit, Squanto, and Hobomah volunteered to aid the Pilgrims because they knew some English.
3. King Philip of Pokanoket.
4. The Indians called Andrew Jackson “Sharp Knife.”
5. The Sioux.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos

Study Questions

1. What was the name of the first fort the Army erected on Navaho lands?
2. Why did the Navahos attack the fort’s soldiers?
3. What sparked the Army’s massacre of the Navahos?
4. What did General Carleton say the Navahos must do to achieve peace?

5. How is General Carleton described?

Answers

1. Fort Defiance
2. To replace their horses and mules that had been shot by a company of mounted soldiers.
3. A disputed horse race between Manuelito, riding on his pony, and a lieutenant, riding his quarter horse.
4. Obey the Army's orders for them to go to the Bosque Redondo reservation.
5. Brown describes Carleton as having a hairy face and fierce eyes with a "mouth ... a man without humor."

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 3: Little Crow's War

Study Questions

1. To where did the Santee Sioux retreat during the ten years before the Civil War?
2. Why did the Santees become angry at the U.S. during 1862?
3. How did Sibley respond to the message Little Crow sent him on September 7?
4. What reward did the murderers of Little Crow receive?
5. Describe the physical properties of the Santee reservation.

Answers

1. The Santees retreated to a strip of territory along the Minnesota River.
2. The annuities promised the Santees by treaty were not given, and the reservation agent for the Upper Agency refused to give them food from his warehouse.
3. Sibley ordered Little Crow to hand over the prisoners he held under a flag of truce if he wanted to be talked to "like a man."
4. The standard bounty for an Indian scalp and a \$500 bonus.
5. The reservation was set on barren lands that had little rainfall, little hunting available, and undrinkable water.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes

Study Questions

1. Why did whites begin settling in Colorado in large numbers?
2. What were Black Kettle's reasons for not fighting the whites?
3. What Indians did John Evans say could be killed?
4. Why were the Southern Cheyennes invited on the expedition against whites at Platte Bridge Station?
5. What was the ultimate result of the Sand Creek massacre?

Answers

1. Gold was discovered at Pikes Peak in 1858.
2. Black Kettle wanted to be friendly and peaceable, was not able to fight the whites, and wanted to live in peace.
3. Evans said that all those not on a reservation could be killed.
4. The Southern Cheyennes were invited to take revenge for the massacre of their relatives.
5. The Cheyennes and Arapahos were pushed off their claims in the Territory of Colorado.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion

Study Questions

1. What was the Powder River tribes' reaction to the rumors of soldiers surrounding them, and why did they have that reaction?
2. What did the Cheyennes say would stop their attacks on whites?
3. Why was Sitting Bull opposed to negotiating with the soldiers?
4. What did the Cheyennes learn from their September charge against the Army?
5. What fate did the Galvanized Yankee troops meet in the winter of 1865?

Answers

1. The tribes were skeptical because they thought their country couldn't be invaded.
2. The Cheyennes would agree to halt their attacks once the government hung Colonel Covington.
3. Sitting Bull didn't trust the soldiers and was against begging them.

4. The Cheyennes learned of the necessity of using guns against the Army.
5. Half of the troops died from scurvy, malnutrition, and pneumonia, and many others deserted.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War

Study Questions

1. Why did Colonel Maynadier deploy Indians to Powder River, and who were the Indians he deployed?
2. Why did Red Cloud decide to wait to sign the treaty?
3. What sparked the Sioux's confrontation with the Army?
4. What was the Indians' strategy against the Army?
5. What were the end results of Red Cloud's war?

Answers

1. The Indians were deployed because whites weren't willing to go. The five Sioux he sent were Big Mouth, Big Ribs, Eagle Foot, Whirlwind, and Little Crow.
2. Waiting allowed him time to send runners to other tribes and time to gather beaver pelts and buffalo hides for trade.
3. The Sioux confronted the Army after the Army decided to build the road through the Powder River country without concern for the treaty it had signed.
4. The Indians strategy was to band together, isolate the Army soldiers, and then mount an attack on Fort Phil Kearny.
5. Red Cloud's war resulted in Powder River road being closed, the Army forts being abandoned, and both the U.S. and the Indians pledging to keep peace.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 7: "The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian"

Study Questions

1. Who was the leader of the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos?
2. Why did the Indian chiefs stay put?

3. How did General Hancock respond to the Indians leaving the conference, and what was the Indians' response to Hancock?
4. For the Indians, what was the impact of the death of Roman Nose?
5. Why did the Southern Cheyennes divide?

Answers

1. Roman Nose was the leader of the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos.
2. The chiefs decided against joining because they disagreed about strategy.
3. Hancock burned the Indian's entire abandoned camp, and the Indians responded by destroying telegraph lines and attacking soldiers' camps and stage stations.
4. The Indians suffered a loss of morale after Roman Nose's death and grew to believe that their tribes would ultimately be defeated.
5. Little Robe ordered Tall Bull and the Dog Soldiers to leave the reservation because they had provoked trouble with the whites.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa

Study Questions

1. Who was Donehogawa?
2. Who went to Washington, D.C., to meet President Grant?
3. What was the trick played on the Sioux?
4. How did Donehogawa placate the Sioux?
5. What caused the downfall of Donehogawa?

Answers

1. Donehogawa was an Iroquois who had forged a friendship with President Grant and was appointed by Grant as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
2. A delegation of the Oglalas, led by Red Cloud, and a delegation of Brules, lead by Spotted Tail, met with the President.
3. The treaty they had signed, as it was ratified by Congress, made no mention of the Laramie or Platte reservations, and instead stated that the Sioux agency would be on the Missouri River.
4. Donehogawa had Secretary Cox explain that the Sioux could still live on their hunting grounds and trade and receive goods outside their reservation.

5. Donehogawa's reforms of the bureau had turned political bosses against him, and his blocking of the Big Horn mining venture had made him enemies in the West. Then, in 1870, Congress blocked the appropriation of funds for buying reservation supplies, William Welsh charged him with fraud, and the House investigated him. Shortly thereafter, he was forced to resign his office.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas

Study Questions

1. How did the conflict between Cochise and the U.S. begin?
2. What was the Apaches' response to the murder of Mangas?
3. What were the results of the trial of the Tucson killers?
4. Why did Cochise want a reservation in Canada Alamosa?
5. On what basis was Eskiminzin imprisoned?

Answers

1. Cochise was accused of stealing cattle and kidnapping a half-breed boy.
2. The Apaches responded with raids on settlements and trails in Arizona and New Mexico.
3. The Tucson killers were found not guilty, and Lieutenant Whitman's career was destroyed. He resigned after being submitted to three court-martials.
4. Cochise preferred the clear, cold water of the streams there, and he sought to avoid the flies in the mountains who attacked his horses, and the bad spirits in the mountains.
5. Because Eskiminzin was a chief, and imprisonment was a military precaution taken after the killing of Lieutenant Alma.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack

Study Questions

1. Why did the Modocs adapt the nickname of Captain Jack for Kintpuash?
2. Why did the whites want Jack to lay down his gun?
3. Why did the Modocs surrender?
4. Why did Hooker Jim's band leave Captain Jack?

5. What happened to Jack's body?

Answers

1. The Modocs thought "Captain Jack" was a funny name.

2. Because Captain Jack was chief, the whites believed that his example would be followed by others in his tribe.

3. The Modoc tribe had been promised that the murderers of the white settlers would merely be kept on a reservation to the south.

4. Hooker Jim disagreed with Jack's strategy, and he sought to betray him and thereby gain freedom.

5. Jack's body was embalmed in Yreka, then sent to the East as a carnival attraction.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo

Study Questions

1. What did the treaty of Medicine Lodge grant the Kiowas?

2. What was Kicking Bird's response to taunts from the warriors?

3. How did the Kiowas respond to the convictions of their two leaders?

4. What happened at the sun dance of 1874?

5. Why did Sherman bring Satanta back to jail?

Answers

1. The treaty granted the Kiowa territory and the right to hunt south of the Arkansas River if there were enough buffalo "to justify the chase."

2. In response to the taunts, Kicking Bird took 100 warriors, launched an attack on a mail coach, and won a fight with Army soldiers.

3. The Kiowas took care to avoid whites while they followed buffalo between the Red and Canadian Rivers, and they made winter camp in Palo Duro Canyon.

4. The Kiowas and Comanches agreed at the sun dance to fight together to push the whites off the buffalos' grazing land.

5. Sherman returned Satanta to jail after Satanta had defied Sherman and the Army.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills

Study Questions

1. What prompted whites to begin settling in the Black Hills?
2. What was the debate the chiefs had over what should be demanded from the U.S.?
3. What was the meaning of Sitting Bull's vision?
4. Why did the Indians go to Little Bighorn Valley?
5. What did the American outrage after the Custer massacre produce?

Answers

1. General Custer's report that the hills were full of gold prompted the whites to converge on the Black Hills.
2. The chiefs had debated whether to accept payment for the gold mined in the hills, or absolute Indian sovereignty over the hills, with no miners allowed in the hills.
3. Sitting Bull envisioned that the white men had no ears to hear the Indians' requests, and so they would be killed.
4. Indians went to the valley because of reports that there were many antelope there, as well as good grazing land for their horses.
5. After Custer was killed, the Sioux were forced to give up their rights to the Black Hills.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés

Study Questions

1. How did the Nez Percés get their name?
2. What damages did white settlers inflict on the Nez Percés?
3. What move did General Howard make against the Nez Percés?
4. What was the Nez–Percé's strategy?
5. Where were the Nez Percés sent?

Answers

1. The French saw that some of them wore dentalium shells in their noses.
2. Gold miners stole their horses, and cattlemen stole and branded their cattle.

3. Howard arrested the prophet Toohoolhoolzote and ordered the tribe to move to the Lapwai reservation within 30 days.
4. The Nez Percés decided to flee to Canada in order to avoid the Army’s soldiers.
5. The Nez–Percé tribe was sent to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, then to a plain in the Indian Territory.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus

Study Questions

1. What were the Northern Cheyennes’ objections to being put on the Cheyenne–Arapaho reservation?
2. What was the Cheyennes’ impression of Carl Schurz?
3. What was the disagreement between the Cheyenne chiefs?
4. How did the U.S. respond to the Cheyennes’ request to go north?
5. Where were the Cheyennes at Fort Keogh sent?

Answers

1. On the reservation, there was no game to hunt, the water was bad, rations were insufficient, and there were too many mosquitoes and too much summer heat.
2. The Cheyennes named Schurz “Big Eyes” and wondered how, with such large eyes, he could be so ignorant.
3. Some chiefs thought it was best to die on the reservation, while others wanted to go north.
4. The U.S. forced the Cheyennes to return to the reservation for fear that if they were let go, it would fracture the reservation system.
5. They were sent to a reservation on the Tongue River.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person

Study Questions

1. Why were the Poncas to be sent off their land?
2. How many Poncas died a year after they arrived in the Indian Territory?
3. Why did General Crook oppose returning the Poncas to the Indian Territory?

4. What was the legal argument made on Standing Bear's behalf?
5. Was the murderer of Big Snake punished?

Answers

1. After Custer's defeat, Congress decided the Poncas needed to be removed to the Indian Territory.
2. Nearly one-quarter of the tribe died.
3. General Crook was outraged by the tribe's plight, and he was especially impressed by Standing Bear.
4. The argument made on behalf of Standing Bear was that he was a "person" and therefore had rights under the Constitution.
5. No, the government did not pursue the murderer.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 16: "The Utes Must Go!"

Study Questions

1. What did Ouray receive in his treaty negotiations?
2. What was the effect of the \$1000 annual stipend, lasting for 10 years, that was given to Ouray?
3. What did Meeker think would force the Utes to work for him?
4. Who wrote the anti-Ute article?
5. Where were the rest of the Utes sent?

