

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

Iron Teeth on Training Horses

Iron Teeth was a Northern Cheyenne woman born in 1834. She was 95 years old when Thomas B. Marquis, a former doctor for the Cheyenne agency interviewed her in 1929. Her memoir is a valuable source of information on Northern Cheyenne life on the Great Plains before the reservation system. In this excerpt she describes her childhood.

My first rising alone on horseback was when I was about 10 years old. My father gave me a yearling colt. When we were traveling, my mother would put packs upon the colt with me. Usually I had behind me and swinging down the colt's sides two badger skins filled with dried chokeberries. Boys teased me by riding up close and lashing my colt, to make it jump. At first, I was frightened, and they laughed at me. But I soon got used to it, and after a little while I became a good rider.

After I grew older I liked to break horses. When I became a woman I never asked any man to tame my horses for me. My sister and I used to take the wild animals to a sandy place beside the river before trying to ride them. Sometimes we would lead on out into deep water before mounting it. A horse cannot buck hard in deep water. One time, a bucking horse threw me into a deep and narrow ditch, but I was not hurt. I never was hurt badly in this way or in any other way. I never had a broken bone. I have been shot at many times, but no bullet nor arrow ever hit me.

Lots of wild horses used to be running loose on the plains to the southward. I had a good running horse when I was a young woman, and I carried always with me a lariat rope made of spun and plaited buffalo hair. As a girl I played a romping game we called "wild horses," in which some children would run here and there while others would try to throw lariats about their bodies. In this way I learned to toss the rope. One time, after my marriage, when I was riding with me baby strapped to my back, I saw some wild horse. I put the baby in its board cradle upon the prairie and got after the herd. That day I caught two horses.

Source: Iron Teeth, from *Cheyenne and Sioux: The Reminiscences of Four Indians and a White Soldier*. Compiled by Thomas B. Marquis, edited by Ronald H. Limbaugh, 1973.