

What were the causes and consequences of the 'Indian Wars'?

Teaching notes

This activity is designed to separate out the causes, main events and consequences of the different Indian Wars, but also to look for common themes and patterns. This could be a revision task after you've taught about the Indian Wars already, or completed with the aid of a textbook that covers the wars if your students are learning about them for the first time. The questions below are designed to get them thinking more deeply about the wars.

Extension questions about the Indian Wars to write and/or discuss

1. Do you think the US government explained the Dakota Sioux Indians' reasons for attacking the reservation agents to local whites? Why/why not?
2. Why is Sand Creek referred to as a 'massacre' and not a war?
3. What do the consequences of the Sand Creek massacre suggest to us about the attitude of white Americans to the Indians by the mid-1860s?

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Use the cards to complete the table below.

Conflict	Causes	Main events	Consequences for Indians	Consequences for the USA
Little Crow's War, 1862				

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Red Cloud's War, 1865-68				

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<p>There had been a struggle for control over the Great Plains of eastern Colorado for some years. The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty granted key portions of this land to the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians.</p>	<p>The reservation agents did little to help the starving Indians, but their leader, Little Crow, initially tried to stop them from attacking the Whites.</p>	<p>2,000 Dakota Sioux were captured by October 1862.</p>	<p>Meanwhile the government instructed US soldiers to build a chain of forts to protect travellers on the Bozeman Trail.</p>
<p>Unable to grow or buy food, the Indians' desperation led to violence.</p>	<p>Tribal chief Black Kettle was invited by Colorado's governor, John E. Evans, to meet with him and hunt near Sand Creek.</p>	<p>Red Cloud and his followers were angry that the US government did little to prevent trespassing on their land, so they took matters into their own hands by attacking Whites using the Bozeman Trail.</p>	<p>However, on 17th August 1862, believing the Americans would be distracted by Civil War which had broken out months earlier, Little Crow and his tribe attacked the Indian Agency.</p>
<p>The tribe was completely unprepared for the attack. 148 were killed (more than half were women and children) compared to just 9 losses amongst Chivington's men.</p>	<p>Gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains in 1862. To reach it, prospectors started to make shortcuts (the Bozeman Trail) across the territory of Sioux Indians led by Red Cloud.</p>	<p>Red Cloud's warriors began their attacks on 21 December 1866 using the ambush tactic. In what became known as Fetterman's Trap, small numbers of Sioux led the US soldiers into an ambush where they were murdered and mutilated.</p>	<p>In 1861 a new settlement (the Treaty of Fort Wise) was drawn up. The Indians withdrew from most of the land granted to them in 1851. Tribal leaders did this to try to secure peace for their people, but many Cheyenne and Lakota Indians were strongly opposed to the new agreement.</p>
<p>Little Crow's followers stole food from the storehouses of the agency and around 700 Whites were killed.</p>	<p>This hardening attitude towards the Indians encouraged harsher policies and actions towards them in future.</p>	<p>However, the struggle was exacerbated by the discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Large numbers of White prospectors arrived in the area, leading to increased tension between settlers and natives.</p>	<p>This did not end the problem of white encroachment onto Indian lands granted by treaties, however. The Great Sioux War was to follow in 1876-77.</p>

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<p>The Treaty also stated that no non-Indians could enter the reservation, so Red Cloud was willing to agree to it.</p>	<p>In 1866 the government opened up peace talks with Red Cloud to try to resolve the problem.</p>	<p>Black Kettle survived the attack. He continued to strive for peace between the Americans and the Indians.</p>	<p>The Dakota Sioux were already starving thanks to a bad harvest the year before.</p>
<p>When Red Cloud found out about the forts, he left the negotiations and decided his tribe would fight.</p>	<p>In response, the government sent in huge numbers of reinforcements. Little Crow and the Dakota Sioux surrendered in September 1862.</p>	<p>In the long term, the Sioux were unable to fully defeat the US army, but they continued to prevent the safe use of the Bozeman Trail.</p>	<p>The massacre was celebrated at first by US citizens, but this turned to disgust when the details of the attack became clearer.</p>
<p>Local white settlers were shocked and outraged by the violence used by the Dakota Sioux. They became convinced of the savagery of the Indians, ignoring their side of their story.</p>	<p>However, local Colonel John Chivington was irritated by continuing Indian unrest. After a night of heavy drinking, he led a group of Civil War soldiers on an attack on Black Kettle's tribe on 29 November 1864.</p>	<p>The Second Fort Laramie Treaty was agreed in 1868. This created the Great Sioux Reservation in Dakota and Nebraska.</p>	<p>The rest of the Dakota Sioux were moved to a new reservation, Crow Creek, which was even less fertile. Hundreds died in the first winter there.</p>
<p>Black Kettle's tribe agreed to move to a new reservation further west in 1865.</p>	<p>In 1851 the Dakota Sioux were moved on to a reservation in Minnesota after agreeing to two treaties with US government.</p>	<p>About 400 were sentenced to death, but President Lincoln intervened due to weak evidence in many cases. In the end only 38 Sioux fighters were executed.</p>	<p>Chivington and his men were not charged for their actions and suffered no legal consequences. However, he did resign from the military and gave up his dream of becoming a politician.</p>
<p>Over the next decade the government went back on some of the agreements in the treaty. Crucially, an annuity (annual payment) due to the Dakota Sioux was not paid in 1862.</p>	<p>This was the USA's worst defeat yet to the Indians, and by 1868 the government was convinced that it would have to negotiate rather than continue fighting.</p>	<p>The government created a different route to the gold mines of the Rocky Mountains and agreed to withdraw the army from the forts.</p>	

