

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

Plains Indian Quotes about Railroads

Plains Indian warriors in the 19th century attacked the various people and institutions that threatened their way of life on the Great Plains. In these speeches to federal agents during the Indian Wars of the 1860s, Indian leaders attempt to explain the sources of conflict.

"You chiefs that are here today, and all you soldiers that are here, listen unto me, for there is no fund in what I have to say. My Great grandfather [President Andrew Johnson] did not send you here for nothing, therefore we will listen unto you. He has made [railroads] stretching east and west, the country in which we live is overrun by whites and all our game is gone. This is the cause of our troubles. We have no objection to this road (U.P.R.R.), but I object to the Powder River and Smoky Hill roads. We all object to them. Let my Great grandfather know this -- you can read and write -- be sure and let him know this. I have been a friend of the whites. I am now. The country across the river (Platte) belongs to the whites; this belongs to us; when we want game we want the privilege of going over there and kill it. I want these two roads stopped just where they are or turned over to some other direction. We will then live peaceably together. . . ."

--Spotted Tail, chief spokesman of the Brule Tetons at a conference with U.S. Indian Commissioners, 1867 as reported in the New York Times September 19, 1867.

"We will not have the wagons [steam locomotives] which make a noise in the hunting grounds of the buffalo. If the palefaces come farther into our land, there will be scalps of your brethren in the wigwams of the Cheyennes. I have spoken."

--Roman Nose, chief who led his fellow Cheyenne against homesteaders and railroad workers on what he considered traditional Native American lands in Kansas, 1866

"Fathers, your young men have devastated the country and killed my animals, the elk, the deer, the antelope, my buffalo. They do not kill them to eat them; they leave them to rot where they fall. Fathers, if I went into your country to kill your animals, what would you say? Should I not be wrong, and would you not make war on me?"

--Bear Tooth, a Crow chief, 1867

"You said that you wanted to put us on a reservation, to build us houses and make us medicine lodges. I do not want them. I was born upon the prairie where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures and where everything drew a free breath. I want to die there and not within walls."

--Ten Bears, a Comanche warrior chief, 1871

