



The Conflict at the Washita River

The Indian Wars in Indian Territory



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Grade Level	9th Grade	Time Frame	2 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	100 minutes
Course	Oklahoma History		

Essential Question

Why was the conflict at the Washita River significant? Should it be remembered as a "battle" or as a "massacre"? How do our interpretations of and the way we remember and label historical events affect our understanding of the world around us?

Summary

In this lesson, students will begin by analyzing two images depicting the conflict at the Washita River to generate hypotheses about what happened during this historical event. Next, students will read and analyze an article and complete a corresponding history frame graphic organizer. As an extension, students will evaluate and justify whether the conflict at the Washita River should be remembered as a "battle" or as a "massacre." Students will demonstrate what they have learned by creating a caption for one of the images that they viewed at the beginning of the lesson.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in an I Notice, I Wonder image analysis.

Explore

Students read and analyze an article about the conflict at the Washita River.

Explain

Students use their article analysis to complete a History Frame.

Extend

Students evaluate whether the engagement at the Washita River should be remembered as a "battle" or as a "massacre."

Evaluate

Students create a caption for one of the images that they viewed at the beginning of the lesson to demonstrate what they have learned.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

OKH.3: The student will evaluate the major political and economic events that transformed the land and its people from the outbreak of the Civil War through allotment and land openings.

OKH.3.1: Summarize the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction Treaties on American Indian peoples, territories, and tribal sovereignty including:

OKH.3.1C: significance of the Massacre at the Washita

OKH.3.3: Analyze the influence of the idea of Manifest Destiny on the Boomer Movement.

OKH.3.4: Compare multiple points of view to evaluate the impact of the Dawes Act (General Allotment Act) which resulted in the loss of tribal communal lands through a transfer to individual property and the redistribution of lands, including the Unassigned Lands and the Cherokee Outlet, by various means.

OKH.3.5: Explain how American Indian nations lost control over tribal identity and citizenship through congressional action, including the Indian Reorganization Act.

Attachments

- [Battle and Massacre Signs—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Battle and Massacre Signs—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Battle and Massacre Signs—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [Battle and Massacre Signs—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)
- [History Frame with Teacher's Notes—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [History Frame with Teacher's Notes—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)
- [History Frame—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.docx](#)
- [History Frame—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [History Frame—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [History Frame—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Conflict at the Washita River.pptx](#)
- [Student Reading with Teacher's Notes—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [Student Reading with Teacher's Notes—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)
- [Student Reading—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Student Reading—The Conflict at the Washita River - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Student Reading—The Conflict at the Washita River.docx](#)
- [Student Reading—The Conflict at the Washita River.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- I Notice, I Wonder Chart (attached; one per student)
- Student Reading (attached; one per student)
- Student Reading with Teacher's Notes (attached)
- History Frame (attached; one per student)
- History Frame with Teacher's Notes (attached)
- Battle and Massacre Signs (attached; one copy of each to hang in the classroom)
- Student devices with Internet access (optional)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Context

This lesson is meant to be taught after students are familiar with the Second Indian Removal and the controversies surrounding the implementation of the reservation system.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Display **slide 2** and begin by organizing students into groups of four. Students will engage in a modified [Think, Pair, Share](#) activity. For this activity, the "Think" portion will involve completing an [I Notice, I Wonder](#) chart.

Give each student a copy of the attached **I Notice, I Wonder** chart. Tell students that they will view two different images of the same historical event and record at least one thing they "notice" (something that they see in the images) and at least one thing they "wonder" (questions they have based on what they see in the images) about each image.

Display **slide 3** to reveal the first image, The Seventh U.S. Cavalry Charging Into Black Kettle's Village at Daylight, November 27, 1868 (unknown artist).



The Seventh U.S. Cavalry Charging Into Black Kettle's Village at Daylight, November 27, 1868 (unknown artist)

Display **slide 4** to reveal the second image, The 1868 Battle of the Washita. Again, give students a few minutes to record their responses individually in the I Notice, I Wonder Chart.



