



## Primary Source Lesson Plan

### Indians and Whites: The Sand Creek Massacre

#### Name of Primary Source

- The Sand Creek Massacre: Colonel Chivington's Account, George Bent's Account, Lieutenant Joseph Cremer's Account, John Smith's Account.

<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/NA-SandCreek.html> Additional Source - Legends of America, Native American Legends, The Sand Creek Massacre. This can be used to provide background information.

#### How primary source ties into text

- Qualifies: The primary sources include four different accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre by people present that day.
- Elaborates: Each primary source gives a different perspective of the events that took place at the Sand Creek Massacre. Three accounts are told from the perspective of the white men who were present at the attack. One is told from the Native American perspective. The Legends of American source gives an account of the Sand Creek Massacre from a historian's perspective.
- Raises questions: Through these primary sources students will be able to complete a comparing points of view activity. Students will also be able to complete the inferring activity to infer the point of view of the Native Americans.
- Correlating Lesson - Use as an essential skill learning activity after lessons 12 & 13, Native American Experience. Students will read and interpret primary sources critically.

#### Colorado Standards

- Social Studies Standard 1 History: History develops moral understanding, defines identity, and creates and appreciation of how things change while building skills in judgment and decision making. History enhances the ability to read varied sources and develop the skills to analyze, interpret, and communicate.
  - Grade level expectation: Use a variety of sources to distinguish historical fact from fiction.
- Reading and Writing 1: Read and understand a variety of materials
- Reading and Writing 3: Write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

#### Big Idea

- Literacy - Compare and Contrast different points of view.
- History - students understand that history is a written account often based on conflicting evidence. Even the accounts by soldiers are in conflict.

#### Critical thinking

- Based on these conflicting accounts, what do you think happened at Sand Creek?

## Mini-Lesson

### Teaching

To provide background, read aloud to students the first part of the article about the Sand Creek Massacre from the Legends of American website. Pause after the eighth paragraph to introduce the primary sources. Facilitate a discussion about why events like this might be seen from different viewpoints. What are the view points that came out of the Sand Creek Massacre? Who were the major parties involved in the massacre?

### Active Engagement

Begin by dividing students into multiple abilities groups for 4 or 5 students per group. Assign each group either Colonel Chivington's account or George Bent's account. Have students read their assigned account and fill in the appropriate box in the graphic organizer. Lead a discussion comparing the two points of view. Conclude by asking which point of view they think is most believable. Once this activity is complete, hand out the two remaining accounts by Lieutenant Joseph Cramer and John Smith and assign one or the other to each group. After they have read these accounts, discuss whether the additional evidence strengthens their earlier conclusion or causes them to revise it. Then continue the narrative of the attack in the Legends of America reading.

### Sharing/Closing

Conclude the lesson with a discussion about how we decide what happened in the past based on conflicting evidence. Can they think of an event in their own lifetime that might produce conflicting accounts?

## Sand Creek Massacre: Colonel John Chivington's Account

The attack was made about sunrise. In my opinion the Indians were surprised; they began, as soon as the attack was made, to oppose my troops, however, and were soon fighting desperately. Many of the Indians were armed with rifles and many with revolvers; I think all had bows and arrows. They had excavated trenches under the back of Sand creek, which in the vicinity of the Indian camp is high, and in many places precipitous. These trenches were two to three feet deep, and, in other connexion [sic] with the banks, were evidently designed to protect the occupants from the fire of the enemy.

The Indians took shelter in these trenches as soon as the attack was made, and from thence resisted the advance of my troops.

From the best information I could obtain, I judge there were five hundred or six hundred Indians killed; I cannot state positively the number killed, nor can I state positively the number of women and children killed. Officers who passed over the field, by my orders, after the battle, for the purpose of ascertaining the number of Indians killed, report that they saw but few women and children dead, no more than would certainly fall in an attack upon a camp in which they were. I myself passed over some portions of the field after the fight, and I saw but one woman who had been killed, and one who had hanged herself; I saw no dead children.

From all I could learn, I arrived at the conclusion that but few women or children had been slain. I am of the opinion that when the attack was made on the Indian camp the greater number of squaws and children made their escape, while the warriors remained to fight my troops.

I had no reason to believe that Black Kettle and the Indians with him were in good faith at peace with the whites.

Source: United States Congress, House of Representatives. "Massacre of Cheyenne Indians," *Report on the Conduct of the War*, 38<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865, p. 48-50.

## Sand Creek Massacre: George Bent's Account

*The following is an account of the attack by George Bent, an Indian-American (his mother was a Cheyenne), who was living with the Indians at Sand Creek.*

At dawn on the morning of November 29 I was still in bed when I heard shouts and the noise of people running about the camp. I jumped up and ran out of my lodge. From down the creek a large body of troops was advancing at a rapid trot, some to the east of the camps, and others on the opposite side of the creek, to the west. More soldiers could be seen making for the Indian pony herds to the south of the camps; in the camps themselves all was confusion and noise—men, women, and children rushing out of the lodges partly dressed....

