

## End of an Era: The Battle of the Little Bighorn



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Media Rich Lesson Plan

**Subject:** US History

**Grade Levels:** 7-8

**Time Allotment:** Four 45-minute sessions

**Overview:** On June 25, 1876, the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry of the US Army attacked an encampment of Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne on the Little Bighorn River along the Bozeman Trail. In the battle that followed, General George A. Custer and the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were killed. But, for the Sioux, this proved a short-lived victory in a much larger clash of cultures. Soon after, Sioux leaders were captured and killed. The Sioux and Cheyenne had no choice but to move to Indian reservations, helping the nation to achieve its dream of “Manifest Destiny.”

In the activities of this lesson, students will discover how trouble on the Bozeman Trail and violations of the ensuing Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 lead to the bloody battle popularly called “Custer’s Last Stand.” Furthermore, they will look at these events within the context of official government policies that determined the future of the west.

**Subject Matter:** Social Studies and US History

### Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Interpret the cultural significance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn revealed in a contemporary ballad;
- Describe the setting of the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Black Hills on a map;
- Recap the immediate outcome of the battle;
- Explain what led to the closing of the Bozeman Trail;
- Describe the reasons why the US Government broke the Fort Laramie Treaty;
- Articulate the significance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century westward expansion in the U.S.;
- Role-play a simulation of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

## **Standards:**

From the United States History Standards for grades 7-12, available online at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards/era6-5-12.html>:

### **Standard 2A:**

The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants. Therefore students will be able to trace patterns of immigrant settlement in different regions of the country and how new immigrants helped produce a composite American culture that transcended group boundaries.

### **Standard 4A:**

The student understands various perspectives on federal Indian policy, westward expansion, and the resulting struggles. Therefore, students will be able to Identify and compare the attitudes and policies toward Native Americans by government officials, the U.S. Army, missionaries, and settlers. Students will compare survival strategies of different Native American societies during the "second great.

## **Montana Social Studies Standards:**

### **Content Standard 1:**

Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

### **Content Standard 3:**

Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

### **Content Standard 4:**

Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

### **Content Standard 6:**

Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

## **Media Components:**

### **Video**

*The American Experience: Last Stand at Little Big Horn*, WGBH TV Educational Foundation and Thirteen WNET, © 1992.

### **PowerPoint Presentation**

*In the Valley of the Little Big Horn*, by Susan Dreyer

### **Music MP3**

*The Valley of the Little Big Horn*, from Buffalo Café, by Jack Gladstone (used by permission of the artist for this lesson)



## Web Sites

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The following websites are bookmarked for easy classroom access on <http://www.trackstar.hypotec.org> in track ID 109800.

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### 1. *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn*

<http://64.227.208.37/sdreyer>

This web page contains a PowerPoint presentation by Susan Dreyer set to the words of the ballad, *In The Valley of the Little Bighorn*, by Jack Gladstone.

### 2. *Smithsonian Magazine – The Bozeman Trail*

<http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues00/oct00/bozeman.html>

This web page contains a brief story of the events that led to the closing of the Bozeman Trail by the Lakota Sioux in the 1860's.

### 3. *The Avalon Project- Ft Laramie Treaty, 1868*

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/ntreaty/nt001.htm#art11>

This web page contains a typed transcript of the handwritten Laramie Treaty of 1868.

### 4. *Little Bighorn Battlefield Archeology and History*

[http://www.custerbattle.com/home/ec\\_hist.htm](http://www.custerbattle.com/home/ec_hist.htm)

This web page describes the events following the signing of the Ft. Laramie Treaty that led to the campaign of 1876 to force the Sioux to enter the Great Sioux Reservation.

### 5. *Custer's Last Command*

<http://www.isigames.com/isifs.html>

The website contains a free download for (Windows computers only) of the demo version of an interactive computer simulation called Custer's Last Command. The demo version allows the player to play for a limited time. A full version is available through PayPal by e-mailing the webmaster of this site.

