

BLACK KETTLE
AND THE
WASHITA RIVER
MASSACRE

by John Turner

LESSON PLAN 1

HISTORY, 9–12



MUSEUM of
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HISTORY

These lesson plans are created with Farina King and the History Department at Northeastern State University. Students of the program – most of them active schoolteachers – study areas of the political and cultural history of Native American individuals and tribes and create thorough, engaging lesson plans based on their research. It is through the generosity of Farina King and her students that the Museum of Native American History is able to share this wonderful material with the Education community, with the hope of creating a broader and more inclusive understanding of Native American history and culture.

This lesson plan was created by John Turner



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How To Use This File

This file is designed to give you all the resources necessary to create a compelling lesson plan using whichever program or lesson planning style you are most comfortable with. All of the text can be easily copied and pasted, and the images can be dragged and dropped into any program, showing up in high quality. All videos and websites referenced can be reached directly using their hyperlinks. The *Text Packet* is a separate file so that it can be printed or sent to students separately from the lesson plans.

Introduction

AUDIENCE

- 9–12 grades
- Advanced reading curriculum
- Examination of primary and secondary sources

MATERIALS INCLUDED

- Lecture Slide Deck, Black Kettle (p.6)
- Lecture Slide Deck, Treaty Explanation
- Primary Source Packet (Text Packet, p. 3)
- Secondary Source Packet (Text Packet, p. 18)
- Lesson Bibliography (p. 11)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

This lesson is designed to engage students with material related to the life and times of the Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle. Students, by the end of this lesson should have a understanding of:

- The Life of Black Kettle
- How treaties impact indigenous lives
- A broad context of what treaties and how they were used to destroy Native culture
- Have a conceptual framework for how names and titles of locations that affect our shared memory (Washita Battlefield vs The Massacre at the Washita River).

Lesson Layout & Assignments

TIMELINE

Lesson Introduction: Lecture Slides (p. 6) and [The West: Washita Battle](#)



DAY 1



DAY 2



DAYS 3
AND 4



DAYS 5, 6
AND 7



DAYS 8
AND 9

Primary Documents: Examine the Primary Source packet (Text Packet) as a class



Wrap up the lesson and write letters to the National Park Service (Region 6) to encourage a name change.



Treaty Primary Source Document (Text Packet p. 4)

Create Secondary Source (Text Packet) Groups, Google Slide Presentations, and Present

LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

Document Participation 75%

1. Primary Source Discussion Questions
2. Secondary Source Presentations

National Park Service Letter or Reflection Response 25%

1. Write a detailed letter or reflection on the materials and how it relates to today.
2. Provide a comprehension of the impact of treaties upon indigenous people
3. Show an understanding of how titles and names of landmarks affect a society's shared memory

DAILY TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Day 1 – Introduction

This day should consist of introducing the material and mission of the lesson. The mission is to understand the life and events that revolve around Black Kettle. Further, the goals of the lesson are to explain how names and titles given to places affect our shared memory, ie. the Washita Battlefield vs the Massacre at the Washita River.

Materials for this day is the slide deck on Black Kettle and videos that help contextualize the time period.

Day 2 – Treaties and Primary Source Analyzation

This day's main focus is to reinforce what a treaty is and how they were used against indigenous peoples. The main point of this day is to examine the Treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapho (Primary Source 1).

Materials for this day all is needed is the treaty primary source

Days 3 & 4 – Primary Source Documents

These two days should consist of dissecting the Primary Source packet and as a class, understanding their context. It is recommended that the teacher do this aloud with all the students. This could include some questions for an assignment.

Materials needed for this day is the primary source packet

Days 5, 6, and 7 – Secondary Source Reading and Presentations

These days, including the weekend (as homework) are to expose students to secondary scholarship. There are two individualized readings. It is recommended that the students be grouped into two groups and instructed to read their assigned packet. Then their group should create a presentation of sorts. This does not necessarily mean a powerpoint but nonetheless they should have the ability to present their reading. This will allow the students to understand both sets of reading without having to read it all themselves and it works on presentation skills.

Materials for this day is the secondary source packet.

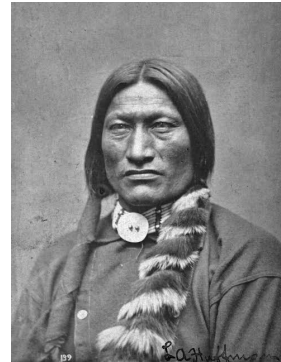
Days 8 and 9

These two days should be used to conclude the overall lesson. The final assignment should be a choice between writing a letter to the National Park Service requesting a name change or writing a small reflection essay on the materials covered in the lesson.

Slides

§1

BLACK KETTLE:
CHEYENNE PEACE CHIEF



§2

Early Life

- Very little is known about Black Kettle prior to him being named to the Council of forty-four
- This council worked to govern the Cheyenne Tribe since being moved onto a reservation prescribed by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851.
- As American settlers continued to push westward Cheyenne were pushed further out of their lands
- This made tribal leaders split into two groups 1) Peace Chiefs and 2) War Chiefs or Dog Soldiers
- Black Kettle and his followers adopted a peaceful approach on the encroachment of settlers.