Answers

1. He received 16 million acres of forest and meadows, and the promise that whites would be prohibited from entering the Ute's land.
2. He had motivation to maintain the status quo and became increasingly allied with the U.S.
3. Meeker believed that if he replaced their ponies with draft horses, their movement would be limited, and he believed controlling their rations would force them to work for him.
4. William B. Vickers was the author of the article.
5. The Utes were sent to land in Utah unwanted by the Mormons, and a small strip of territory in southwestern Colorado.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs

Study Questions

1. What was the reaction to Clum's demand for the Army soldiers to leave?
2. Why did Victorio decide to resist the U.S.?
3. Why did General Crook return to Arizona?
4. How did the War Department punish General Crook for Geronimo's escape?
5. Why did General Crook avoid fighting the Apaches?

Answers

1. After Clum's demand, there was outrage in Washington, D.C., New Mexico, and Arizona, and Clum decided to depart for Tombstone.
2. Victorio believed that resistance was the only way to avoid the extinction of the Apaches.
3. Crook returned in order to restrain and organize the Army soldiers and white civilians.
4. Crook was given a severe reprimand and forced to resign.
5. Crook believed that fighting the Apaches would have been too difficult and too expensive.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts

Study Questions

1. How did General Terry gain access to Sitting Bull?
2. Why did the Sioux come into Fort Buford?
3. Why did Sitting Bull reconcile with the commissioners?
4. How did the audience respond to Sitting Bull's speech at Bismarck?
5. How did the Ghost Dance religion begin?

Answers

1. The War Department made arrangements with Canada for Terry to go into Canada with the Mounties to meet Sitting Bull.
2. The harshness of life in Canada and lack of governmental support caused the Sioux to leave Canada and go to the Great Sioux Reservation.
3. Sitting Bull wrongly thought that the commissioners would help the Sioux keep their land.

4. Sitting Bull was given a standing ovation.
5. After 11 Sioux had a vision in Nevada of the returned Christ, who taught them to Ghost Dance.

» [Back to Section Index](#)
» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Questions and Answers Chapter 19: Wounded Knee

Study Questions

1. How did the Ghost Dance religion affect the Sioux?
2. How many guns did the Sioux have at Wounded Knee Creek?
3. How many Sioux died at Wounded Knee?
4. Where were the wounded Sioux taken?
5. Who commanded the Army soldiers?

Answers

1. Because of their belief that their ancestors would soon return to life and the whites would leave, the Sioux did not retaliate against the Army soldiers.
2. The Sioux had two rifles.
3. Approximately 300 Sioux were massacred.
4. The survivors were taken to the Episcopal mission at Pine Ridge.
5. Colonel James W. Forsyth was the commanding officer.

» [Back to Section Index](#)
» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Characters

Big Foot

Big Foot is a Minneconjou chief who surrenders his people when the military starts killing indiscriminately in revenge for the death of Custer. After he is identified as an instigator of the Ghost Dance, Big Foot tries to take his people to Red Cloud's Agency at Pine Ridge. The Army captures and tries to disarm them. In the process, a Minneconjou fires a shot and the military reacts, killing Big Foot and most of the Minneconjous.

Black Kettle

Black Kettle is a Cheyenne chief who goes to great lengths to keep peace with white people. He assures his people at Sand Creek that they have protection from the Army, who slaughters the village. He escapes, but is tricked once again at a later date, and dies while trying to make peace with the soldiers. General Sheridan lies about Black Kettle's death, saying that he was offered peace but chose to make war.

Captain Jack

Captain Jack is the chief of the Modocs; he tries to make peace with white people, even after some Modocs are killed. However, when Hooker Jim's band of Modocs kill some settlers, Captain Jack agrees not to turn them in. He kills General Canby under pressure from this band who then betrays Captain Jack by helping the Army find him. Captain Jack is hanged.

Cochise

Cochise is an Apache chief who fights many battles with the American military, escapes capture on several occasions, and helps lead raids against white settlers. When American soldiers shoot his father-in-law, Mangas, Cochise rides to Mexico and forces a Mexican surgeon to save Mangas's life. Cochise is able to secure a reservation that encompasses part of the Apaches' land.

Crazy Horse

Crazy Horse is a Sioux chief who refuses to live on a reservation. As a young man, Crazy Horse distinguishes himself in Red Cloud's War. He is one of the many chiefs who oppose selling the Black Hills to the government, and he helps lead several battles in this war, including the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in which General Custer is killed. When the military comes in overwhelming force to avenge Custer's death, Crazy Horse attempts to fight them, but ultimately he surrenders. When several of his people enlist with the military to help fight other Native Americans, Crazy Horse tries to take the rest of his people and return to his land. He is captured and is fatally stabbed while trying to escape. Crazy Horse's parents bury his heart and bones near Wounded Knee Creek.

General George Crook

General Crook leads several campaigns against the Apaches—who call him Gray Wolf—and the Plains Native Americans—who call him Three Stars. Over the course of a decade, Crook's cold attitude towards Native Americans changes to one of respect and sympathy. He helps the runaway Poncas win their freedom in court, uses diplomacy instead of force to get Geronimo to surrender, and condemns local newspapers for spreading lies about the Apaches. He resigns when the War Department does not recognize Crook's surrender terms with Geronimo. The government later dupes Crook into convincing the Sioux that the government will take their lands by force if the Sioux do not sell them.

General George Armstrong Custer

General Custer participates in several campaigns against the Plains Native Americans—who call him either Hard Backsides or Long Hair. Custer reports that the Black Hills are filled with gold, which attracts many gold seekers to the region. During the resulting War for the Black Hills, at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Sioux and Cheyenne warriors kill Custer and all of his men—the greatest defeat suffered by the United States Army in the conflicts with Native Americans. The government's massive retaliation for this defeat ultimately leads to the end of freedom for all Plains Native Americans.

Donehogawa

Donehogawa, an Iroquois who takes the American name of Ely Samuel Parker, has an unusual amount of success in the world of white people. He learns English and goes to law school but is refused the right to take the bar exam. He becomes a civil engineer and serves with General Grant during the Civil War. When General Lee surrenders at Appomattox, Parker writes out the terms of surrender. When Grant is elected president, he makes Parker his Commissioner of Indian Affairs. However, a strong political group opposed to any Native American in government eventually harasses Parker until he resigns.

Dull Knife

Dull Knife is a Northern-Cheyenne chief who helps lead a number of battles. Following Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn, the military attacks and destroys Dull Knife's village. The Northern Cheyennes are transferred to a Cheyenne reservation in Indian Territory, where many die from hunger and disease. Dull Knife and

several Cheyennes seek sanctuary with Red Cloud but are captured. They escape, but only Dull Knife and a small band of Cheyennes make it to Red Cloud's agency, where they become prisoners.

Geronimo

Geronimo is an Apache chief who leads many raids into Mexico. When the government places soldiers near his reservation, Geronimo thinks he is in danger. He and others escape to their Mexican stronghold and build a small army. Geronimo surrenders to General Crook but leaves the reservation again when he hears rumors he is going to be arrested. The Army sends a force of several thousand against Geronimo's twenty-four men. Geronimo surrenders and is sent to prison in Florida. He dies on a reservation as a prisoner of war.

The Gray Wolf

See General George Crook

The Great Warrior Sherman

See General William T. Sherman

Hard Backsides

See General George Armstrong Custer

Kicking Bird

Kicking Bird is a Kiowa chief who refuses to engage in or support aggressive acts against the Army. Because of this allegiance, the government forces Kicking Bird to choose several Kiowas to answer for the tribe's part in their battles. Kicking Bird dies mysteriously after drinking a cup of coffee, two days after his life was threatened by a medicine man.

Little Crow

Little Crow is a chief of the Santee Sioux, who are repeatedly swindled out of their treaty provisions. Little Crow does not want to fight the powerful U.S. military, but he has no choice when some of the Santee Sioux young men kill settlers. The Santees win some battles but lose the war when their major ambush fails and when Little Crow is betrayed by another Santee. Little Crow is shot and killed by a white settler.

Little Wolf

Little Wolf is a Northern–Cheyenne chief who helps lead a number of battles. The Northern Cheyennes are transferred to a Cheyenne reservation in Indian Territory, where many die from hunger and disease. Little Wolf and several other Cheyennes flee north towards their old territory but surrender after spending a winter hiding from soldiers. Little Wolf is one of many Native Americans who is destroyed by alcohol.

Lone Wolf

Lone Wolf is a Kiowa chief who arranges for the parole of Satanta and another chief. He argues with Kicking Bird's peaceful ways. Lone Wolf joins with the Comanches and participates in several battles with white soldiers and hunters, in an attempt to drive them out of the region and save the buffalo. When his son dies in one of these battles, Lone Wolf strengthens his resolve. Lone Wolf is one of the last Kiowas to surrender and is one of the people chosen by Kicking Bird to be imprisoned.

Long Hair

See General George Armstrong Custer

Manuelito

Manuelito is a Navaho chief who tries to maintain peace with the United States through treaties. However, after U.S. soldiers cheat during a friendly horse race—and shoot Navahos who try to protest—the Navahos go to war with the soldiers. Manuelito is the last chief to surrender. He and the others live in squalor for two

years at the Bosque Redondo reservation before the government allows them to return to a small portion of their old land.

Ouray the Arrow

Ouray is a Ute chief who is fluent in English. He uses these skills to retain a large chunk of Ute land. When a new agent comes to the White River Agency and attempts to convert Ouray and the Utes to his religion and ways of life, the agent instigates a battle. The government uses the incident as justification to take the Ute land.

Ely Samuel Parker

See Donehogawa

Red Cloud

Red Cloud is a Sioux chief who wins many battles against the U.S. government. He engages in a successful guerrilla war that causes the government to withdraw the Army from the region. When Red Cloud finds out later that the peace treaty he signed had unknown items in it, he successfully presents his case to President Grant and Donehogawa. He also wins over a crowd of New Yorkers with his impassioned speech about the false treaty. Ultimately, however, Red Cloud loses all that he has gained when he is forced to sign a treaty giving away his lands and move his people to a reservation.

Roman Nose

Roman Nose is a Southern–Cheyenne warrior. Although he is not a chief, he commands the allegiance of the Dog Soldier Society, a powerful group of Cheyenne warriors. He leads a successful attack against soldiers in the Powder River country and unifies the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos to fight for their own country. The government knows that Roman Nose is the key to a lasting peace in the area, but he refuses to attend a peace commission. Instead, he leads several raids against settlers and dies while fighting a small band of Army scouts.

Satanta

Satanta is a Kiowa chief who is captured and imprisoned. Eventually, Lone Wolf arranges for his parole. Satanta and his warriors are unsuccessful in their fight to drive away the white buffalo hunters. Satanta is eventually given life in prison, where he commits suicide.

General Philip Sheridan

General Sheridan leads several campaigns against the Plains Native Americans. He lies about the massacre at Black Kettle's village, saying that he had offered the chief sanctuary. Sheridan makes a comment that in being quoted eventually evolves into the hate statement: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Sheridan believes that killing all of the buffalo is the best way to get Native Americans to adopt white culture.

General William T. Sherman

General Sherman, a Civil War hero known as the Great Warrior Sherman by most Native Americans, oversees American forces through many of the Native–American wars. He attends several peace commissions with various Native–American tribes. Following Custer's defeat, Sherman assumes military control of all reservations. After Standing Bear wins his court case and freedom, Sherman defies the new law by giving General Sheridan military authority to apprehend other Poncas.

Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull is the Sioux's most powerful chief, and on some occasions he commands allegiance from other Native–American tribes as well. He fights many battles with U.S. soldiers to preserve his freedom and the Sioux ownership of the Black Hills. He and Crazy Horse defeat Custer's forces at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. When the military comes in overwhelming force to avenge Custer's death, Sitting Bull and some of

his followers move into Canada. However, he becomes a military prisoner after he returns to the United States under a false promise of amnesty. Many chiefs, newspaper reporters, and others come to visit him, and Sitting Bull soon becomes a celebrity. He even receives permission to go on tour around the country. The government incorrectly believes that Sitting Bull is responsible for the spread of the Ghost Dance and tries to arrest him. He is killed in the process by two Sioux policemen.