The 1868 Battle of the Washita, by Steve Lang, commissioned by the National Park Service, 2003

Return to the first image on slide 3. Invite students to "pair" with one or two other students to discuss the things that they noticed and wondered about the image. Students should add to their I Notice, I Wonder charts based on their conversations with their peers. Once students have had a few minutes to discuss, ask student groups to choose one or two responses to share out with the whole class. When you feel that enough has been said about the first image, move to slide 4 to display the second image, and repeat the pair-and-share process.

Display **slide 5**. Ask students to return to their groups and discuss the question on the slide: What do you think is happening in these images? Using your existing knowledge to justify your response, why do you think that? Explain to students that their answer does not have to be correct, but it should be a well-reasoned hypothesis based on their prior knowledge and what they observed in the images. Invite groups to share out their hypotheses. Conclude the discussion by noting that the images depict a conflict between the U.S. Army and the Cheyenne that took place at the Washita River in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in the winter of 1868.

Display **slide 6** and explain to students that throughout the lesson, they will be exploring the following essential questions: *Why is the conflict at the Washita River significant? Should the conflict at the Washita River be remembered as a "battle" or as a "massacre?" How do our interpretations of and the way we remember and label historical events impact our understanding of the world around us?* Additionally, display **slide 7** to review the learning objectives for this lesson.

Explore

Display **slide 8**. To explore the essential questions and learning objectives, explain to students that they will begin by working with groups of four to read and analyze an article about the conflict at the Washita River. Students will be using a modified version of the [POMS \(Point of Most Significance\)](#) strategy to help with their analysis of the text. After reading each section, students will work with their group to identify a point of most significance. Thus, by the end of the reading, they will have developed a total of four POMS statements to summarize the most significant information from each section of the text.

Distribute copies of the attached **Student Reading** handout. Ask students to read through section 1 (the first three paragraphs) with their groups. Give groups approximately five minutes to discuss what they think the POMS is for that section, but tell them not to write anything down yet—instead, have them prepare to share their ideas with the class. Call on several groups to share their ideas. Once you have heard from the groups, synthesize the various contributions to craft the first POMS as a class. Have students write down the statement that you craft for POMS 1.

Sample Student Responses

Refer to the attached **Student Reading with Teacher's Notes** for possible responses.

Allow groups time to work through the remaining three sections of the article, instructing them to stop at the end of each section to document a POMS.

Teacher's Note: Further Scaffolding

Providing scaffolding for completing the first POMS should help students understand what they are expected to do for the remaining points, but if you feel that your students need further scaffolding, consider going through one section at a time and discussing it as a whole class before moving on to the next section.

When groups have wrapped up their reading, assign each group one of the POMS (2–4) to share with the whole class. As groups share their responses, clarify any missing or inaccurate information, and encourage students to modify their responses based on the whole-class discussion.

Explain

Display **slide 9** and pass out a copy of the attached **History Frame** to each student. Still working with their groups, students should use the information from the article and the POMS activity to respond to the prompts in the History Frame graphic organizer.

Teacher's Note: Response Format

Provide students with some guidance about the format that you prefer for their answers. Consider allowing students to use bullet points for the Participants/Key Players, When, Where, Causes/Conflicts, and Effects/Resolution sections while requiring complete sentences for the Summary and Significance sections. Another option would be to have students use complete sentences for all sections. Choose what will work best for your students.

Teacher's Note: Scaffolding

Before students begin, you might consider completing the top three sections as a class. If further support is needed, you might also consider identifying one cause/conflict as a whole class. It could also be helpful to discuss explicitly with students what is meant by causes/conflicts, effects/resolution, summary, and significance. Identifying and explaining the significance of historical events is often challenging for students. Consider reminding them that in determining significance they should answer the following questions: So what? Why does this event matter? Why is this event important?