## Materials

For each student:

- Words to *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn* by Jack Gladstone
- Writing paper for journaling
- Investigation 1 Study Guide
- Investigation 2 Study Guide
- Investigation 3 Study Guide
- Investigation 4 Study Guide
- Investigation 6 Flow Chart

For the teacher:

- Investigation 1 Study Guide answer sheet
- Investigation 2 Study Guide answer sheet
- Investigation 3 Study Guide answer sheet
- Investigation 4 Study Guide answer sheet

For class discussion:

- A map of the northern plains showing the location of the Black Hills and the Battle of the Little Bighorn

## Vocabulary

Cavalry – A branch of the army that rode on horseback (mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century)

Pe Sapa – The Sioux word for the Black Hills

General Sherman – Commander General of the Army under President Ulysses S. Grant

Fort Laramie Treaty – An agreement between the Lakota Sioux tribe and the US Government which created the Great Sioux Reservation

## Prep for Teachers

PowerPoint Viewer can be downloaded if PowerPoint is not installed on classroom computers at <http://office.microsoft.com/downloads/2000/Ppview97.aspx>.

Download the demo version of the Custer's Last Command game at <http://www.isigames.com/download.html> for the culminating activity of this lesson. This game may be shared on a single classroom computer or loaded on each computer in a school lab.

## Prepare the hands-on element of the lesson by:

Make copies of the following for each student:

- Words to *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn* by Jack Gladstone
- Investigation 1 Study Guide
- Investigation 2 Study Guide
- Investigation 3 Study Guide
- Investigation 4 Study Guide
- Investigation 6 Flow Chart

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**When using media, provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites, or other multimedia elements.**

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## Day 1: Introductory Activity

### Step 1. Lyric Study: *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn*

Pass out copies of the words to Jack Gladstone's song, *Valley of the Little Bighorn*, to your students.

Ask students to examine the lyrics for answers to the following questions:

1. From whose point of view is this ballad written? (*a member of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry*)
2. What was the meaning of the "trail of thorns" in the first stanza? (*The battle would be difficult.*)
3. To what did the phrase "But glory followed Custer's men so with glory we were torn from the Valley of the Little Big Horn" refer? (*Custer had a reputation for great showmanship in battle; thus, this engagement was destined to be an all-or-nothing combat against the Indian camp. Overwhelmed by large numbers of Indians, every member of the Cavalry was violently slaughtered.*)



4. What was promised to cavalry members before the battle? (*A leave from military duty was guaranteed to anyone who produced an Indian scalp; fame and fortune would await the cavalry after it won.*)
5. Who were the Masters of the Plains? Who were the invaders from afar? (*The Masters were the Indian Americans; the invaders were the cavalry.*)
6. What historical point of view is reflected in this ballad? (*The ballad illustrates the human pain caused by the 19th century clash of cultures in the fight for control of the rich lands of the northern plains.*)

## Step 2. PowerPoint Presentation: *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn*

**Website 1:** <http://64.227.208.37/sdreyer>

Your students will now log into the above website to view a PowerPoint presentation set to *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn* by Jack Gladstone.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking that, as they watch the presentation, they reflect how the pictures and music change their understanding of the circumstances leading to the battle's outcome.** (To play the PowerPoint presentation, click the slideshow icon in the lower right corner of the screen.)

## Step 3. Journal Reflections: The Little Bighorn Setting

After playing the slideshow, display a map of the region containing Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Ask the students to identify the Black Hills area (southwest South Dakota) and the Little Bighorn River (southeast Montana). Ask the students to summarize in a short paragraph the following:

1. In what region of the United State did the Battle take place? (*The battle took place in the Montana territory.*)
2. Who were the “invaders from afar?” (*The invaders were the US Army.*)
3. Who were the casualties in the battle? Who were the victors? (*Everyone in Custer’s regiment perished. The Indian tribes camping on the Little Bighorn won the battle. The largest of those groups were the Sioux and Cheyenne.*)

## Days 2 and 3: Learning Activities

### Step 1. Investigation 1: Identifying the “Invaders from afar”

#### Video Segment 1: *Last Stand at Little Bighorn*

Insert the video, *Last Stand at Little Big Horn* into your VCR. Pass out copies of the Investigation 1 study guide to your students.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to investigate the “invaders” of the ballad to complete the Investigation 1 study guide.**

**START** the tape at 8:55 after the *second* picture of Chief Black Elk where you hear the spoken words, “That they are many. Black Elk, Lakota.” There will be a picture of New York City in the early 1800’s. The narrator says, “The Road to the Little Bighorn began in the East.” **STOP** the tape at the picture of Bear Butte in the Black Hills where the narrator describes Crazy Horse, saying, “As a man, he would fight, and come to be counted on by his people as a savior.” This segment runs about eight minutes.