Standing Bear

Standing Bear is a Ponca chief. Standing Bear's people are tricked into being transferred to Indian Territory, where many of them die, including his last son. He and a group of Poncas are captured while trying to return to Poncas land to bury him. General Crook, two lawyers, and a sympathetic judge intervene, and Standing Bear successfully wins freedom for him and his escort party but not for the rest of his people.

Three Stars

See General George Crook

Young Joseph

Young Joseph, generally known as Chief Joseph, is a Nez–Percé chief. When miners pressure the government to move the Nez Percés to a reservation, Chief Joseph tries to go peacefully but resolves to fight after some of his warriors kill settlers. He leads his noted marksmen to several victories against superior forces, but the military ultimately overpowers him and he surrenders. He and most of the others are sent to Indian Territory, where he dies of a broken heart—according to the agency physician.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Themes

Manifest Destiny

Much of the mistreatment of Native Americans in the nineteenth century can be attributed to a concept known as Manifest Destiny. This theory stated that European descendents in the United States were destined to spread over the North American continent and that they were justified in doing so. As a result, many politicians, military personnel, and settlers felt it was their God–given right to take land from whoever stood in their way. As Brown notes, the concept of Manifest Destiny simply “lifted land hunger to a lofty plane.” Says Brown: “Only the New Englanders, who had destroyed or driven out all their Indians, spoke against Manifest Destiny.”

Deception

Manifest Destiny provided the justification for many deceptions, the most notable form of which was broken treaties. When white settlers first began their relations with Native–American tribes, they made treaties—paper contracts that ceded Native–American land to the United States, often in exchange for money or provisions. However, in many cases, the systems set in place to monitor these transactions became corrupted by white middlemen who profited at the Native Americans's expense. For example, Dee Brown states: “Of the \$475,000 promised the Santees in their first treaty, Long Trader Sibley had claimed \$145,000 for his American Fur Company as money due for overpayment to the Santees.” In other cases, Native Americans were deceived into signing false treaties. Most Native Americans could not read or write English. As a result, they often had no way of verifying that the paper they signed included the correct terms of their agreement and were surprised when they found out later that the treaty included additional terms.

When the government could not get the desired land by diplomacy, it often ignored past treaties and took the land by force. For example, at one point, a number of Native–American tribes came to a council with U.S.

commissioners to talk about building additional transportation routes through tribal lands. However, during this council, a regiment of Army infantry arrives, and the Native–American assembly realizes “that the United States government intended to open a road through the Powder River country regardless of the treaty.” Brown reports that Red Cloud stated in the council: “Great Father sends us presents and wants new road. But White Chief goes with soldiers to steal road before Indian says yes or no!”

In addition to treaty violations, Americans also made false promises, such as agreeing to keep the peace when they had no intention of doing so. One of the best examples of this deception is the massacre of Cheyennes at Sand Creek. Major Scott J. Anthony tells the Cheyennes that if they return to their village at Sand Creek, they will be safe. Anthony arranges it so that two additional men, known to be peaceful, go to the village in an attempt to “lull the Indians into a sense of security and keep them camped where they were.” In the meantime, Anthony receives reinforcements. His plan works, and the Cheyennes are totally unprepared when Anthony attacks and destroys the village with his large force.

Perhaps the worst deception is the betrayal of Native Americans by their own. For example, the Modoc known as Captain Jack refuses to turn in Hooker Jim and others who have murdered white settlers. In the end, however, these same men who he risked his life to save end up betraying him to save their own lives. Says Brown, “Hooker Jim's band surrendered to the soldiers and offered to help them track down Captain Jack in exchange for amnesty.”

Murder

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee is saturated with examples of indiscriminate and often premeditated killing. Many of the murderous acts become genocidal when they are performed by Army officers and others who are determined to kill all Native Americans. One of the most chilling examples of genocide happens at Sand Creek. Although a few officers disagree with Colonel Chivington's plan to murder all Native Americans at Sand Creek, Chivington threatens them with a court–martial if they do not join the expedition. Brown quotes Chivington as saying: “I have come to kill Indians, and believe it is right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians.” This attitude was shared by other Americans, particularly frontier settlers, some of whom engaged in or supported the murder of Native Americans wherever they were found.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Style

Setting

The setting is extremely important in this book. The action takes place in the mid– to late–1800s, when a large number of white settlers emigrated to the frontier American West seeking property, gold, or both. Some Native Americans moved to other areas, thinking that there was room enough for both races. However, the land, which had been large enough to accommodate countless tribes, was quickly overrun by white settlers and military troops. Some, like Sitting Bull, tried to leave America for a new setting. Brown states: “He decided there was no longer room enough for white men and the Sioux to live together in the Great Father's country. He would take his people to Canada.” The setting is also important for military strategy. Many battles in the book are determined by the location and terrain on which the battle is fought. Native Americans are often able to beat much larger forces because they know how to use the western terrain to set effective ambushes, to hide, or to defend themselves.

Point of View

The book is written mainly in the third–person omniscient viewpoint. This broad viewpoint gives the author unlimited power to move through time and space and in and out of characters' minds as necessary. For

example, Brown notes during the description of one battle that “Roman Nose was wearing his medicine bonnet and shield, and he knew that no bullets could strike him.” Like many such descriptions in the book, Brown combines historical facts with his own assumptions about Roman Nose's thoughts and motivations to bring the historical figure to life. Interspersed with these descriptions, Brown also includes first-person, eyewitness accounts, such as speeches, proclamations, and official records. For example, one Native American notes, “From a distance we saw the destruction of our village.... Our tepees were burned with everything in them.... I had nothing left but the clothing I had on.” These intimate accounts—from both Native Americans and white people—lend credibility to Brown's descriptions, but they also help the reader to understand what it was like to be involved in this conflict.

Imagery

Brown includes powerful and violent imagery in his book, which is to be expected in a book that details several wars. Though many cultures adhere to war rules that forbid certain actions, such as killing women and children or mutilating bodies, during the battles to win the West, U.S. soldiers engaged in certain acts, which were even then considered war crimes. For example, as Captain Nicholas Hodt notes of a spontaneous massacre of Navahos, he saw a soldier killing “two little children and a woman. I hallooed immediately to the soldier to stop. He looked up, but did not obey my order.” Hodt orders the man to turn himself in as a prisoner but notes that even some of his superiors engage in the slaughter. Another eyewitness, Lieutenant James Connor, this time at Sand Creek, overheard “one man say that he had cut out a woman's private parts and had them for exhibition on a stick.” These and countless other chilling images of mutilation, murder, and desecration help to underscore the great injustice and cruelty perpetrated upon Native Americans.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Context

Vietnam and the My Lai Massacre

When Brown first published *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* in 1970, the United States was engaged in an undeclared war in Vietnam, and the U.S. public was inclined to revisit the country's guilt over the past treatment of Native Americans. The parallels between the United States–sponsored massacre of Native Americans in the 1800s and the United States' actions in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s were not lost on readers of Brown's book. This insight was especially available in 1970, when twenty-five U.S. Army officers and enlisted men were indicted for the 1968 massacre of hundreds of civilians in the South Vietnamese village of My Lai. Despite Army efforts to cover up the incident, a few concerned soldiers who were either at or near My Lai helped bring it to light, and the story was quickly picked up by the national media. Only a few men were actually tried for their part in the massacre, and only one—Lieutenant William Calley—was found guilty. Calley was sentenced to a lifetime of hard labor. However, three years later, President Nixon intervened and secured Calley's parole. Shortly after this incident, polls indicated that for the first time since the war began, a majority of Americans opposed the United States involvement in Vietnam.

American Indian Movement (AIM)

At the same time, Native Americans in both Canada and the United States began to organize and protest in many isolated regional events. In 1968, four men established the American Indian Movement (AIM). The group wanted to host a demonstration to help promote Native–American issues and at the same time help to unify the various separate Native–American groups. In 1969, AIM received its opportunity. Following a convention in San Francisco to discuss Native–American issues, the Indian Center that was hosting the convention caught fire and burned to the ground. Realizing that there were no government funds to build a new Indian Center, a group of Native Americans, supported by AIM and calling themselves the Indians of All Tribes, seized Alcatraz, the famous island–based prison that had lain empty since 1964. Citing treaty rights

that stated Native American rights to surplus government land, the group demanded that the government let its members turn the defunct prison into a cultural–educational center. Individuals occupied Alcatraz peacefully for twenty months until they were removed by federal marshals. With nationally recognized protests like the one staged on Alcatraz, AIM became more visible.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Critical Overview

Brown's 1970 publication of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* marked the first time a white author had written a book about the colonization of the American West from the point of view of Native Americans. As a result of this unique perspective, the book was received very well by critics and popular readers, who made it a best–seller. In her 1971 review of the book for the *New Statesman*, Helen McNeil notes that “the new perspective is startling.” McNeil also says that one of the most powerful aspects of this “Indian historical viewpoint lies in its contrast to the vulgarity of the ‘Turner thesis.’” McNeil is referring to Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 proclamation, which claimed that it was the settling of the frontier lands that gave modern Americans their distinct character because they had to work hard in the new, unfamiliar land. As McNeil notes, Turner’s thesis considered the frontier to be “empty land” and did not take into account the Native Americans who were killed or displaced. McNeil compares this type of imperialistic thinking to that found in the Nixon White House; she states that *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*—which was published at the height of the Vietnam War—is very timely. Says McNeil:

Now that Vietnam has brought the United States to the point of accepting national guilt for the first time, this scholarly and passionate chronicle ... has attained US bestsellerdom by fixing the image of the nation's greatest collective wrong: the extermination of the American Indian.

Other critics notice the similarities to the situation in Vietnam. In his 1971 review for the *New York Times Book Review*, N. Scott Momaday, a prominent Native–American author, refers to the American “morality which informs and fuses events so far apart in time and space as the massacres at Wounded Knee and My Lai.” Momaday also praises the book as “a story, a whole narrative of singular integrity and precise continuity; that is what makes the book so hard to put aside, even when one has come to the end.”

A decade later, upon the publication of Brown’s Native–American novel *Creek Mary’s Blood* (1980), some critics used the opportunity to discuss how they liked it much less than *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Says Joshua Gilder, in his review of the novel for *New York Magazine*: *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* “had a sweep and an authenticity due in large measure to his letting the Indians speak for themselves.” Gilder finds this quality missing in *Creek Mary’s Blood*. Likewise, in her 1980 review of the novel, Leslie Marmon Silko, another prominent Native–American author, notes that *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was brought alive through “the strength and conviction of Dee Brown's view of this history.”

Not all critics compare Brown’s later novels with *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. In his review of *Killdeer Mountain* (1983) in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, John Rechy acknowledges *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* as “a moving, resonant book.” However, Rechy says that one must also “ignore the expectations aroused by” this book, when critiquing Brown's later works. Rechy is the rare critic that does this. Even today, Brown’s reputation rests primarily on *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, even though he has also written many novels and children's books.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Essays and Criticism

1. [Language and Plot as Weapons to Defeat Misconceptions](#)
2. [Brown's Alternative History of North America](#)
3. [Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee and the Indian Voice in Native Studies](#)

Language and Plot as Weapons to Defeat Misconceptions

In *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Dee Brown relies on many harrowing eyewitness accounts from Native Americans, letting them tell their side of how the West was won. Several reviewers consider these eyewitness accounts the most important part of the book. For example, in her *New Statesman* review, Helen McNeil says that the book “awakens a more authentic sense of ... grandeur with the moving speeches of the great chiefs.” In fact, Brown's later Native–American books that do not include these eyewitness accounts have often been panned because Brown does the talking. For example, in his *New York Magazine* review of Brown's Native–American novel *Creek Mary's Blood* (1980), Joshua Gilder says it lacks the “sweep and ... authenticity” of Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, which was “due in large measure to his letting the Indians speak for themselves.”