§ 3

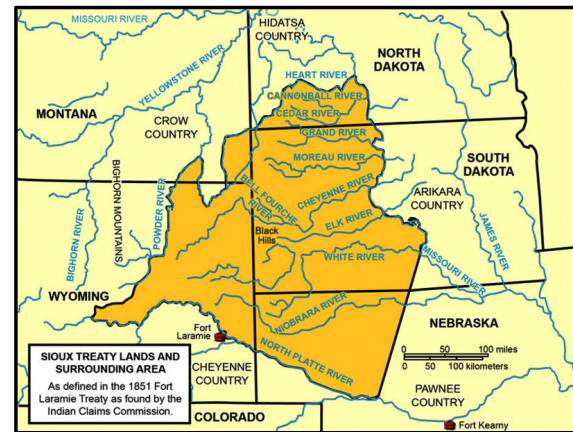
Peace Chief Ideology

Cheyenne tradition holds that the first peace chief was appointed by Sweet Medicine, who established a code of conduct for all such future chiefs. This code indicates that a peace chief was to abandon all violence, even in the face of imminent danger. Yet he was to stand firm, even non aggressively, against all opponents of his people, maintaining this position even after the soldier societies might have retreated. Though the younger generation of Cheyenne warriors might defy the peace chief, they were to persist in peacemaking efforts. This policy was not restricted by race; peace was to be sought in this manner with both Native and White. The peace chief was educated to show generosity in dealing with his own people, especially the poor.

§ 4

Fort Laramie Treaty 1851

- Signed in 1851 to establish reservation bounds
- 8 Native American groups agreed to specific limited geographic boundaries in return for the US government promising to honor those boundaries forever.
- Natives felt that had no other choice than to sign the treaty
- Government never paid the tribes.
- Peace lasted for a short period of time



§5

Sand Creek Massacre

- Happened in Colorado in November of 1864
- Cheyenne, under Black Kettle, came to the US fort to negotiate
- Colonel John Chivington arrives at fort and ignores attempts to negotiate
- Executes them all men, women, and children
- Over 200 people were killed.
- Link to [article](#) for more information



§6

New Reservation and Washita River Village

- Black Kettle escaped the massacre. Even after this outrage, he continued to counsel pacifism, believing that military resistance was doomed to fail. The majority of Cheyenne tribes disagreed, and launched all-out warfare in alliance with the Comanche and Kiowa. Black Kettle instead moved south and continued to negotiate.
- This led to the Treaty of Little Arkansas River in 1864
- Black Kettle's dwindling band proclaimed their desire to live peacefully alongside American. Black Kettle signed yet another treaty, the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867.



THE SEVENTH U. S. CAVALRY CHARGING INTO BLACK KETTLE'S VILLAGE AT DAYLIGHT, NOVEMBER 27, 1868.—[SEE PAGE 511.]

§7

“Battle of the Washita”

- The “battle” of the Washita River occurred on November 27, 1868 when Lt. Col. George Custer’s 7th Cavalry attacked Black Kettle’s Cheyenne camp.
 - Custer attacked the sleeping village and within 15 minutes over 103 Cheyenne were killed.
 - Black Kettle and his wife were among the dead
 - Black Kettle had met with the US military the day before the attack as a show of peace
 - 53 women and children were captured
-

§8

Aftermath

- Custer was awarded with permanent command of the 7th Cavalry
- He also became a hero in eastern newspapers as a victor over “savage” natives.
- Black Kettle’s work for peace was never mentioned.
- Custer led the 7th Cavalry to his death at the Battle of Little Bighorn
- The site of the “Battle” is a part of the National Park Service



§9

Collective Memory and Name Change

Collective memory refers to the shared pool of memories, knowledge and information of a social group that is significantly associated with the group's identity. In historical studies it is the collective consciousness

- This lesson will work to show why the name of the Washita Battle should be changed to represent the actual event.
- The battle was a massacre of indigenous people and the site should represent that truth
- A society must learn to own the truth of history if it is confront it and then change the future

Annotated Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Treaty between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe, October 1865.

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/char65.asp

This primary source document is the backbone of the lesson plan. Not only is it an important event in the life of Black Kettle himself, but also in the lives of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Further, this document is perfect for explaining treaties to students. It has a direct series of events leading up to and after the signing of this agreement.

A Newspaper Clipping from the Colorado Weekly Chieftain December 10, 1868.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=CCF18681210.2.18&srpos=1&dliv=none&e=-1859--1870--en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22black+kettle%22-----2->

This clipping is perfect for this lesson plan to analyze language and voice regarding indigenous people on the plains. This clipping announces the “battle” at the Washita River in western Oklahoma where Black Kettle was killed. The article mentions how the “Indians” put up a good fight and were “whipped” by the Calvary. We now know that the majority of the Native Americans in Black Kettle’s camp were women and children. This article represents a plethora of media that presents history in the wrong way and this will be in the lesson plan to compare

the truth to what was reported and how that has affected public memory, including calling the site a battle instead of a massacre.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Brill, Charles. *Conquest of the Southern Plains: Uncensored Narrative of the Battle of Washita and Custer’s Southern Campaign*. Golden Saga Publishers, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 1938.

This book is an anthology of the history of what the author calls the Washita “Campaign.” This book presents a “full” history of Black Kettle and Custer. But it was written in 1938 and that perspective will be interesting to present in the lesson plan. Reading this in a small group setting will be perfect to show the difference in language from 1938 to now. This book does not take into account the indigenous perspective. Showing students this difference will be invaluable.

Hardorff, Richard. *Washita Memories: Eyewitness Views of Custer’s Attack on Black Kettle’s Village*. University of Oklahoma, Norman. 1991.

This book is the complete opposite to Brill’s. Not only is it a collection of oral stories but it is also a good secondary source. This book will also provide more primary course stories for students to analyze and compare. Continuing to present different perspectives is important in this lesson. Students can gain



valuable insights and they will be able to look at any historical event that same way in the future.

Hatch, Thom. *Black Kettle: The Cheyenne Chief Who Sought Peace but Found War*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey, 2004.

This is a general biography of Black Kettle. This will be perfect for have a general knowledge to develop lecture materials and to have an overview of events.