After the segment has played, check students’ understanding using the Investigation 1 answer sheet.



## Step 2. Investigation 2: The Closing of the Bozeman Trail

**Website 2:** <http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues00/oct00/bozeman.html>

Pass out copies of the Investigation 2 study guide to your students.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to log on to the Smithsonian Magazine's *The Bozeman Trail* website to investigate how the Lakota reacted to mounting threats from the "invaders."**

When they have completed their study guides, use the Investigation 2 answer sheet to check their understanding about the Bozeman Trail.

## Step 3. Investigation 3: Government Promises

**Website 3:** <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/ntreaty/nt001.htm#art11>

Pass out copies of the Investigation 3 study guide to your students.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to study the Ft. Laramie Treaty to answer questions on the Investigation 3 study guide.**

After the students have finished their study guides, ask them to share answers to the following questions:

1. What was the government's intent in offering the Laramie Treaty to the Indians? (*The Government wanted to end the Indian wars and open the northern plains for settlement to homesteaders.*)
2. What sacred grounds did the treaty protect for the Sioux and Cheyenne? (*The reservation included the Black Hills, "Pe Sapa" to the Indians.*)
3. What cultural changes did the treaty encourage the Indians to begin making? (*The treaty encouraged them to become farmers and give up their nomadic, hunting lifestyles.*)
4. In what ways was the agency set up like a white settlement? (*It included several buildings to house personnel who would heal, teach, and provide services for the residents on the reservation. These included a government agent, a doctor, teachers, blacksmiths, farmer, carpenter, engineer, and a miller.*)
5. In your opinion, was this a plausible solution for settling differences between the plains Indian and white cultures? (*Answers will vary.*)

## Step 4. Investigation 4: Breaching the Laramie Treaty

### Video Segment 2: *Last Stand at Little Bighorn*

Pass out copies of the Investigation 4 study guide to your students.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to complete the Investigation 4 study guide to:**

- 1. discover how the Laramie Treaty was broken;**
- 2. explain how Crazy Horse reacted to the Expedition of 1874;**
- 3. record how Sitting Bull reacted to the Treaty and white presence in the Black Hills;**
- 4. learn why President Grant ordered all Lakota to report to reservations.**



**START** the video at 25:45, where a view of the Black Hills can be seen. This segment begins after the Indian historian speaks the words, “That is the place where the Great Spirit has blessed, and that belongs to my people.” The segment begins, “In 1874, the Government took the first step in claiming the lands recognized as Lakota in the Laramie Treaty.” **STOP** the video at 30:11 after Richard Slotkin, a cultural historian, says, “There was no way that they [the U.S. cavalry] could lose.”

After the video segment has finished, ask your students to share their study guide answers with partners to check for understanding. Then, have the entire class discuss their answers. Use the answer sheet to check for accuracy.

## Step 5. Investigation 5: Moving Towards Attack

**Website 4:** [http://www.custerbattle.com/home/ec\\_hist.htm](http://www.custerbattle.com/home/ec_hist.htm)

Ask your students to log into the above website.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to read the article to determine the sequence of events following the Government’s decision to take the Sioux lands by force.**

After they have read the document, discuss the Sioux reaction to President Grant’s ultimatum, and the resulting action taken by General Sherman. (*The January, 1876, the government’s deadline passed without effect. Instead, that spring, thousands of Lakota gathered in an unceded territory (Montana). As a result, Sherman planned a three-pronged attack from Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, meant to surround them. George Custer led the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry under General Terry from Ft. Lincoln.*)

## Step 6. Investigation 6: The Battle

**Video Segment 3: Last Stand at Little Bighorn**

Pass out copies of the Investigation 6 flowchart study guide to your students.

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to complete the Investigation 6 flowchart to sequence the events of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.**

**START** the video at 34:15, where Custer is shown writing in his office at Ft Lincoln, Lakota Territory. The narrator says, “Custer wrote his brother Tom, ‘I think the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry may have its greatest campaign.’” **STOP** the video at the night campfire before Libby Custer’s words, “Fort Abraham Lincoln, June 25, Elizabeth Custer...”