Despite the popularity of the eyewitness accounts, Brown is not an absentee narrator. Like one of the military leaders in the book, Brown serves as a general, deploying his two main forces—the techniques of language and plot—in a calculated manner to give the eyewitness accounts as much impact as possible. In the process, he attempts to defeat his enemy: the misconceptions and falsehoods that have plagued Native–Americans and their reputation among non–Natives.

Brown's first weapon is language. His book differs from previous books about Native Americans in this time period, because he uses many Native–American interpretations. For example, the Sioux and Cheyennes frequently see trains pass through their land in the Powder River country. Says Brown: “Sometimes they saw Iron Horses dragging wooden houses on wheels at great speed along the tracks. They puzzled over what could be inside the houses.” Brown uses the terms “Iron Horses” and “wooden houses” to describe trains and train cars as a Native–American at this time would have perceived them. Brown also uses the Native–American designations for U.S. military ranks in his descriptions. For example, to a Native American at this time, a general was known as a “Star Chief” and a colonel was an “Eagle Chief.”

In addition, Brown refers to prominent American historical figures by their Native–American names. For example, many Native Americans called General George Armstrong Custer “Hard Backsides,” “because he chased them over long distances for many hours without leaving his saddle.” Brown also uses Native–American naming systems for natural processes like time. White people divide the year into twelve months and refer to these time periods by cryptic names like May and June. However, Native Americans referred to these time periods by their actual, perceivable correlation to nature. So, in Brown's book, May is “the Moon When the Ponies Shed” and June is “the Strawberry Moon.” By using distinctly Native–American interpretations like these in his narration, Brown takes his readers deep into the Native–American experience. In the process, the reader begins to identify with the Native Americans.

When readers identify with characters, they tend to feel sympathy for them. Through his second weapon, plot, Brown organizes his story to maximize his readers' sympathetic emotions. With any historical book, the author has to make choices about what events to include and how to organize them. As McNeil notes, Brown does not choose to make many distinctions among the various tribes: “One isn't reminded that the Navahoes were settled, the Apaches predatory, the Poncas gentle or the Utes lazy, since in any case the same fate

awaited them all.” Brown establishes a three–part structure for most chapters, which demonstrates again and again that Native Americans lost no matter what they did. Typically, the chapter begins with a discussion of a chief or tribe who has lost something—generally a piece of their land—and still has more to lose. For example, in the beginning of the second chapter, Brown notes: “As the result of two deceptive treaties, the woodland Sioux surrendered nine–tenths of their land and were crowded into a narrow strip of territory along the Minnesota River.”

Following the discussion of what has been already lost, Brown introduces the second part of his three–part structure, the struggle. For Native Americans in the nineteenth century, the struggles were many, whether they decided to go to war or did not. Many tribes in the book do choose to fight to retain their remaining land and freedom. In most cases, the tribes win some battles but end up losing the war. The U.S. soldiers are too advanced and numerous to be defeated, something that the Native Americans begin to realize. For example, Little Crow is leery about fighting at first, because “he had been to the East and seen the power of the Americans. They were everywhere like locusts and destroyed their enemies with great thundering cannon.” Even when the Native Americans outnumber the whites, the latter’s military technology can be the decisive factor in the victory. As many Native Americans learn: “Bravery, numbers, massive charges—they all meant nothing if the warriors were armed only with bows, lances, clubs, and old trade guns of the fur–trapper days.”

In cases where the Native Americans try to remain peaceful, Brown shows many ways that they are provoked into war. In several cases, settlers or miners hungry for the Native Americans’ remaining land spread incriminating lies in an effort to get the government to take their land. During the Civil War, Native Americans were sometimes provoked into fighting because it was the safer of two options for white, male citizens. Says Brown about the Cheyenne wars in Colorado: “There was political pressure on Evans from Coloradans who wanted to avoid the military draft of 1864 by serving in uniform against a few poorly armed Indians rather than against the Confederates farther east.” Even after the Civil War, when the draft was no longer an issue, some settlers used lies to provoke Native Americans and and kill them because peace was not profitable for the settlers. Brown notes that Tucson citizens in 1871 “were opposed to agencies where Apaches worked for a living and were peaceful; such conditions led to reductions in military forces and a slackening of war prosperity.”

The final part of Brown’s three–part plot structure in most chapters is the bitter ending. Due to the massive struggles that Native Americans faced whether or not they chose to remain peaceful, most chapters end badly. The chiefs, who are often depicted as strong in the beginning and middle of the chapters when they are fighting for their land and people, end up dead, in prison, in exile, or on a reservation with the rest of their people. Even the exceptions to this rule, such as the chapter depicting Red Cloud’s successful war, ultimately end negatively. In a later chapter, Red Cloud is forced to sign away his beloved Powder River country and live on a reservation. Red Cloud’s plight highlights the overall plot structure of the book, which mimics the three–part structure of the individual chapters. The book starts out with many Native Americans living free and retaining parcels of their land. As the story progresses and the trickle of white emigration turns into a flood, ever–larger armies and groups of land–hungry white settlers cut down the various tribes. By the end of the book, the noose of white emigration has tightened around so much of the country that most Native Americans are dead, in prison, or on scattered reservations.

The effect on the reader is profound. Brown has gotten his readers to root for the underdogs by using eyewitness accounts and language to draw readers into the Native–American experience. Yet, in each chapter Brown steadily crushes any hope that the reader might have for the Native Americans winning much of anything. By using these strategies, Brown makes his readers more receptive to the most important aspect of his book—his anger. Brown’s tone, or attitude towards his subject matter, is one of barely restrained outrage, and he wants readers to get angry, too. To this end, he fills his book with sarcastic and scathing comments that further underline the savagery of whites in the late nineteenth century. For example, at the end of one chapter, Brown describes how three major Cheyenne leaders were killed, and in the process he mimics the infamous

saying: “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” Says Brown: “Roman Nose was dead; Black Kettle was dead; Tall Bull was dead. Now they were all good Indians.”

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, Gale, 2003. Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Brown's Alternative History of North America

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, written by the eminent historian Dee Brown, is an epic history of the invasion of Native America by the white Europeans. Many histories that deal with this time period are written from the point of view of the white conquerors and tend to ignore or de-emphasize the violence and deceit perpetrated by the United States government and the European settlers upon Native America. Brown shows that the “westward expansion” of white history was much more complicated when viewed from another angle. Brown’s powerful history is told from the point of view of the victims of the invasion themselves. In his history, he tells the compelling and heart-rending story of the Native Americans beset by a vastly more powerful enemy, and shows their attempts to heroically defend themselves against their tragic fate. Using an array of sources and quoting from the Native Americans of that era, Brown’s history is a graphic account of the broken treaties and the genocide that the United States government and its citizens inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of the continental United States.

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide describes genocide as actions done with the intention of destroying a particular group of people. The convention declares that genocide is a crime whether committed during war or peacetime. It bans killing or causing serious injury, either mental or physical, to an individual because of his or her group identity. It bans destroying a people’s means of survival. It bans taking children away from a people and giving them into the care of people of another group. In *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Brown demonstrates, in retrospect, that the United States government, in its relationship with the Native Americans, committed these acts. Using old records as well as the words of Native Americans, Brown recounts in detail how the United States military, often aided by white civilians, repeatedly attacked peaceful Native-American camps without provocation. Native Americans were often shot and killed by soldiers as well as civilians because of their racial identity. These murderous deeds were often justified by such sayings as, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” At the time, the term “genocide” was not used. That seems to be a point that Brown is making in his history; the conquerors, acting with such simple and shallow directives, were able to perpetrate deeds that their own value systems deemed immoral and unlawful.

Brown’s technique is so effective because it takes the common history of events and brings it to life. Brown is a conventional historian when he recounts the timeline of history on the North American continent, beginning with the Arawak, the natives of San Salvador where Columbus had first landed. He goes on to show the conquest of the entire continental United States, stretching from the East Coast, where the English first landed in 1607, to the West Coast where gold was discovered in California in 1848. Brown also utilizes novelistic technique in his history, which adds a powerful dimension. Drawing on a broad array of sources, he brings his history and the individual characters involved alive with this writing technique. This history uses dialogue to give characters in the struggle real voices, from both sides of the conflict, as well as photographs of many of the Native-American warriors who tried to help their people survive the white onslaught. Brown even includes old Indian songs. The Native Americans are seen to have been real people, happy with their way of life, and even willing to share the bounty of their land. Bringing history to the personal level, Brown's book

gives a different and disturbing view of the discovery and conquest of North America. For instance, Mangas Colorado of the Apaches, Big Snake of the Poncas, Crazy Horse of the Lakota Sioux, and many others were all murdered while in the custody of the United States Army. The reader feels these tragic deaths when the human voices and faces are included vividly in the text.

By so intricately researching and assembling his history, Brown is able to show how the forces of cultural imperialism were so devastating, and brings the individuals and tragedy in this history alive for the reader. There are white conquerors and Native–American resisters in this history. The complexities of the history are also revealed when Brown shows sympathetic whites and honest settlers, as well as Native–American mercenaries who helped to devastate their own people. Brown’s history also shows the insidious nature of the violence. The aggressive soldiers are displayed as men taking orders from a distant political bureaucracy, carrying out impersonal directives that become extremely violent on the ground level. Brown shows how the whites justified to themselves their broken treaties, their wanton killings, and their destruction of a culture as they followed the policy of Manifest Destiny, the belief that God had given them the rights to the land.

Brown’s history connects the relationship between cultural imperialism and religious and economic beliefs. The European settlers believed that the Native–American religions were not valid. The government often gave Native–American leaders the choice between accepting the European religion and way of life, or perishing. Brown reveals that many Native–American chiefs were aware of this choice, and heroically chose death before the destruction of their cherished beliefs. Thus, Brown makes the reader aware of the tragic loss of an entire culture, tragic because its people defended it valiantly.

Brown gives many instances of how the Native Americans and their culture were continually reviled. The whites in this history, with deeply imbedded racism, saw the Native Americans as savages who did not deserve civilized treatment. In spite of Judge Dundy’s legal decision in 1879, they were not considered persons under the law. A main thrust of Brown’s history is the contention that the United States government and its citizens justified their genocide by falsely declaring that the Native Americans and their various cultures were inferior to their own. This was so strongly ingrained within the white culture that any white person who dared to be friendly to the Native Americans was called an “Indian lover” and was usually met with great disfavor, often of a violent nature, from the rest of the white populace. When Brown uses quotes by Native–American leaders speaking in English, it reveals the eloquence and intelligence of the human beings on the losing side of the war.

The ordinary white settler, from Brown’s point of view, seemed unwilling to look closely at the genocide perpetrated by their government on their behalf. The average settler just wanted land, a place of his or her own, and many were willing to kill (or let the army kill) the former inhabitants to get it. Brown uses the details of white history to show how the land was taken. For instance, in Colorado in the early 1850s, Governor Evans, in collusion with Colonel John M. Chivington—head of the Colorado Volunteers—and the Indian Agent Samuel G. Colby, schemed to drive all of the Native Americans out of Colorado. They wanted the land for themselves and their friends. In particular, Denver had been built upon Arapaho land, and unless the Native Americans were completely driven out of the state, they would have a claim upon the city. To achieve this end, Governor Evans ordered all the Cheyennes and Arapahos to report to the reservation at Fort Lyons. He then issued a proclamation giving all citizens of Colorado the right to pursue and kill any Indians found living out on the plains. Soon there were no free Cheyennes or Arapahos in Colorado, and Brown’s history clearly shows the violent mechanism of white land acquisition.

