

# Point of View, Misconceptions, and Errors of Omission – Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Big Horn

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grades 7-8  
Suggested Duration: Two 50-minute periods (possibly more)

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

**Grade 8 Social Studies Benchmark 6** Explain how and why events (e.g., American Revolution, Battle of the Little Big Horn, immigration, Women’s Suffrage) may be interpreted differently according to the points of view of participants, witnesses, reporters, and historians.

**Essential Understanding 6** History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

### Understandings

- An event can be observed from many viewpoints, depending on who is telling the story, when the event is written down, and the perspective taken. [EU6]
- Errors of omission occur when facts, information, and points-of-view are left out of a history or story. History is told from many points of view. [EU6]
- Errors of omission in historical accounts contribute to biases, stereotypes, misunderstandings, and distrust. [EU2]
- Stereotyping, over-generalizations about a people, and resulting actions have contributed to conflict and cooperation between tribes and the U.S. government.
- Misconceptions about people, omitted points of view, and an author’s embedded values should be noted, discussed, and corrected whenever noted. [EU2]

### Essential Questions

- How does who I am shape my views about the Battle of the Little Big Horn?
- How might only relying on one source, in this case, textbook information limit my understanding of this event?
- What might I misunderstand about the Battle of the Little Big Horn because of my own prejudices, habits, and/or styles?
- What was the writer feeling, thinking, seeing, and trying to make me feel and see as this event was discussed in my history book?

- What is the possible impact on a reader’s beliefs and actions?
- When did “Custer’s Last Stand” become the “Battle of the Little Big Horn” and why?

### Students will be able to...

- show respect and awareness of another’s culture.
- identify and describe possible errors of omission in a historical account and summarize perspectives/ points of view.
- draw conclusions about possible embedded values, omissions, and biases in a historical account.

### Students will know...

- stereotyping Indian behaviors has caused permanent harm to individuals and tribes.
- some books and materials contain stereotypes and biases based on misperceptions about Indians. Good readers identify the biases, stereotypes, misconceptions, and errors of omission they read, and identify the intended and unintended effects.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Read and discuss a passage from your history book describing the Battle of the Little Big Horn.
2. Complete the worksheets and class time tasks.
3. Identify the author’s point of view/perspective, and describe the embedded values based on the passage you read.
4. How does the passage from the history book describe this battle?

### Other Evidence

1. Ensure students utilize their glossaries to briefly identify terms: *embedded values*, *error of omission*, *point of view*, *primary source materials*, and *secondary source material*. They should write the needed definitions in their notebooks. Glossary of terms can be accessed on the OPI Indian Education Web site.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

Utilize your Grade 8 history book (Battle of the Little Big Horn), and explain the special purpose of the lesson (see Established Goals and Understandings). Discuss how history can be viewed from many different points of view, that history changes depending on whose filters the story goes through. When history is told from the dominant culture’s viewpoint, a tribe’s perspective is left out, or omitted. This

results in an error of omission; readers should be aware of possible omissions whenever they read history.

Distribute the *Definitions Worksheet*, and teach the terms prior to asking students to read the passage concerning the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Ensure students put the definitions into their notebooks. Use the Essential Question starters to formulate key questions most pertinent to the work being read. Discuss the work in small segments so students are able to identify stereotypes, prejudices, and issues occurring in the material.

Stop at pivotal points and ensure that discussion identifies the issues; make sure students identify and can express the problems that occur as a result of information omitted. For example,

- What is missing in the selection?
- What wording and terminology is used in the history book?
- Is the history book a *primary source* or a *secondary source*? Why does this matter?
- What points of view/perspectives are not told?
- What does this brief passage say about the embedded values of the author?

Perform group rewrites of misconceptions, omissions, and perceptions so students learn to evaluate the writer's ideas.

In an oral presentation, make the following points to your students (from the Office of Public Instruction publication *Bringing the Story of the Cheyenne People to the Children of Today*)

Northern Cheyenne Social Studies Core Understanding 5 (p. 13).

Cheyenne history during the 1700-1800's was characterized by intense change including the westward movement, acquisition of the horse, disease, invasion, massacres and battles. Living during this time was heroic.

Talking Points (learning objectives in the above Northern Cheyenne teaching guide, p. 13).

- The westward movement compacted tribes, causing intense inter-tribal wars during the 1700-1800's. The Cheyenne endured displacement and forced relocation.
- Introduction of the horse created a significant Cheyenne horse culture.
- Cholera and smallpox decimated Cheyenne bands.
- The primary food supply (bison) of the Cheyenne was intentionally wiped out.
- The gold rush invasion of the Cheyenne lands impacted the tribe's ability to move within their own territory (Black Hills invasion in 1874).
- The Sand Creek Massacre took place in 1864.
- The Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876) resulted in intense change for the Cheyenne people.