After the video is stopped, ask your students to share their flowcharts with the class. To ensure that everyone understands the chain of events, compare student flowcharts.

(Suggestions for filling out the flow chart include:

1. Without warning, in early spring of 1876, thousands of Lakota Sioux began to leave the reservation and move to Crazy Horse’s camp in Montana.
2. The army planned to march three columns of cavalry into Montana to surround the Indian camp.
3. The Sioux held a huge Sun Dance, where Sitting Bull received a vision of a large battle in which all the cavalry were killed.
4. Later, Crazy Horse forced the southern column to retreat. Custer was to take one of the northern columns to locate the Indians and wait for reinforcements.



5. *Custer's scouts led him to an overlook where they could see an "immense encampment" of Indians. Custer decided to divide his troops into three groups. Reno and Benteen would take two columns to the south while Custer went to the north of the encampment.*
6. *Reno's soldiers fired into the village first. The Indian men rushed to meet the charge, and 1/3 of Reno's men were killed, wounded or missing.*
7. *Custer sent for reinforcements from Benteen. But when Benteen's column discovered Reno's dead and wounded men they went no further.*
8. *Suddenly, hundreds of warriors sprang up to fight Custer's regiment. They chased Custer's men up to the top of the hill, where all 210 men were killed.*
9. *Benteen and Reno's surviving men remained on a spot 4 miles to the south. Later, they saw many Indians campfires blazing brightly.)*

## Step 6. Investigation 7: The Aftermath

### Video Segment 4: Last Stand at Little Bighorn

**Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to learn the fate of the Sioux and the Cheyenne after the Battle of the Little Bighorn.**

**START** the video where you previously stopped it after the picture of the night campfire. **PLAY** the video to the end. After the video is finished, ask your students:

1. Was the Indian victory at the battle long-lived?
2. How were the Indians forced to surrender?
3. What became of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull?
4. How was the memory of Custer preserved?
5. How was the memory of Crazy Horse preserved?
6. What significance did the battle hold in the total picture of America's westward movement?

*(Students should realize that the entire military turned on the Cheyenne and Sioux in order to force them to surrender. The Sioux and Cheyenne were starved into surrendering to the government's demands that they move to reservations. Both Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull were soon were killed in captivity. While Custer's memory was publicly immortalized by agents like Buffalo Bill and Anheiser Busch, the Lakota passed on stories to their children about the great feats of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. In the total picture, the Battle of the Little Bighorn marked the end of the great Indian wars. The victory fell to the U.S. Government, and Custer remained the hero of the battle for 100 years. However, for the Cheyenne and the Lakota Sioux, the memory of those days continues to reap sorrow over broken promises and a lost way of life.)*

## Day 4: Culminating Activity

**Website 5:** <http://www.isigames.com/isifs.html>

### "Custer's Last Command" computer simulation

Arrange for your students to play free demo version of "Custer's Last Command" on a classroom or lab computer. This game allows students to relive the battle by advancing the cavalry or Indians on a simulated map of the area. (Note: This game is only Windows-compatible.)



## Cross-Curricular Extensions

### LANGUAGE ARTS

Read Elizabeth Custer's book, "Boots and Saddles" available online at <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Classroom/1101/ECuster.html> for a primary source account of a cavalry officer's wife at Fort Lincoln in the 1860's.

### VISUAL ART

Research the depictions of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in painting throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to discover the prevailing attitudes about the battle.

### HISTORY

Research how Hollywood has portrayed Custer in movie recreations of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

### MEDIA

Create a PowerPoint presentation containing a timeline of the events preceding the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

## Community Connections

Conduct research about local tribal history and the creation of reservations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Little Bighorn Battlefield, located south of Hardin, Montana on the Crow Agency, is available on line at several sites:

Little Bighorn Battlefield

<http://littlebighornbattlefield.areaparks.com/>

Little Bighorn National Monument <http://visitmt.com/categories/moreinfo.asp?IDRRecordID=3124&SiteID=1>

Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association

<http://www.intuitive.com/sites/cbhma/index.shtml>

## Student Handouts

1. Words to *In the Valley of the Little Bighorn* by Jack Gladstone
2. Investigation 1 Study Guide
3. Investigation 2 Study Guide
4. Investigation 3 Study Guide
5. Investigation 4 Study Guide
6. Investigation 6 Flow Chart

