

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Educator's Primer on the Historical Period

MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

Before you begin playing MISSION US: "A Cheyenne Odyssey," here are five important pieces of information to consider. This information may or may not help you as Little Fox makes his way through life on the Plains.

In the early 1800s, peaceful trade relations existed between whites and Plains Indians.

Trade between Plains Indians and Europeans dates back to the early 1700s, as British and French fur traders traveled from the Hudson Bay into what is now North Dakota. By the late 1700s, there were permanent trading posts within Indian lands on the Missouri River in Montana. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the United States expanded into the Great Plains, and the number of American traders there grew. Plains Indians traded buffalo hides and fur in exchange for knives, iron pots, blankets, cloth, guns, beads, coffee, tobacco, and other goods. To strengthen trade relations, Indians often brought white traders into their tribal networks through marriage. Because both sides benefited from trade, the relationship between whites and Indians was mostly friendly and cooperative until the 1860s.

The US government forced many Eastern Indian tribes to move west to the Great Plains.

From the beginning of European settlement in North America, whites came into conflict with Indian tribes that already occupied the land. Europeans regarded Indians as "uncivilized savages" and tried to convert them to Christianity. Indians that did not assimilate were pushed further west. With the founding of the United States, the new nation developed a powerful and rapidly growing capitalist economy that ran counter to many Indian cultures.

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson pushed an Indian Removal Act through Congress that offered reservations west of the Mississippi to the Cherokee, Choctaws, Creek, Chickasaws, and Seminole tribes in exchange for their current lands in the Southeast. Under threat of military intervention, many tribal leaders signed away their eastern territory. US troops used force to remove those who did not move voluntarily, herding some 15,000 Indians in an 800-mile trek to Oklahoma that became known as the Trail of Tears.

The Cheyenne were allied with some Plains tribes, and fought wars against other Plains tribes.

The Cheyenne had extensive trade, social, and military relationships with other Plains Indians. As one of the smaller tribes on the Plains, the Cheyenne formed strategic alliances that shifted depending on the circumstances. From the 1860s to the 1880s, the Cheyenne worked closely with the Lakota and Arapahoe, sharing campsites, trading goods, aiding one another in



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skirmishes or battles, and intermarrying. Interactions with the Crow, Shoshone, and Pawnee tribes tended to be more hostile, with frequent horse raids and competition over hunting grounds. Since the various tribes spoke different languages, they often communicated with one another through a Plains Indian Sign Language that developed across the region.

Many US leaders believed that the United States had a special mission to expand west and settle the entire continent.

The United States more than tripled in size between 1800 and 1860. The country expanded by making treaties, purchasing land, and fighting wars with nations that already controlled the land, including Indian tribes, Great Britain, France, Spain, and Mexico. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 further increased the push westward. Hundreds of thousands of people from the eastern United States and other areas moved west (which had a devastating effect on the native population; it fell by over 100,000). Politicians and business leaders called for the construction of a transcontinental railroad that would reduce the time and effort required to cross the country. In 1862, Congress set aside millions of dollars to build the railroad, which was completed in 1869. The expansion of the United States was costly, both in terms of government and private spending, but also in the hundreds of thousands of Indians and Mexicans who were pushed off their land. Americans justified these costs with the idea of "Manifest Destiny." Manifest Destiny was the widely-held view that the United States had a God-given mission to expand west across the continent, spreading American government and culture.

White Americans disagreed about how to deal with Plains Indians, and vice versa.

After the Civil War, conflicts between whites and Plains Indians greatly increased. The construction of the transcontinental railroad, along with the encroachment of thousands of western settlers, miners, and ranchers, began to negatively affect the Plains Indians' nomadic way of life. Some Indians responded by attacking white settlers, their livestock, and their property. Other Indians negotiated with the United States in an effort to minimize violence. White people also had different approaches to the conflict. Some whites, including many northern reformers who had opposed slavery, sympathized with the Indian perspective. They believed that the United States should gradually assimilate Indians into American society through education, Christianity, and farming. Soldiers, miners, and settlers, who were often in direct contact with Indians, often took a much more intolerant position. Some even believed that the army should try to exterminate all of the Indians.