1. What is a massacre?

2. Students should be able to describe the difference between a “battle” and a “massacre,” after your discussion of the Sand Creek Massacre and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.
3. Whose viewpoint is expressed when the gold rush is described as an “invasion?” Why was this regarded as an invasion?
4. In the view of the Cheyenne, what were the causes of the Battle of the Little Big Horn?
5. In the view of the U.S. Army, what were the causes of the Battle of the Little Big Horn?
6. When and why did the description of this battle change from “Custer’s Last Stand” to the Battle of the Little Big Horn?”

### Lesson Extension

Use the Grade 8 Lesson “Trying to Return Home” from the Northern Cheyenne teaching guide (pages 69-95).

Have students read the section called “A Young Mother at the Rosebud and Little Bighorn Battles” pages 25-26 from the publication *Resilience: Stories of Twenty Indian Women*.

Students could conduct an on-line search using the words “Custer’s Last Stand” and view the types of images that come up and then discuss perspective and bias.

### Materials/Resources Needed

Northern Cheyenne Curriculum Committee. ***Bringing the Story of the Cheyenne People to the Children of Today***. Helena, MT: Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2006.

**Grade 8 United States History book** (Use your current edition. It might also be interesting for them to look at an older one, too. Check with the school library for copies of older textbooks). In addition, use the notes on the next page to give students background on Northern Cheyenne perspectives of the change resulting from westward movement, their acquisition of the horse, the effects of diseases, invasions, massacres, and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Ferguson, Laura K. ***Resilience: Stories of Montana Indian Women***. Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society. 2016.

### Additional Teacher Information and Reading

Hardorff, Richard G., (ed). ***Cheyenne Memories of the Custer Fight: A Source Book***. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

◊ This text includes interviews and statements from many at the battle, including Little Wolf, Brave Wolf, American Horse, Tall Bull, and Hump.

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Hardorff, Richard G., (ed). ***Indian Views of the Custer Fight: A Source Book***. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

◊ Hardorff has 35 interviews and statements, including Crazy Horse, Crow King, Two Moons, Turning Hawk.

Hardorff, Richard G., Editor. (1997). ***Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight: New Sources of Indian-Military History***. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

◊ This text Includes testimony from 15 Lakota Sioux and one Cheyenne.

Liberty, Margot and John Stands-In-Timber. ***Cheyenne Memories, 2nd Edition***. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967, 1998.

◊ Read especially Chapters 12-14, concerning The Custer Fight, After the Custer Fight, and After Surrender.

### Additional Recommended Resources

Marquis, Thomas, Interpreter. ***Wooden Leg: A Warrior Who Fought Custer (Cheyenne)***. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1931. (*Roots and Branches* 167-168)

Welch, James with Paul Stekler. **(Blackfeet/Gros Ventre). *Killing Custer***. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1994. (*Roots and Branches* 188-189)

◊ Welch and Stekler deal very specifically with points of view, sources, etc.

PBS - THE WEST - [6.13 White Man Runs Him](#).

## Point of View, Misconceptions, and Errors of Omission Whose Point of View Does My History Textbook Present?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Definitions

**Bias** A highly personal and unreasoned distortion of judgment; prejudice [*Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*].

**Embedded Values** The visible and invisible values of the author, as shown in his/her published work. For example, an author who writes about American Indians using his/her own traditional values to make judgments and assertions about American Indians [Montana Social Studies Standard 1].

**Error of Omission** Are there other perspectives which have been left out or omitted?

**Point of View** The standpoint from which something is considered or valued. An author might write in the *first-person point of view* or in the *third-person point of view*. **Synonyms include:** angle, attitude, frame of reference, opinion, orientation, outlook, perspective, position, private opinion slant, standpoint, two cents worth, viewpoint, way of thinking [*Roget's Thesaurus of Phrases*, 2001].

**Primary Source** Primary resources provide firsthand evidence of historical events. They are, generally, unpublished materials such as manuscripts, photographs, maps, artifacts, audio and video recordings, oral histories, postcards, and the like. For example, a treaty made between the U.S. government and a tribe is a primary resource [UCLA Institute on Primary Sources, available on Internet].

**Secondary Source** Secondary materials, such as textbooks, synthesize and interpret primary materials. A grade 8 text book in history is an example of a secondary source [UCLA Institute on Primary Sources, available on Internet].

**Stereotype** Something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; especially, a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment [*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*].



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize what you have learned below.

What were the causes of the Battle of the Little Big Horn from the U.S. army point of view?

What were the causes of the Battle of the Little Big Horn from the Cheyenne point of view?

In your history book, how does the account about the Battle of the Little Big Horn differ from what you have learned about the Cheyenne perspectives?

What facts were omitted in your history book, according to Cheyenne accounts?