The Indians all began running, but they did not seem to know what to do or where to turn. The women and children were screaming and wailing, the men running to the lodges for their arms and shouting advice and directions to one another. I ran to my lodge and got my weapons, then rushed out and joined a passing group of middle-aged Cheyenne men.... So after a short time we broke and ran back toward the creek, jumping into the dry bed of the stream, above the camps. Hardly had we reached this shelter under the high bank of the creek when a company of cavalry rode up on the opposite bank and opened fire on us. We ran up the creek with the cavalry following us, one company on each bank, keeping right after us and firing all the time. Many of the people had preceded us up the creek, and the dry bed of the stream was now a terrible sight: men, women, and children lying thickly scattered on the sand, some dead and the rest too badly wounded to move.

We ran about two miles up the creek, I think, and then came to a place where the banks were very high and steep. Here a large body of Indians had stopped under the shelter of the banks, and the older men and the women had dug holes or pits under the banks, in which the people were now hiding. Just as our party reached this point I was struck in the hip by a bullet and knocked down; but I managed to tumble into one of the holes and lay there among the warriors, women, and children.

Source: George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent: Written from his Letters* (Ed. by SovieLottinville.) Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968. Pp. 151-152.

## Sand Creek Massacre: John Smith's Account

*Question:* How many Indians were there there [at Sand creek]?

*Answer:* There were 100 families of Cheyennes, and some eight lodges of Arapahos.

*Question:* How many persons in all, should you say?

*Answer:* About 500, we estimated them at five to a lodge.

*Question:* 500 men, women, and children?

*Answer:* Yes, sir.

*Question:* Do you know whether or not Colonel Chivington knew the friendly character of these Indians before he made the attack on them?

*Answer:* It is my opinion that he did.

*Question:* Did you tell Colonel Chivington the character and disposition of these Indians at any time during your interviews on this day?

*Answer:* Yes, sir.

*Question:* What did he say in reply?

*Answer:* He said he could not help it; that his orders were positive to attack the Indians.

*Question:* From whom did he receive these orders?

*Answer:* I do not know; I presume from General Curtis.

*Question:* Did he not tell you?

*Answer:* Not to my recollection.

*Question:* Were the women and children slaughtered indiscriminately, or only so far as they were with the warriors?

*Answer:* Indiscriminately.

*Question:* Can you state how many Indians were killed - How many women and how many children?

*Answer:* Perhaps one-half were men, and the balance were women and children. I do not think that I saw more than 70 laying dead then, as far as I went. But I saw parties of men scattered in ever direction, pursuing little bands of Indians.

*Question:* What time of day or night was this attack made?

*Answer:* The attack commenced about sunrise, and lasted until between 10 and 11 o'clock.

*Question:* How large a body of troops?

*Answer:* From 800 to 1,000 men.

*Question:* What amount of resistance did the Indians make?

*Answer:* I think that probably there may have been about 60 or 70 warriors who were armed and stood their ground and fought. Those that were unarmed got out the way as they best could.

Source: United States Congress, House of Representatives. "Massacre of Cheyenne Indians," *Report on the Conduct of the War*, 38<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865, p. 6-9.

## **Sand Creek Massacre: Lieutenant Joseph Cramer's Account**

*Question:* Were most of the Indians killed and scalped at Sand creek warriors?

*Answer:* They were not; I should think two-thirds were women and children.

*Question:* Did any of the Indians escape during the attack upon Black Kettle's camp?

*Answer:* I should judge they did, a good many.

*Question:* At anytime during the attack on Black Kettle's camp did the Indians appear in line of battle?

*Answer:* Not that I saw.

*Question:* How did the Indians resist the attack upon them?

*Answer:* By fighting back. They fought singly or a few in a place when the ground would give them shelter from our fire, and fought bravely. A great many started towards our lines with hands raised, as if begging for us to spare them.

*Question:* Were the Indians followed and killed while attempting to escape?

*Answer:* They were, some of them.

*Question:* Were any of the Indian women and children killed and mutilated while attempting to escape?

*Answer:* They were; they were followed and killed, but I do not know when they were mutilated. They were mutilated, though.

Source: United States Congress, Senate, "Sand Creek Massacre," *Report of the Secretary of War*, Sen. Exec. Doc. 26, 39<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867, pp. 50-51.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparing Points of View (1)

Complete this section for the White Man's point of view  
of view

COLONEL CHIVINGTON'S point of view:

GEORGE BENT'S point of view:

Complete this section for the Indian's point

Put yourself in their shoes. I understand these things about both points of view.

CHIVINGTON'S point of view:

BENT'S point of view:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Comparing Points of View (2)

Complete each section below summarizing each person's point of view of the Sand Creek Massacre based on the information you read about in the primary source documents.

JOHN SMITH'S Point of View (1)

LIEUTENANT CRAMER'S Point of VIEW (1)

JOHN SMITH'S POINT OF VIEW (2)

LIEUTENANT CRAMER'S Point of View (2)

Put yourself in their shoes. What do you understand about the above points of view?

after considering these points of view, WHICH OF THE FIRST TWO ACCOUNTS (CHIVINGTON OR BENT'S) DO YOU THINK IS MOST BELIEVABLE? WHY?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Why and How? Reflection

Why do you think Ada Sanford wrote this account?

What lesson did you learn from it?

Does the account have a moral or theme?

How does this primary source relate to your life? Have you experienced the same feelings as the people in this account? What did you personally learn from the account?