



The Washita Massacre

The Indian Wars in Indian Territory



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Grade Level	9th – 11th Grade	Time Frame	100 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	2 periods
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History		

Essential Question

Why was the Washita Massacre significant?

Summary

In this lesson, students will begin by analyzing two images depicting the Washita Massacre 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 examine the text of a historical marker at the Washita Battlefield NHS, and they will determine why a growing number of historians think the event should be labeled a “massacre” rather than a “battle.” 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 analyze two images of the massacre during an I Notice, I Wonder activity, and they hypothesize about what had happened.

Explore

Students read and analyze an article about the Washita Massacre.

Explain

Students use their article analysis to complete a History Frame.

Extend

Students examine the text of a historical marker at the Washita Battlefield NHS and determine why a growing number of historians think the event should be labeled a “massacre” rather than a “battle.”

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.3.1C: significance of the Massacre at the Washita

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

USH.1.3: Analyze the impact of westward expansion and immigration on migration, settlement patterns in American society, economic growth, and American Indians.

USH.1.3C: Examine the rationale behind federal policies toward American Indians including the establishment of reservations, attempts at assimilation, the end of the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee, and the impact of the Dawes Act on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.

USH.1.3D: Compare viewpoints of American Indian resistance to United States Indian policies as evidenced by Red Cloud in his Cooper Union speech, Quanah Parker, and Chief Joseph as expressed in his I Will Fight No More Forever speech.

Attachments

- [Historical Marker Questions—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Historical Marker Questions—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Historical Marker Questions—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [Historical Marker Questions—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [Historical Marker Transcript—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Historical Marker Transcript—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Historical Marker Transcript—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [Historical Marker Transcript—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [History Frame with Teacher's Notes—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [History Frame with Teacher's Notes—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [History Frame—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.docx](#)
- [History Frame—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [History Frame—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [History Frame—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [I Notice I Wonder—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Washita Massacre.pptx](#)
- [Student Reading with Teacher's Notes—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [Student Reading with Teacher's Notes—The Washita Massacre.pdf](#)
- [Student Reading—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Student Reading—The Washita Massacre - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Student Reading—The Washita Massacre.docx](#)
- [Student Reading—The Washita Massacre.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)

- Historical Marker Transcript handout (attached; one per student)
- Historical Marker Questions handout (attached; one per group)
- Student devices with Internet access (optional)

15 minutes

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 3**, 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 4** to reveal the first image, "The Seventh U.S. Cavalry Charging Into Black Kettle's Village at Daylight" (pictured below). Give students a few minutes to record their responses individually in the I Notice, I Wonder Chart.



Display **slide 5** to reveal the second image, "The 1868 Battle of the Washita" (pictured below), by Steven Lang. Again, give students a few minutes to record their responses individually in the I Notice, I Wonder Chart.



Return to the first image on slide 4. 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 5 to display the second image, and repeat the pair-and-share process.

Display **slide 6**. 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 prior knowledge and evidence from the images, justify your response.* 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 the massacre of the Cheyenne that took place at the Washita River in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in the autumn of 1868.

Display **slide 7**, and explain to students that throughout the lesson, they will be exploring the following essential question: *"Why was the Washita Massacre significant?"* Additionally, display **slide 8** to review the learning objectives for this lesson.

25 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 9**. 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 Washita Massacre. 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.

25 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 10**, 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 is 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.

25 minutes

Extend

Move to **slide 11** and have students view the [photo](#) of the historical marker, “The Battle of the Washita.” Pass out to each student the **Historical Marker Transcript** handout, which includes the transcribed text from the marker.

Display **slide 12**. Arrange your students into groups of three. Using the [jigsaw](#) strategy, make sure that every student in each group is reading a different couple of paragraphs than their partner. Ask the students to number off from 1-3 and have them read the section of the text that corresponds with their number. This will ensure that the paragraphs are split equally among the three students in each group. Give the students about five minutes to read their assigned paragraphs.

Display **slide 13**. Make sure to take time to go over the definitions of “battle” and “massacre.” Be sure that students have a good understanding of each definition. For example, the word “*indiscriminate*” is important to emphasize, but you may need to define that word for some of the students as well. Consider asking volunteers whether they want to add anything to the provided definitions.

Pass out the attached **Historical Marker Questions** handouts to each small group. Make sure to keep slide 13 displayed and have the groups work together for about 15 minutes to answer the questions included on the bottom of their handouts:

1. What are some details that stood out to you in the text?
2. How many Cheyenne men, women, and children were killed on the morning of November 27, 1868? How many soldiers in the 7th Cavalry were killed?
3. What information do you think might have been left out of the text?
4. Based on the text and what you already know, why do you think many historians now agree that this was a massacre, and not a battle?

Sample Student Responses

1. *It looks as if a lot more Cheyenne men, women, and children died than soldiers. Black Kettle wanted there to be peace. One of the soldiers killed was Alexander Hamilton's grandson. Hundreds of horses were killed.*
2. *Probably between 38 and 103 Cheyenne were killed. Records indicate that at least 13 men, 16 women, and 9 children were killed. The exact number of 7th Cavalry deaths isn't given, but at least two soldiers and a squad of troopers were killed.*
3. *It doesn't explain what happened to the Cheyenne who were taken captive. It doesn't refer to the incident as a massacre. It leaves out graphic details about the injuries sustained by innocent citizens of the village who were attacked without warning. It doesn't list the reason why Colonel Custer decided that the village should be attacked.*
4. *The Cheyenne did not provoke an attack, and there is no clear reason why they were attacked. They were not prepared to fight, and men, women, and children were killed indiscriminately by the soldiers. Since they were caught off guard, the number of Cheyenne killed was higher than the number of soldiers that were killed.*

Teacher's Note: Exploring the Site

If time allows, you might want to share photos 4-10 from the linked [site](#) with your students. Ask them what they notice about each photo. Ask them too if seeing the site of the massacre has given them a better sense of what happened that morning.

Once students have answered the questions, call on a volunteer from one of the groups, and have them share their group's answer to the first question. Repeat this process with the other questions, making sure to call on a volunteer from a different group for each question.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 14**. Invite students to choose one of the two images from the beginning of the lesson (which are also repeated on **slides 15 and 16**). Using the [Caption This](#) strategy, ask students to create a caption showcasing what they have learned about the Washita Massacre. Captions should be between 1-3 sentences, and students should incorporate what they have learned about the massacre 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

- Carter, G. D. (2023, February 7). The Battle of the Washita: 1868. Historical Marker Database. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=11468>
- Conn, J. S. (2007, October 16). The Battle of the Washita marker. Historical Marker Database. <https://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=35923>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Caption this. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/82>
- 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/180>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179>
- 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/101>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139>
- Lang, S. (2003). The 1868 battle of the Washita [Image]. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/waba/learn/historyculture/index.htm>.
- Unknown artist. (1868, December 19). The Seventh U.S. Cavalry charging into Black Kettle's village at daylight, Nov. 27, 1868 [Image]. Harper's Weekly. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96521161/>