

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

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### MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

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#### US Government and Military Quotes about Plains Indians

*Plains Indian warriors in the 19th century attacked the various people and institutions that threatened their way of life on the Great Plains. As these reports from various federal agents, including the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and General Custer, show, white leaders agreed with the Plains Indians on two points: the railroads would destroy Native American communities and Plains Indians could not survive independently without buffalo.*

"The progress of two years more, if not another summer, on the Northern Pacific Railroad will of itself completely solve the great Sioux problem, and leave ninety thousand Indians ranging between two transcontinental lines as incapable of resisting the Government as are the Indians of New York or Massachusetts. Columns [of soldiers] moving north from the Union Pacific and south from the Northern Pacific, would crush the Sioux and their confederates as between the upper and nether millstone."

*--Francis A. Walker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872*

"The rapid construction of railroads branching into every section of the country is a matter of very serious import to the Indians generally. The grants of land given by Congress in aid of roads in the West must inevitably and unavoidably interfere with many Indian reservations. A diversity of opinion exists among the various tribes of the Indian territory by reason of projected roads north, south, east, and west through that Territory. Other roads in the South aiming to reach the Pacific will of a necessity pass through immense tracts on Indian country or country claimed by them. So with the Northern Pacific, which road must necessarily pass through several reservations, the quiet possession of which is guaranteed to the Indians by the solemn faith of treaties. Other roads are projected through the great Sioux districts. The Sioux are the most powerful and warlike tribe of Indians in the United States, and their persistent and determined opposition to the railroads is well known. Any attempt, therefore, to penetrate the country in this way must produce a collision. These are matters which should receive the attention of the authorities of the government and Congress, and such steps be early taken as will avoid all difficulty."

*Source: "From Washington. The Annual Reports. The Report of the Indian Bureau," Cincinnati Daily Gazette, November 30, 1870.*

"The experience of the past, particularly that of recent years, shows that no one measure so quickly and effectually frees a country from the horrors and devastations of Indian wars and Indian depredations generally as the building and successful operation of a railroad through the region overrun... So earnest is my belief in [its] civilizing and peace giving influence... [A]

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railroad established and kept in operation [in Indian Country] would have forever preserved peace with the vast majority of tribes infesting [the Great Plains]."

--General George Custer, shortly before the Battle of Little Bighorn, 1876

"The buffalo are disappearing rapidly, but not faster than I desire. I regard the destruction of such game...as facilitating the policy of the government, of destroying [the Indians'] hunting habits, coercing them on reservations, and compelling them to adopt the habits of civilization."

--Columbus Delano, President Grant's Secretary of the Interior, 1874