Once groups have completed the history frame, assign each group a different part of the graphic organizer to share out. You might consider grouping together the Participants/Key Players, When, and Where sections, asking one group to share all three, as those are the "easy" sections. You might also ask several groups to share one or two items from the Causes/Conflicts section or from the Effects/Resolution section, as there should be more than one answer in those sections. The goal is to generate a class discussion where information that belongs in the graphic organizer is shared, confirmed, synthesized, and modified if needed.

Sample Student Responses

Refer to the attached **History Frame with Teacher's Notes** attachment for possible student responses.

Extend

Display **slide 10**. Remind students that, as the article mentioned, there has been controversy surrounding the way the Washita River conflict is remembered and memorialized. This engagement was identified in official U.S. Army reports as the Battle of the Washita, and, thus, it is popularly referred to as such. However, some have argued that what took place during this conflict should not be labeled as a battle but rather a massacre. Invite students to consider how our interpretations of and the way we remember historical events impact our understanding of the world around us, specifically the power of word choice and how language affects that understanding.

In reference to the importance of word choice when memorializing historical events, ask students how they would define the words "battle" and "massacre." What is the difference? Once you have heard from multiple students, display **slide 11**, which shows the dictionary definitions for both words. Ask students to keep those definitions in mind as they participate in the next activity.

Explain to students that they are going to participate in a modified [Four Corners](#) activity. The modification is that, rather than there being four options, there will be only two—battle and massacre. Post the attached **Battle and Massacre Signs** on opposite sides of the room. Ask students, given what they have learned about the conflict at the Washita River, if they feel the event should be remembered as a battle or as a massacre. As students decide, they should move to the side of the room with the sign representing their choice. Once they have chosen a side, ask students to organize themselves into groups of two or three.

Give groups 5-10 minutes to discuss why they think the event should be called a "battle" or a "massacre." Students should consider the evidence that they can use to support their choice. After time is up, give each group the opportunity to share their reasoning with the whole class.

Teacher's Note: Opposing Viewpoints

If most of your students gravitated toward one side, after they have shared their reasoning you might prompt them to consider the opposing viewpoint by asking, "Why might someone think this event should be labeled as a battle/massacre?"

Display **slide 12**. To conclude the discussion, invite students to consider the following essential question with their groups: *How do our interpretations of and the way we remember and label historical events affect our understanding of the world around us?* After allowing approximately five minutes for discussion, call on multiple groups to share their responses with the whole class.

Teacher's Note: Adding Structure

As the lesson is written, this activity lacks significant structure, allowing for a more casual conversation. If you prefer to add structure, consider having students write down their responses in the form of a [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning \(CER\)](#) statement that they can turn in as well as share with the class. Additionally, if you are concerned about students choosing their own groups, you could quickly assign them to groups by numbering off.

Evaluate

Display **slide 13**. Invite students to choose one of the two images from the beginning of the lesson (which are also repeated on **slides 14 and 15**). Using the [Caption This](#) strategy, ask students to create a caption showcasing what they have learned about the conflict at the Washita River. Captions should be between 1-3 sentences, and students should incorporate what they have learned about the conflict to explain what is happening in the image.

Optional Technology Integration

Digital copies of the images can be shared through [Google Classroom](#) or [Padlet](#), and captions can be collected and shared there as well.

Resources

- Harper's Weekly. (1868, December 19). The Seventh U.S. Cavalry charging into Black Kettle's village at daylight, Nov. 27, 1868 [Image]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96521161/>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Caption This. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/7b4de59085f566aa097814b8c0036253>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER). Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506fc09>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four Corners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5064550>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google Classroom. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I Notice, I Wonder. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f507d1a7>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). POMS: Point of Most Significance. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/b30762a7557ba0b391f207f4c600f5ac>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5064b49>
- Lang, S. (2003). The 1868 battle of the Washita [Image]. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/waba/learn/historyculture/index.htm>.