Writing his history from the point of view of the victims rather than the conquerors, Brown shocks the reader by recounting deadly brutality. He details instances when the United States military, often aided by white settlers, attacked and destroyed entire Native–American villages, killing men, women, and children indiscriminately, burning the tipis, clothing and other means of survival. Often they would kill or steal the Native–Americans’ horses, leaving the survivors on foot and without adequate food, clothing or shelter.

Women and children, especially babies, would often die of exposure or starvation. Brown does not allow the reader to overlook the painful events. His history is told with impressive detail, down to the particulars of what individuals were doing on the mornings of battles, detailed statistics of the wounded and dead, and words spoken and written by participants on both sides. It is the expert use of details that reflects Brown's conviction of an historian seeking justice and truth, however belatedly. At the same time, Brown maintains an objective tone, despite the brutality he is recording, and this effectively allows the reader to absorb the implications and emotions of the injustices revealed.

Sympathetic to the spirituality of the Native Americans, Brown describes how their rich spiritual lives were often reviled or repressed. He recounts how white missionaries were often put in charge of the Native Americans living on the reservations and how they would ban non-Christian spirituality. The government banned the Ghost Dance, a powerful and healing spiritual ceremony. Brown details the murder of Sioux warrior chief Sitting Bull and the massacre of an unarmed camp of Ghost Dancers, finally putting an end to the dance.

Brown describes how the Native Americans watched as their land was ruined, the streams polluted, the trees cut down, and many animal species, such as the buffalo, almost completely destroyed. Several times, Brown quotes Native Americans, who, in addition to lamenting the destruction of their own way of life, were mystified and saddened by how the whites seemed to hate nature. Brown states, "To the Indians it seemed that these Europeans hated everything in nature—the living forests and their birds and beasts, the grassy glades, the water, the soil, and the air itself." Brown also gives the reader glimpses into the Native Americans' connection with nature, when he refers to seasons as "summer moon" or the "moon of strong cold" rather than calendar time, for instance. This has the effect of creating more empathy in the reader for the lost culture.

Brown's history ends with the massacre at Wounded Knee, a devastating loss for Native America. The last lines of text remark, ironically, on a sign over a church: "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN," after the brutal killings. Then an eloquent quote by Black Elk, followed by an Indian song of longing, and a photograph and quote of Red Cloud are final reminders to the reader of the tragic history of the Native Americans.

Source: Douglas Dupler, Critical Essay on *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, Gale, 2003. Dupler has published numerous essays and has taught college English.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee and the Indian Voice in Native Studies

In 1971 Dee Brown wrote *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*—a book that stunned America, persuading a generation to listen to the voice of Native Americans. Society learned about the Indian as a victim in the American West.

The full impact involved the emergence of an academic Indian voice in the following years. Native Americans had always expressed their concerns and opinions about issues ranging from legal status, to living conditions, to past mistreatment at the hands of the United States government. But the Indian voice was not widely heard, at least by the dominant society, until the 1960s during the Civil Rights protests and the concurrent rise of American Indian activism. During the late 1960s and at the start of the next decade, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* opened the door for the Native American voice and launched a generation of American Indian studies in academia.

At unexpected times, an important work comes along and jolts society, provoking a reaction—right time, right book. And Dee Brown's book has had a long life, perhaps because of its portrayal and inclusion of the Wounded Knee tragedy of 1890 with the slaughter of 350 Minneconjou Ghost Dancers (mostly women and children).

The book was copyrighted in 1970 and appeared in print in January 1971. During the remainder of 1971, Holt, Rinehart and Winston reprinted the book 13 times in 11 months, and it has sold five million copies! This is *impact*, even in the hard-edged world of capitalism! During these years of the so-called "Third World" movement, the book unveiled a story that Native Americans had always known.

While many enthralled readers turned the pages of *Bury My Heart*, their consciences acknowledged this mistreatment of the American Indian. Guilt seized them. Scholars, however, remained doubtful about Brown's work. The late historian Wilcomb Washburn noted:

While Brown's work, from the scholarly point of view, leaves something to be desired, its impact has been phenomenal in raising the consciousness of the white Americans about the past history of Indians and whites in America.

The book capitalized on the liberal 1960s, offering something new and different as the decade closed.

Many of us recall those years, witnessing radical changes in America: bell bottoms, the peace sign, Jimi Hendrix, marijuana, Janis Joplin, the 1964 invasion of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the New Left, underground protest groups, Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, the NAACP, John F. Kennedy, LBJ, and more that we wore, hated, believed in, smoked, and became immersed in.

For Native Americans, "Red Power" emerged as a philosophical outspokenness of politics and cultural renaissance, but it confirmed a national identity of "being Indian." The Chicago National Indian Conference and the rise of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in 1961, Indian Fish-Ins in Washington in 1964, the founding of the American Indian Movement in 1968, Red Power, and the Alcatraz Take-over in 1969 witnessed a new era of Native American deconstruction and reaction for a generation of Native Americans who wanted to study about themselves and their people's histories and cultures. It was a struggle.

But for Native Americans to succeed at higher education was not yet reality. In 1961, only 66 Indians graduated from four-year institutions. During that decade, the college dropout rate for Native Americans remained at 90 percent. By 1968, only 181 Native Americans had graduated from college. By 1970, Estelle Fuchs and Robert J. Havighurst estimated a 75 percent rate for Indian college drop-outs. Twenty years later, in 1988 and 1989, 3,954 Indian students had received Bachelor's degrees, with 1,086 having received Master's degrees and 85 graduate students earning a Ph.D. However, Native Americans still believed that institutions of higher learning were a means for future betterment of Indian people.

Bury My Heart awakened scholars and writers, and especially Native Americans. Native scholars began writing about the feelings of Indian people and about their opinions. Indians felt the frustration of urban alienation and the influence of Red Power activists, and they began to put pen to paper.

In addition to Dee Brown's work, two other important books about Indians appeared during these years—Vine Deloria, Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1968) and N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1966). The latter won the Pulitzer Prize, the only work written by a Native American to be recognized.

A part of this scholarly current to study American Indians derived especially from the political movements of Black Power, Brown Power, and Red Power. Civil Rights for minorities and equal rights for women

expressed during political protests and activism caused society and institutions of higher learning to reconsider the status and past written histories of ethnic groups and women. Thus, the 1960s represented pivotal changes in American society, as people contemplated their own lives and the values of the mainstream society and the dominant culture that had stressed the importance of education, economics, religion, and individualism.

Until the 1960s, mainstream society had refused to listen to, or to learn from, Native Americans. Naturally, this provoked the title of Vine Deloria, Jr.'s book, *We Talk; You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf*. From an Indian point of view, Deloria predicted in 1972:

American society is unconsciously going Indian. Moods, attitudes, and values are changing. People are becoming more aware of their isolation even while they continue to worship the rugged individualist who needs no one. The self-sufficient man is casting about for a community to call his own. The glittering generalities and mythologies of American society no longer satisfy the need and desire to belong.

On the heels of *We Talk; You Listen* came Deloria's *God Is Red* (1974), in which he pointed out that Native Americans identify with place rather than time as do white men, and that Indians galvanize toward group identity rather than individuality. Undoubtedly, Americans were looking for security in various ways and forms, even looking to Native Americans because of their traditional values of communalism and environmental relationship with the earth. As a result of the self-examining society of the 1960s, people began to ask questions about their inner selves, wondering who they were, and they researched their roots. They needed something with which to identify, and to bring balance to their lives. Many looked toward history for answers, as the rugged individualist American began to break down.

Timing proved to be germane to the powerful influence of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. It was the link to the past, and a model by which people could re-examine that past. Although the revelation of America's mistreatment of Native Americans was shocking, it was not unique; 90 years earlier, Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* had been published—an exposé that had alerted the public to the plight of the American Indian. However, it was as a result of Dee Brown's book in 1971 that journalists, writers, and scholars began to offer new ideas and theories, and they introduced new ways to look at their subjects in a broader context with open minds.

Until the 1960s, the dominant society had maintained strict control over learning, forcing Western linear teaching into the minds of Indian students at boarding schools and missionary schools, while public schools berated the ways of Native Americans and presented them as inferior to white ways. The Native-American perspective was ignored until the unleashing in the 1960s.

In his introduction to *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Dee Brown wrote:

... I have tried to fashion a narrative of the conquest of the American West as the victims experienced it, using their own words whenever possible. Americans who have always looked westward when reading about this period should read this book facing eastward ... This is not a cheerful book, but history has a way of intruding upon the present, and perhaps those who read it will have a clearer understanding of what the American Indian is, by knowing what he was.

The emotions that *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* brought forth in readers made for a precedent-setting work. Dee Brown described the feelings and emotions of Native Americans in such a way as no historians had successfully done—he humanized them.

As the decade of the 1970s began, numerous books continued to be published about Indians, resulting in some 13 books in print. In 1971, Hazel Hertzberg published *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements*, indicating that social, cultural, and political history of a minority was indeed important enough to write about, especially in the 20th century. Other noted works appeared as well, including Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *The Indian in American History* (1971); Joseph G. Jorgensen, *The Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless* (1972); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973); Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (1973); and *Memoirs of Chief Red Fox* (1972).

While these important works encouraged a growing interest in the American Indian, and as more books appeared on the horizon, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* had articulated an Indian version of the history of the American West. Rediscovering the “Indian voice” had also occurred in 1971 with Virginia Irving Armstrong, *I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians*; W. C. Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory: Famous Speeches Told by Noted Indian Chieftains* (1971); Joseph Cash and Herbert Hoover, eds., *To Be an Indian: an Oral History* (1971); and Joseph Epes Brown, ed., *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (1971). But though these works did not have the same success as *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, the door had been opened for listening to the Indian point of view. Students and scholars in particular were keenly interested in what Indians thought about the history of Indian–white relations.

Meanwhile, the National Indian Youth Council and the American Indian Movement (AIM) expressed a contemporary Indian voice, albeit of multiple opinions, during the early 1970s. “The First Convocation of Indian Scholars,” limited to 200 participants, convened in 1970 at Princeton University, and the “Second Convocation” occurred the following year at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies in Colorado.

And as *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was appearing in January 1971, other interests were developing simultaneously in Indian activism and Native American militancy. Indian activists protested that colleges and universities offered very little about American Indians—or incorrect information—in their college courses. Non-Indians, too, began to embrace the opportunity to study Native Americans to see the courses they had to offer. This interest in Indian curriculum was not new, but was rather a renaissance of Native American issues, which led to a genre of literature with increasing demands. Writings and scholarship was changing, and new sources and inspiration were pursued.

Because of the emergence of Native American studies programs, the momentum carried throughout the 1970s. Even history as an academic discipline began to re-examine its basic approach. In an article entitled “American Historians and the Idea of National Character: Some Problems and Prospects,” David Stannard wrote about the American search for “National Character” as a means for writing history, and that historians were looking toward the behavioral sciences in their analyses. Yet, although new ideas about writing history entered the discipline, the old habit of disregarding Native Americans and other minorities still prevailed.

In the early 1970s, the discipline as practiced by mainstream historians refused to make Native Americans a true part of American history. Simultaneously, the Indian struggled for his place in other academic disciplines as well. In 1970, Jeanette Henry reprimanded the history profession and American society for denying Native Americans a proper place in the written history of this country:

... Every dominant political class in any society attempts to control the ideology of the people most particularly through the learning process in the schools. It is not to be wondered at that “this” American society does the same. The school boards and curriculum commissions which control the adoption and purchase of textbooks usually adopt books to support the dominant political class. So too do the professors in universities, [and] departments of various disciplines.

During these times of Civil Rights protests, Indian activism, and AIM militancy, Indian academic warriors like Jeanette Henry and others took on the academic disciplines at academic conferences and in journals, books, and all forms of the printed word. The number of such warriors was small, drawing from a rank of less than 200 Native Americans holding a Ph.D. by the mid-1970s, and this group, which included outspoken Native Americans without doctorates, naturally polarized American academia and Native Americans.

