

Activity

Students revise the narrative of the Wounded Knee Massacre as it is told on the current monument sign by comparing and contrasting it to the *Takuwe* exhibition.

Grades

9-12

Content Areas

English Language Arts

Skills

- Close Reading
- Comparing and contrasting texts
- Writing narratives

Understandings

1. Dominant narratives of history can be flawed.
2. Dominant narratives of Wounded Knee often exclude factual evidence, along with the experiences and voices of American Indians, specifically Lakotas.
3. Reclaiming and revising narratives is a way of empowering people to counter discrimination, invisibility, and the denial of history.

Procedure

1. Guide students through a review of narrative and narrative form. Narratives retell a story. Narrative form discloses details of an act, event or phenomena using vivid details that support the story.
2. Explain to students that they will be reading the current narrative summary of the Wounded Knee Massacre as written on the monument sign. Show pictures of the sign. It is important to note that this is the only narrative or interpretation for visitors at the site of Wounded Knee. Pair students, according to teacher preference, and provide each pair with a copy of the narrative. A copy of the sign's exact text, complete with errors, is included in this book.
3. Students will use a close reading strategy and discussion to analyze the narrative. A brief list of close reading strategies to review with students is below. In addition to their annotations, students should collect and list details and facts from the text.
 - Underline key terms.
 - Circle what you don't understand.
 - Annotate in the margins
 - Left Margin—what is the author saying?
 - Right Margin—what is happening?
4. Lead a discussion (either a Socratic Seminar style or in small groups) of the following questions:
 - What is the purpose of this narrative?
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - What is the "point of view" in this narrative?
5. Give students time to reflect, by journaling or completing an Exit Ticket, on what they learned. For more information about Exit Tickets, along with possible prompts, go to <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/exit-cards>.

6. In the next class, display or provide students with physical copies of the *Takuwe* panels. Allow students time to read through the panels using the same close reading strategies they did for the sign's text and listing details and facts that differ from or reinforce the sign.
7. Students will compare the information they collected for their close reading guide with the Wounded Knee sign narrative. Lead students through a discussion of what they discovered. Start by arranging students in small groups or in pairs. After a set amount of time, ask students to rearrange themselves so they are discussing with as many new people as possible. Repeat this several times. Between each move, students participate in a timed turn, talk about the information they gathered, and record any observations of their classmates they had previously missed.
8. After several rounds of this, lead students through a whole group discussion that compares and contrasts the sign's narrative with the information they collected from *Takuwe*.
9. Students revise and rewrite the narrative on the Wounded Knee sign using the information they collected from *Takuwe*. They should cite specific facts and lines wherever possible.
10. This lesson can be repeated for the Big Foot Memorial Sign.

Wounded Knee Massacre Sign

Text of Sign:

MASSACRE OF WOUNDED KNEE

Dec. 29, 1890, Chief Big Foot, with his Minneconjou and Hunkpapa Sioux Band of 106 warriors, 250 women and children were encamped on this Flat, surrounded by the U.S. 7th Cavalry (470 soldiers), commanded by Col. Forsythe.

The "Messiah Craze" possessed many Indians, who left the vicinity of the Agencies to "Ghost Dance" during the summer and fall of 1890. "Unrest" on the Pine Ridge Reservation was partly due to the reduction of beef rations by Congress, and to the "Ghost Dancing" of Chiefs Sitting Bull, Hump, Big Foot, Kicking Bear, and Short Bull. The Sioux were told by Kicking Bear and Short Bull that by wearing "Ghost Shirts," the ghost dancing warriors would become immune to the whiteman's bullets and could openly defy the soldiers and white settlers, and bring back the old days of the big buffalo herds.

On Nov. 15, 1890, Indian Agent Royer (Lakota Wokopa) at Pine Ridge called for troops, and by Dec. 1, 1890, several thousand U.S. Regulars were assembled in this area of Dakota Territory.

On Dec. 15, 1890, Chief Sitting Bull was killed by Lt. Bullhead of the Standing Rock Indian Police. Forty of Sitting Bull's braves escaped from Grand River, and joined Chief Big Foot's band on Deep Creek, to camp and "Ghost Dance" on the south Fork of the Cheyenne River. Chief Big foot was under close scrutiny of Lt. Col. Sumner and his troops, and on Dec. 23, 1890, they were ordered to arrest Big Foot as a hostile. However, the Big Foot band had already silently slipped away from the Cheyenne county, into the Badlands, heading for Pine Ridge.

On Dec, 28, 1890, without a struggle, Chief Big Foot surrendered to the U.S. 7th Cavalry (Maj. Whitesides) at the site marked by a sign five miles north of here. The Band was then escorted to Wounded Knee, camping that night under guard.

Reinforcements of the U.S. 7th Cavalry (including one company of Indian Scouts) arrived at the Wounded Knee from Pine Ridge Agency the morning of Dec. 29, 1890, Col. Forsythe took command of a force of 470 men. A battery of four Hotchkiss guns was placed on the hill 400 feet west of here, overlooking the Indian encampment. Big Foot's Band was encircled at 9:00 a.m by a line of foot soldiers and cavalry, Chief Big Foot, sick with pneumonia, lay in a warmed tent provided by Col. Forsythe, in the center of the camp. A white flag flew there, placed by the Indians. Directly in the rear of the Indian Camp was a dry draw, running east and west.

The Indians were ordered to surrender their arms before proceeding to Pine Ridge, Capt. Wallace, with an Army detail, began searching the teepees for hidden weapons. During this excitement, Yellow Bird, a medicineman, walked among the braves, blowing on an eaglebone whistle, inciting the warriors to action, declaring that the "Ghost Shirts" worn by the warriors would protect them from the soldier's bullets. A shot was fired, and all hell broke loose. The troops fired a deadly volley into the Council warriors, killing nearly half of them. A bloody hand-to-hand struggle followed, all the more desperate since the Indians were armed mostly with clubs, knives, and revolvers. The Hotchkiss guns fired 2-pound explosive shells on the groups, indiscriminately killing warriors, women, children, and their own disarming soldiers. Soldiers were killed by cross-fire of their comrades in this desperate engagement.

Surviving Indians stampeded in wild disorder for the shelter of the draw 200 feet to the south, escaping west and east in the draw, and north down Wounded Knee Creek. Pursuit by the 7th Cavalry resulted in the killing of more men, women and children, causing this battle to be referred to as the "Wounded Knee Massacre". One hour later, 146 Indian men, women and children lay dead in Wounded Knee Creek valley. The bodies of many were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter. Twenty soldiers were killed on the field, and sixteen later died of wounds. Wounded soldiers and Indians alike were taken to Pine Ridge Agency. A blizzard came up Four days later, an Army detail gathered up the Indian dead and buried them in a common grave at the top of the hill northwest of here. A monument marks this grave.

"Ghost Dancing" ended with this encounter. The Wounded Knee battlefield is the site of the last armed conflict between the Sioux Indians and the United States Army.

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