The turf of battle of the American Indian Movement against the United States had been extended to academics, and leading this Indian attack was Vine Deloria, Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins; We Talk, You Listen*; and *God Is Red*, as well as other related works. Deloria's chapter on "Anthropologists and Other Friends" in *Custer Died for Your Sins* became a volleying point for heated discussions, charging writers and scholars who exploited Indians for personal gains and misrepresenting Native Americans and their cultures. Deloria insulted anthropologists by writing in his inflammatory chapter that some people are cursed with plagues and bad luck, "... but Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists."

In the middle of the battlefield, native scholars like the late Alfonso Ortiz challenged his own anthropology profession to re-examine Indians and treat them more appropriately. He realized in one of his writings that he had "taken a position, fully mindful of the dangers of being shot at from both sides." Ortiz wrote:

... Anthropology is a science born of imperialists and colonial powers and ... at best, all too many of its practitioners still approach their tribal and peasant subjects with a neo-colonist attitude.

He noted that there were too few Indian scholars to help turn the tide at that time in 1970. A stronger Indian academic voice was needed if, indeed, academia was to revise its paternalistic views of Native Americans.

Sensitive and open-minded non-Indian scholars began to include cultural studies in their writings about Native Americans. Hence, cross-cultural studies and cross-disciplinary works evolved. Attempting to understand Indian culture, environment, and community became essential in order to understand Native Americans. This approach, combined with academia's contemplation of new ideas and theories, urged a reconsideration of the previous means of examining history and the Indian and other minorities.

Then in 1970, the *Western Historical Quarterly* produced its first issue. The following year, the sixth president of the Western Historical Association, Robert Utley, assessed the field and changes in Western history amidst societal changes resulting from the 1960s. He wrote:

Indeed, I shall be surprised if western studies do not gain new life from the intellectual and social ferment now troubling the nation. As attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and traditions of American life come increasingly under scrutiny, stereotypes begin to disintegrate ... Does not the current obsession with minority and ethnic studies suggest unplowed western fields? Scholars are already beginning to till these fields ...

And in 1971, as an example of Utley's admonition, Doubleday published William Loren Katz's *The Black West*, a documentary and pictorial history; Seth M. Scheiner and Tilden G. Edelstein edited *The Black Americans: Interpretative Readings*; the third edition of Morris U. Schappes' edited work *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, reappeared in print; and Leonard Dinnerstein published his edited book, *Antisemitism in the United States*.

In November of 1969, *The Black Scholar* journal had produced its first issue, and other African-American publications appeared, such as the *Journal of Black Studies* with its first issue published in 1970. Subsequently, the *Journal of Ethnic Studies* released its first issue in the spring of 1973. Other minority

journals and publications followed throughout the decade and afterwards, such as the *Ethnic Forum* in the summer of 1981.

In 1971, Lawrence Towner, past president of Chicago's Newberry Library, and other key individuals, conceived of the idea to establish a center in the Library for studying the history of the American Indian. Towner wanted Indian involvement, so he contacted D'Arcy McNickle, a Flathead Indian studying anthropology, who also studied at Oxford University. In September 1972, the Center for the History of the American Indian opened its doors for business with a supporting grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Newberry Library, and 11 supporting universities. D'Arcy McNickle became the first director of the Center, with many scholars becoming research fellows who would study Native Americans over the years. In 1997, the McNickle Center celebrated its 25th year of researching and studying the American Indian.

In the 1970s, people learned that American Indians have always lived in their own way, in spite of federal policies designed to force them to assimilate into the dominant society. The current 547 federally recognized Native American tribes and other Indian communities exist according to their particular identity and heritage; and this need for freedom of expression involves culture, political concerns, religion, and intellectualism. Although American Indians have sought self-determination since the 1960s, a dominant control of the media, including textbook companies, the film industry, and a majority of publications, suppressed the advancement of Indian people and their communities throughout Indian country.

A "natural sovereignty" for Indian people has meant that all native communities possessed a heritage of freedom. A native identity is based on desired segregation from other peoples and their natural right to pursue their own way of life. This is done on reservations throughout Indian country and in urban Indian areas in most major cities where Native Americans survived the relocation program of the 1950s and 1960s. Currently, more than two-thirds of the total Indian population of just over two million live in urban areas; thus Indian country consists of reservations and urban Indian communities.

A history of struggle is common to all nations, and American Indian tribal nations have certainly had this experience. Their struggle has been one against European imperialism and the United States. The invasion of these foreign nations has defeated and suppressed the Native American, and, in some cases, annihilated Indian people.

Euroamerican colonization has a history of going beyond building homesteads and clearing the land for crops; this colonization experience has been one of deliberate destruction of Native Americans and their culture. Attempts at co-existence did not work out, and the Indian nations fell before the Euroamerican colonization after patriotic resistance in every region of the country.

Aside from attempts of genocide, the survival of Native Americans, even against overwhelming odds, compelled the United States to assimilate Indian people into the ideological "melting pot" of white values. Simultaneously, in order to accomplish this assimilation or desegregation, the United States government and its military sought to suppress the native intellectualism of Indian people. With biased scientific evidence in the late 1800s, and in an attempt to justify the American experience with Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," America sought to subordinate Native Americans. An insecure American culture believed it necessary to deem Native American knowledge and native intellectualism to be inferior. Undoubtedly, this was intellectual racism on the part of America, which has not been fully addressed.

The conservatism of the Eisenhower era of the 1950s had caused a backlash against this kind of ideology, provoking an experimentation with liberalism during the next ten years and afterward. But as for Native Americans, they continued to look for themselves in textbooks and public forms of the media. The mainstream saw a "doomed" Indian in books and at the cinema. Perhaps, even worse, in the 20th century

Native Americans had virtually disappeared, and simply were not needed by Turnerian historians to explain the history of this country.

In 1968, an Indian student (Shoshone and Bannock) enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, expressed her frustration at finding her place in the white man's world:

It's hard for me to go to college and eventually be assimilated and never be able to relate to the American Indian and their problems. I feel they're trying to make me into a white person ... There is little opportunity to learn anything about my own history; I've tried to take courses in history at the University. I can't find out anything about my people.

Until the late 1960s, post-modern America had continued to move forward with increasingly less interest in American Indians, leaving the issue up to Indians to fight for Indian education. But as American Indians were rarely in the path of the daily concerns of the federal government and the public in general, it was left to colleges and universities and Indian communities to advance the interests of America's original people. The American public and our nation's leaders needed to be educated about Indian people and their issues and concerns.

President Lyndon Johnson was sensitive and responded to the concerns of Native Americans and their problems when he gave his "Forgotten American" speech in 1968. In actuality, LBJ proved to be more understanding of Native Americans and their circumstances than his popular predecessor, John F. Kennedy.

Following Johnson's pro-Indian efforts, which included the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, Richard Nixon continued presidential support of Native Americans. In 1972, the Indian Education Act authorized educational programs for American Indian and Alaskan native children, college students and adults, with funding from the Department of Education. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs also funded educational programs for Native Americans. The termination policy of the 1950s and 1960s came to a halt by Congress, and the Kennedy Study Report disclosed an increased need for Indian education. Furthermore, Indian action, especially the militancy of AIM, called for a new federal Indian policy during the early 1970s of the Nixon years.

In 1974, President Gerald Ford signed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which took effect in 1975. This new federal Indian policy authorized the development of Indian education and other reform programs. In addition, organizations like the Ford Foundation and Donner Foundation saw it as their task to educate more Native Americans in graduate programs.

American Indian intellectualism has always existed, but it has not always been acknowledged. Unfortunately, the most brilliant Indian individuals were called to lead their people in war against the United States—those such as Tecumseh, Sitting Bull, and Chief Joseph in the 19th century. In post-modern America, Indian intellectualism should be allowed to be expressed; however, conservative academic attitudes have suppressed or ignored the opportunity for Native American thoughts and ideas. Should not American Indian intellectuals have the same right as others to offer their ideas, philosophies, and theories? Should not American Indian people have the same opportunities to obtain a college education and have the same opportunities to succeed as other Americans? Many years ago, before the first Native American Studies Program, the Lakota sage Luther Standing Bear challenged white society: "Why not a school of Indian thought, built on the Indian pattern and conducted by Indian instructors?"

As teaching and discussing Native American studies became important in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, ethnic studies programs began to emerge on college campuses, and the study of American Indians experienced a renaissance.

Although in 1968 San Francisco State University became the first college to establish a Native American studies program, few people know that the first official Indian studies program had been attempted at the University of Oklahoma in 1914, when Senator Robert Owens of Oklahoma introduced a resolution in the United States Congress calling for an Indian Studies Department. However, nothing had resulted from Owens' efforts. Another effort was made in 1937, once again at the University of Oklahoma, but it too failed. The impetus for an American Indian studies program was premature until after World War II.

In 1968, American Indian studies programs also emerged at the University of Minnesota, the University of California, Berkeley, and later at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1969, Trent University, Ontario, started the first native studies program in Canada. These early programs became the flagships of Indian studies in the United States.

Native American studies programs and departments began to develop during the 1970s, and they flourished. By 1985, 107 colleges and universities had either a program or department of American Indian studies. Many were a part of an ethnic studies program or a unit of an anthropology department. Eighteen Native American studies programs or departments offered majors, and 40 of these offered minors. (For example, a student could obtain a Ph.D. in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, Berkeley, but Native American Studies was under the umbrella of Ethnic Studies.)

By 1995, six Native American studies units offered graduate programs, including the University of California–Berkeley, University of Arizona, University of California–Los Angeles, and Montana State University; and Harvard University continues to offer a graduate program in American–Indian Education. During the mid–1990s, 13 research centers and institutions existed whose objectives focused on American Indians.

In 1976, an estimated 76,000 American Indian students attended accredited colleges and universities. By 1984, some 82,672 Native Americans were enrolled in colleges and universities. Another 60 percent of that number attended two–year community colleges. It was obvious that many Indian youth wished to pursue American Indian studies. By 1997, 124 Native American studies programs existed. Admittedly, most of these programs lack recognition and visibility; however, several have earned national distinction through the years for their activities such as the programs at Berkeley, UCLA, University of Minnesota, University of Oklahoma, and University of Arizona, Tucson.

In 1996, the American Indian studies program at the University of Arizona announced the end of a seven–year struggle to offer the first doctoral program in American Indian studies. With seven core Native American faculty, and with a total of 19 faculty participating in the program, American Indian studies at the University of Arizona have set an important new precedent.

The need for more visibility of Native American studies and other ways of academic advancement is imperative in educating other minorities and mainstream Americans about Native Americans and their many diverse cultures. Carter Blue Clark, a Muscogee Creek historian and executive vice president at Oklahoma City University, stated:

American Indian Studies is trapped in ... [a] cultural dilemma ... American Indian Studies fits no standard academic mold. American Indian Studies is by its nature interdisciplinary ... American Indians are unique, and so is their discipline. They stand alone among all of the other ethnic groups because of their history, which involves treaties, tribalism, and other aspects that set them apart.

The Native American presence in academia had emerged noticeably with the works of the first generation of Indian scholars in post–modern America—Vine Deloria, Jr., and N. Scott Momaday in the late 1960s, as well

as Francis LaFlesche, John Milton Oskison, John Joseph Matthews, Luther Standing Bear, James Paytiamo, George Webb, John Tebble, John Rogers, and D'Arcy McNickle. Because the public and publishers seemed willing to entertain the writings of Native Americans, another group soon followed, consisting of Howard Adams, Robert Burnette, Harold Cardinal, Rupert Costo, Edward P. Dozier, Jack D. Forbes, Jeanette Henry, Bea Medicine, Alfonso Ortiz, and Robert K. Thomas. In the creative writing field, the list included Leslie Silko, Duane Niatum, Simon Ortiz, Gerald Vizenor, James Welch, Ray Young Bear, and many others.

American Indian intellectualism also has been expressed by publication of a dozen or more Native American journals, which were founded in the 1970s and 1980s. In the mid–1990s, articles about Native Americans were published in *Akwekon* (Cornell University, 1984), *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (UCLA, 1974), *Journal of American Indian Education* (Arizona State University, 1961), *American Indian Law Journal* (Institute for the Development of Indian Law, Washington, D.C., 1975), *American Indian Law Review* (University of Oklahoma, 1973), *American Indian Quarterly* (now at University of Oklahoma, 1974), *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, *Journal of Alaska Native Arts* (Institute of Alaska Native Arts, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1984), *Journal of Navajo Education* (Chinle, Arizona, 1983), *Native Studies Review in Canada*, *Tribal College Journal*, and *Wiscazo Sa Review* (Eastern Washington University, 1985). The majority of these journals are peer–judged and externally refereed. Because of the diversity of Native Americans and their multiple interests, more Indian journals are needed. Yet, human and financial resources are lacking, thus limiting American Indian and non–Indian scholars publishing their works.

American Indian identity in academia has required increased attention and action. In 1985, historian Carter Blue Clark stated:

Interest in American Indians will continue as a result of the historic legacy of Manifest Destiny, yearning for family roots, and a lingering romantic attachment to the glories of a bygone era. The necessities of earning a living with marketable skills will not lessen the need to maintain Indian cultural ties and to learn more about one's Indianness through American–Indian Studies. Even though some of the attributes of Indian studies will alter with changing demands from society and administrators, American Indian Studies will continue to offer insights into America's unique culture and heritage. The basic mission of American Indian Studies is to educate and enlighten all students about the diverse and rich cultures that make up American Indian life.

As Indian communities have continued to flourish—with much promise for this next century and the new millennium—academia has endeavored to keep pace. The number of tribally controlled colleges has increased. The first, the Navajo Community College, started as only an idea in the early 1960s. With funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the tribe, and the Donner Foundation, the Navajo Nation founded the Navajo Community College in 1968. Additional tribal colleges were soon established in California, North Dakota, and South Dakota. As of this writing, there are 30 such colleges.

Tribal colleges received major support when the U.S. Congress passed the Tribally Controlled Community College Act in 1978, providing limited grants for starting these institutions in Indian country, including any Alaskan native village or village corporation approved by the Secretary of the Interior. At this pace, one college is being established each year. These community colleges base and develop their curriculum to meet the needs of their people, with practically oriented courses in business and administration.

The faculty for these 30 colleges are degreed Native Americans. It is now estimated that some 400 Native Americans in the United States have earned a Ph.D., and many others have earned a Master's degree. In the various academic fields for the professions, however, there are less than 25 Native Americans in each. And in each of the fields, the number of Native Americans, who are three–fourths or full–bloods are a fraction of the less than 25 in each field.

Institutions such as Arizona State University are extraordinary for having so many Native Americans holding doctorates; most colleges and universities have a couple, one, or none. Native American faculty and American Indian programs are vital to advancing the scholarship of Native American studies and to increasing the number of Indian college graduates. Unfortunately for American Indians, the colleges and universities that were founded to educate Native Americans, such as Dartmouth College, Harvard University, and the College of William and Mary, are not identified today as Indian schools.

Perhaps it is even more sad that the future of Native American studies—and the hope of graduating more American Indians—is in the hands of non-Indians who may not be able to give them the same attention that they commit to other minority groups and the mainstream. American Indian studies and Native Americans suffer from this virtual neglect, and this is reflected on college campuses across the country, where Indian students, faculty, and administrators are a mere fraction of the mainstream.

Yet, in spite of the suppression and neglect of American Indians on college campuses, the interest in them remains for many and complex reasons, including a curiosity of wanting to hear the Indian point of view. The late 1960s and early 1970s represented a drastic change in the study of Native Americans, beginning with listening to the Indian voice of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*—a voice that was varied, coming as it did from a myriad of Indian people who were outraged at the federal government, angry at the dominant society, and frustrated with their own people, or themselves. Dee Brown’s work enabled this voice to be heard and gave it a sense of direction.

Source: Donald L. Fixico, “*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and the Indian Voice in Native Studies,” in *Journal of the West*, Vol. 39, No. 17, January 2000, pp. 7–15.

» [Back to Section Index](#)

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Suggested Essay Topics

Chapter 1: “Their Manners are Decorous and Praiseworthy”

1. The first chapter briefly outlines the white settlement of America from 1492 to 1860. What were the consequences of those settlements for the Eastern Indian tribes discussed in the chapter?
2. The second part of the first chapter describes the position of various Western tribes as of 1860. Why does Brown provide these descriptions of the tribes he will extensively discuss later in the book?

Chapter 2: The Long Walk of the Navahos

1. Much of the conflict between the Navahos and the U.S. involved the destruction of Navaho horses, mules, livestock, crops, and food stores. The Army also issued insufficient amounts of rations and other supplies to the Navahos. What was the purpose of those actions, and how might the whites have justified them?
2. Brown describes the disputed horse race between Manuelito and the Army lieutenant, and the subsequent massacre, as permanently creating bitterness between the Navahos and the Army. What were the possible reasons for the Army to trick Manuelito and massacre the Navahos?

Chapter 3: Little Crow's War

1. Brown says “ten years of abuse by white men” caused the Santee Sioux to begin fighting the whites. Did the tribe have any other option besides attacking the whites?

2. Most quotations in Chapter 3 are of Santee Sioux, while quotations of whites are short and infrequent. What effect does this disparity have on you as you read the chapter? How would the framing of the events described in the chapter have changed if most of the quotes were from the Army and other whites?

Chapter 4: War Comes to the Cheyennes

1. Compare and contrast the initially cordial relations between the Plains Indians and whites from 1858 to mid-1864 with the state of their relations as described at the end of Chapter 4.

2. The Bent brothers serve as pivotal figures in this chapter. Describe the reasons for their rejection of white civilization, and describe their relationship with the civilization they abandoned.

Chapter 5: Powder River Invasion

1. Compare the naiveté of the Plains Indians as described early in Chapter 5 with their increased skepticism, ferocity, and confidence at the end of the chapter. What were the reasons for this change in attitude? What results did the change produce?

2. Do you think the reluctance of the 2,000 troops under Colonels Cole and Walker to continue serving in the Army after the Civil War ended contributed to the Army's loss to the Sioux? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: Red Cloud's War

1. Red Cloud won his war against the Army. What tactics did he employ to help him win? Could similar tactics have been employed by other Indian chiefs to achieve victory?

2. The Sioux's suspicion of the whites resulted from U.S. aggression and the duplicity, trickery, and lies, as well as from their exposure to previously unknown technology. Compare and contrast the Sioux's reaction to aggression and dishonesty with their reaction to the whites' technology.

Chapter 7: "The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian"

1. Is General Sheridan's ruthlessness and statement that "the only good Indians I ever saw were dead" an accurate representation of the whites' basic attitude toward the Cheyennes and other Indian tribes?

2. Gray Beard insists on being treated like a man, and not a dog, by the whites. On the other hand, Stone Calf tells General Sheridan that his soldiers should "grow long hair" in order to give the Cheyennes "some honor in killing them." What effect did the Indians' cultural standards and warrior ethos have on their opinion of the Army and their strategy against it?

Chapter 8: The Rise and Fall of Donehogawa

1. Does the fate of Donehogawa suggest that no Indian could remain in a position of power in the U.S. government while the U.S. was struggling to conquer the Indians?

2. Describe Donehogawa's actions as head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. To what extent did he use his position to advance and assist the Indians' cause?

Chapter 9: Cochise and the Apache Guerrillas

1. Describe the significance of the events that took place in response to the Tucson expedition's massacre of Aravaipas. Did the acquittal of the Tucson killers prove that an Indians' rights would not be recognized in the U.S. justice system?

2. In Cochise's speech to General Granger, he calls himself a poor man and says the Apaches "do as the animals, go about at night and rob and steal." How does his description of himself conflict with the white men's description of him as "gentle in his manners, and very neat and clean in his appearance"? Compare

Cochise's description of himself and his tribe with the claim made by many whites that Indians were not human.

Chapter 10: The Ordeal of Captain Jack

1. The disagreement between Hooker Jim and Captain Jack over strategy against the U.S. is one example of division within a tribe over how to respond to the U.S. threat. How does Jack's treatment of Hooker Jim compare with the actions an Army official would have taken in a similar situation?
2. What does the treatment of Captain Jack's body say about Eastern attitudes towards Indians?

Chapter 11: The War to Save the Buffalo

1. Make a comparison between the Indians' desire to save the buffalo and the whites' desire to discover and mine gold. Did the two different desires accurately reflect the respective cultural ideals of the two races?
2. What does the taunting of Kicking Bird for wanting to farm rather than hunt indicate about the Kiowas' preferred lifestyle?

Chapter 12: The War for the Black Hills

1. Custer's defeat is a very well-known part of U.S. history, but the author spends very little time talking about Custer himself. What is the effect of this de-emphasizing of Custer?
2. The U.S. response to Custer's defeat produced final defeat for the Sioux, as they were removed from the Black Hills and put on reservations. This pattern of an initial Indian victory followed by later defeat appeared in earlier chapters as well. Does this show that, ultimately, the Indians had no hope of defeating the U.S. and maintaining their independence?

Chapter 13: The Flight of the Nez Percés

1. Chief Joseph's desire for peace, friendship, and good relations with the U.S. is thwarted by the whites' desire for his land and money. How do these opposing desires raise the question of which side was more savage and uncivilized, the Indians or the whites?
2. What is the importance of General Sherman's reaction to the reports that the Nez Percés were fleeing "almost within view of his luxurious camp"?

Chapter 14: Cheyenne Exodus

1. Is Brown's statement that Mackenzie "was able to afford compassion for the survivors now that they were defenseless" merely his speculation, or is it accurately reflected by historical facts?
2. What do the words of the young warrior, "We will go north at all hazards, and if we die in battle our names will be remembered and cherished by all our people," say about the warrior ethic of the Cheyennes? Did Brown intend for this book to be a way for readers to read and remember the names of the Cheyenne warriors?

Chapter 15: Standing Bear Becomes a Person

1. In arguing that he was a "person," Standing Bear tried to change his legal status from that of Indian to that of U.S. citizen. However, it was decided that the ruling in his favor did not extend to any other Indians. Are Indians currently living on reservations primarily Indians, or are they primarily U.S. citizens? Discuss how the ruling in favor of Standing Bear has evolved over time.
2. General Sherman ordered that Standing Bear's legal victory "does not apply to any other than that specific case." Did Sherman have any legal justification for making that decision? What would have been the

consequences if other Indians had gained the status of U.S. citizen?

Chapter 16: “The Utes Must Go!”

1. The anti-Ute article reprinted across Colorado inflamed sentiment against the Utes. What impact did “The Utes Must Go!” slogan have on the fate of the Utes?

2. Agent Meeker played a key role in arousing anger toward the Utes. He justified his policies towards the tribe by writing in an imaginary dialogue that the Utes had no right to the reservation land and knew nothing of “the joys of work” and “the value of material goods.” How do these arguments reflect whites’ desire to “reform” the Indians’ morals and lifestyle?

Chapter 17: The Last of the Apache Chiefs

1. The author does not explain why the beaten Apache warriors were sent to Florida while their children were sent to an Indian school in Pennsylvania. What was the purpose of sending the Apaches so far from their homeland?

2. The author describes Victorio as “a ruthless killer” while dismissing the many “atrocious stories” made up about Geronimo by rumor mongers. Why was Geronimo, not Victorio, singled out by whites as a villain?

Chapter 18: Dance of the Ghosts

1. The Ghost Dance religion combined a Christian doctrine with a prophecy intended specifically for Indians. What explains the reasons why the Sioux and other tribes were so receptive to the Ghost Dance religion?

2. What does the contrast between what Sitting Bull said of white people in his speech at Bismarck and his white audience’s applause for the translation of his speech say about white-Indian relations? Similarly, why did the same people who booed him during the Wild West Tour pay for his signed photograph after the shows?

Chapter 19: Wounded Knee

1. Is Louise Weasel Bear’s claim that, unlike the white soldiers who opened fire on Indian children at Wounded Knee, Indian soldiers would not kill white children believable? What evidence from this chapter and earlier chapters supports or refutes her claim?

2. Why did Brown choose to spend the final chapter of his book describing the battle of Wounded Knee? What is the intended contrast between the wounded Sioux entering the Episcopal church and the Christmas banner in the church proclaiming “PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN”?

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Sample Essay Outlines

• Topic #1

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee describes the diverse responses Indian tribes across the West made to the incursion of whites on their lands. Some tribes managed to maintain their freedom for many years, while some came under whites’ authority quite rapidly. We can generally categorize tribal reactions into two types: hostile, resistant, and engaging in violent struggle against the whites; or relatively pacific, quick to bargain, and reluctant to battle against the whites. Present a case arguing that one of these two types of reactions was the more successful in allowing a tribe to keep its freedom and independence as long as possible.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Those Indian tribes that responded to the incursion of whites on their lands with hostility and counter-aggression kept their freedom longer than those that struggled against the whites reluctantly, if at all.

II. Freedom of tribes resistant to whites

A. Sioux—Began attacking whites during Civil War; battled Army in Powder River country; won Red Cloud's War; defeated Custer; not finally defeated until end of 1890.

B. Apaches—In 1861, Cochise responds to U.S. threat with attack; Apaches evade attempts to put tribe on reservations; Cochise gets desired land for Chiricahua reservation in 1872; Geronimo and other Apaches repeatedly evade hostile whites, leave reservations; guerilla war begun in 1861 only ends in 1886.

C. Cheyennes—Cheyennes successfully resist Army's 1865 invasion of Powder River country; Northern Cheyennes win Red Cloud's War in 1868; Cheyennes join with Sioux, other tribes to defeat Custer in 1876; rebellion at Fort Robinson in 1879; Cheyennes finally subdued in 1880.

D. Navahos—Manuelito launches surprise attack on Fort Defiance in 1860; Navahos refuse to be sent to Bosque Redondo reservation; 1868 treaty wins tribe right to stay off Bosque Redondo and return to homeland.

III. Quick subjugation of tribes offering feeble resistance to whites

A. Poncas—Tribe ordered to leave territory in 1877; journeys to Quapaw reservation; Standing Bear's legal efforts ineffectual; in 1879, tribe split in two, with most Poncas moved to Indian Territory.

B. Nez Percés—Tribe signs 1863 treaty giving away most territory; 1877 order for Nez Percés to leave Wallowa Valley prompts tribe to attempt flight to Canada; tribe caught by Army in late September; Nez Percés sent to Fort Leavenworth, then Lapwai reservation, then Colville reservation.

C. Modocs—Captain Jack agrees to treaty removing tribe to Klamath reservation; after skirmish in 1872, tribe retreats to Lava Beds; Captain Jack reluctantly agrees to kill Canby; betrayal of Captain Jack by Hooker Jim ensures tribe's downfall in 1873; tribe sent first to Indian Territory, then to Oregon reservation.

D. Utes—1868 treaty reduces size of tribes' territory; in 1873 treaty, tribe sells off mineral-rich land and accepts salary for Ouray; in 1878, agent Meeker arrives and begins pushing for Utes to become agrarian tribe; in 1879, anti-Ute outcry arises; Meeker sends soldiers to subdue tribe; in 1880, nearly all Utes removed to reservation on marginal Utah land.

E. Ghost Dance/Wounded Knee Massacre—Sioux adopt Ghost Dance faith in 1890 and cease resisting whites due to prophecy of Indians' return; Sitting Bull killed in December; Minneconjou and Hunkpapa Sioux massacred at Wounded Knee at year's end.

IV. Conclusion: The Indian tribes that fought against the settlers and the United States government were able to retain their freedom and ways of life longer than the tribes who acquiesced to white demands, or cooperated with the U.S. government.

• Topic #2

Although the Indians fought their primary battles against the United States Army, their ultimate defeat was the result of both the actions of private whites acting on their own behalves, and the policies of the Army and U.S. government. Which of the two forces—settlers, miners, and other groups of private white citizens, or the Army and other government entities—were more responsible for the invasion of Indian land and the subjugation of Indian tribes?

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Ordinary white citizens were more responsible for the Indians' defeat than the U.S. government. Without the actions of those citizens, the Army would not have been prompted to make war against the Indians, and the government would not have put the tribes on reservations or made the treaties that pushed them off their land.

II. Several tribes whose surrender to U.S. began with private white citizens leading invasions against Indians' land and property.

A. Santee Sioux—Over 150,000 whites settle on Santee land in 1850s; traders deny Santee food supplies.

B. Cheyennes and Arapahos—Pike's Peak gold rush brings thousands of miners to Colorado; settlers come by droves into Platte Valley land held by Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos.

C. Apaches—Settlers, miners, freighters invade Apache land; dispute over alleged theft of cattle and boy begins conflict with U.S.

D. Modocs—Settlers seize Modoc land in 1850s and 60s; settlers then push for treaty consigning Modocs to Klamath reservation.

E. Kiowas and Sioux—White hunters kill off buffalo herds; settlement of Texas plains.

F. Oglala Sioux—Miners come into Black Hills; outrage over Custer's defeat prompts push to move Sioux out of Hills.

G. Nez Percés—Settlers move into tribes' Wallowa Valley; miners and stockmen steal tribes' horses and cattle; tribe told to move to Lapwai reservation to open up Valley for settlement.

H. Utes—Gold rush brings miners into Utes' territory; Colorado citizens push for diminishment of Ute territory; growth of "The Utes Must Go!" slogan creates general clamor to move Utes out of Colorado.

III. Anti-Indian initiatives supported or engendered by eastern popular sentiment.

A. Public pressure on Donehogawa from William Welsh and others leads to his resignation from Commissioner post.

B. In wake of Custer's defeat, push from "white men in the East" (p. 297) for western Indians to be punished sparks retribution against reservation Indians.

C. Support for general doctrine of Manifest Destiny provides ideology to justify subjugation of western Indians.

IV. Conclusion: Western citizens, including settlers, miners, and hunters, give impetus for Army to embark on anti-Indian expeditions and pressure government to remove tribes to reservations. Easterners provide necessary backing and justification for anti-Indian measures taken by U.S. government.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Compare and Contrast

- **1860–1890:** U.S. soldiers engage in several wars in the American West in an attempt to acquire the lands of the Western frontier from the Native Americans who live there.

Late 1960s–Early 1970s: U.S. soldiers engage in an undeclared war in Vietnam, purportedly in an attempt to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

Today: An increasing number of U.S. soldiers occupy several parts of the globe as part of the U.S. war on terrorism.

- **1860–1890:** The United States government attempts to destroy Native-American culture.

Late 1960s–Early 1970s: The American counterculture movement rebels against the ways of the wealthy corporate establishment, and many hippies dress like Native Americans and adopt their close-to-nature ways of life.

Today: On September 11, 2001, terrorists destroy one of the most prominent symbols of U.S. wealth and international power—the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.

- **1860–1890:** The plight of Native Americans is rarely represented accurately in U.S. newspapers and books. In addition, many Native Americans cannot write in English, so they are generally unable to inform the white public of the injustices they face.

Late 1960s–Early 1970s: N. Scott Momaday, a Native–American author, wins the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1969 for his novel *House Made of Dawn*. The novel depicts the difficulties Native Americans face when trying to fit in among other Americans, and it helps to spark an increase in writing by and about Native Americans.

Today: Many Native–American authors, such as Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko, have earned critical and popular success with works that depict the plight of contemporary Native Americans.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Topics for Further Study

- On a current map of the United States, plot all of the existing Native–American reservations. For each one, include a brief description of when and how it was created, what tribes live there, and the population size at the time it was founded and at the time of the 2000 Census.
- Research the various ways that Native–American language and culture have been incorporated into American language and culture since the 1860s. Find one area of the United States that has been particularly influenced by Native Americans, and write a short, modern–day profile of this region and its people.
- Research the prehistory of the Americas, and discuss how Native Americans first came to North America. Imagine that you are one of these early Native Americans. Write a journal entry that describes your typical day in these prehistoric times, using your research to support your writing.
- Research what life is like on a Native–American reservation today. Outline the current problems faced by Native Americans on reservations, research any potential courses of action that are being taken, and propose your own solutions to these problems.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Media Adaptations

- *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was adapted as an audio book in 1970 by Books on Tape.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

What Do I Read Next?

- Brown’s sixth novel, *Creek Mary’s Blood* (1980), takes place in the nineteenth century during the westward expansion that pushed Native Americans off most of their land. The story combines historical and fictional elements in order to tell the various stories of Creek Mary and her family as they constantly move westward.
- *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations* (1992), by Jerry Mander, examines the effects that increasing technology has had on society and advocates a return to a Native–American way of life. In addition, Mander discusses how some Native Americans who try to maintain their way of life in modern times have clashed with the corporate world.

- *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian–White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492–1992* (2 volumes, 1978–1988), edited by Peter Nabokov, also gives the Native–American side of the colonization story. Like Brown’s work, this book relies on original documents and stories from Native Americans. However, this book takes a longer view, examining the entire five–hundred–year history of colonization.
- Native–American storytelling has a long history, rooted in oral tradition. In *Coming to Light: Contemporary Translations of the Native Literatures of North America* (1996), published by Vintage Books, editor Brian Swann assembles many of these oral stories, songs, prayers, and orations, which collectively represent more than thirty Native–American cultures. Each of the pieces in this anthology is accompanied by an introduction from the translator, which explains the meaning behind the selection, as well as how it was spoken or sung in its time.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)

Bibliography and Further Reading

Sources

Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970; reprint, Owl Books, 2001.

Gilder, Joshua. “Who’s on First.” In *New York Magazine*, Vol. 13, No. 14, April 7, 1980, pp. 76–77.

McNeil, Helen. “Savages.” In *New Statesman*, Vol. 82, No. 2115, October 1, 1971, pp. 444–45.

Momaday, N. Scott. “When the West Was Won and a Civilization Was Lost.” In *New York Times Book Review*, March 7, 1971, pp. 46–47.

Rechy, John. “The Flaws to Make a Fiction Shine.” In *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, April 3, 1983, pp. 2, 9.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. “They Were the Land’s.” In *New York Times Book Review*, May 25, 1980, pp. 10, 22.

Further Reading

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors*. Anchor, 1996. In this compelling set of profiles, Ambrose weaves a narrative that compares Crazy Horse to General George Armstrong Custer. As Ambrose shows, before the two leaders first met in battle at Little Big Horn in 1876, their lives were remarkably parallel.

Andrist, Ralph K. *The Long Death: The Last Days of the Plain Indians*. Reprint, University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. This seminal work in Native–American studies, first published in 1964, describes how Native Americans were crowded into increasingly smaller areas by the massive westward expansion of white settlers.

Hirschfelder, Arlene. *Native Americans: A History in Pictures*. Dorling Kindersley, 2000. This book offers a detailed overview of Native–American history from ancestral times to the present day. It contains hundreds of photos, illustrations, maps, profiles of major Native–American leaders, famous quotations, and informative sidebars.

Nies, Judith. *Native American History: A Chronology of a Culture’s Vast Achievements and Their Links to World Events*. Ballantine Books, 1996. Nies gives a thorough timeline of the major events in Native–American history, from prehistorical times until 1996. Using a two–column format, she places these

events next to the other world events from the same year, giving readers a context within which to understand the Native–American events.

» [Back to Table of Contents](#)