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Completed teacher version

Conflict	Causes	Main events	Consequences for Indians	Consequences for the USA
Little Crow's War, 1862	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1851 the Dakota Sioux were moved on to a reservation in Minnesota after agreeing to two treaties with US government. Over the next decade the government went back on some of the agreements in the treaty. Crucially, an annuity (annual payment) due to the Dakota Sioux was not paid in 1862. The Dakota Sioux were already starving thanks to a bad harvest the year before. Unable to grow or buy food, the Indians' desperation led to violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reservation agents did little to help the starving Indians, but their leader, Little Crow, initially tried to stop them from attacking the Whites. However, on 17th August 1862, believing the Americans would be distracted by Civil War which had broken out months earlier, Little Crow and his tribe attacked the Indian Agency. Little Crow's followers stole food from the storehouses of the agency and around 700 Whites were killed. In response, the government sent in huge numbers of reinforcements. Little Crow and the Dakota Sioux surrendered in September 1862. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,000 Dakota Sioux were captured by October 1862. About 400 were sentenced to death, but President Lincoln intervened due to weak evidence in many cases. In the end only 38 Sioux fighters were executed. The rest of the Dakota Sioux were moved to a new reservation, Crow Creek, which was even less fertile. Hundreds died in the first winter there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local white settlers were shocked and outraged by the violence used by the Dakota Sioux. They became convinced of the savagery of the Indians, ignoring their side of their story. This hardening attitude towards the Indians encouraged harsher policies and actions towards them in future.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Sand Creek Massacre, 1864</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been a struggle for control over the Great Plains of eastern Colorado for some years. The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty granted key portions of this land to the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians. • However, the struggle was exacerbated by the discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Large numbers of White prospectors arrived in the area, leading to increased tension between settlers and natives. • In 1861 a new settlement (the Treaty of Fort Wise) was drawn up. The Indians withdrew from most of the land granted to them in 1851. Tribal leaders did this to try to secure peace for their people, but many Cheyenne and Lakota Indians were strongly opposed to the new agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal chief Black Kettle was invited by Colorado's governor, John E. Evans, to meet with him and hunt near Sand Creek. • However, local Colonel John Chivington was irritated by continuing Indian unrest. After a night of heavy drinking, he led a group of Civil War soldiers on an attack on Black Kettle's tribe on 29 November 1864. • The tribe was completely unprepared for the attack. 148 were killed (more than half were women and children) compared to just 9 losses amongst Chivington's men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Kettle survived the attack. He continued to strive for peace between the Americans and the Indians. • Black Kettle's tribe agreed to move to a new reservation further west in 1865. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The massacre was celebrated at first by US citizens, but this turned to disgust when the details of the attack became clearer. • Chivington and his men were not charged for their actions and suffered no legal consequences. However, he did resign from the military and gave up his dream of becoming a politician.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Red Cloud's War, 1865-68</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains in 1862. To reach it, prospectors started to make shortcuts (the Bozeman Trail) across the territory of Sioux Indians led by Red Cloud. • Red Cloud and his followers were angry that the US government did little to prevent trespassing on their land, so they took matters into their own hands by attacking Whites using the Bozeman Trail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1866 the government opened up peace talks with Red Cloud to try to resolve the problem. • Meanwhile the government instructed US soldiers to build a chain of forts to protect travellers on the Bozeman Trail. • When Red Cloud found out about the forts, he left the negotiations and decided his tribe would fight. • Red Cloud's warriors began their attacks on 21 December 1866 using the ambush tactic. In what became known as Fetterman's Trap, small numbers of Sioux led the US soldiers into an ambush where they were murdered and mutilated. • In the long term, the Sioux were unable to fully defeat the US army, but they continued to prevent the safe use of the Bozeman Trail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Second Fort Laramie Treaty was agreed in 1868. This created the Great Sioux Reservation in Dakota and Nebraska. • The Treaty also stated that no non-Indians could enter the reservation, so Red Cloud was willing to agree to it. • This did not end the problem of white encroachment onto Indian lands granted by treaties, however. The Great Sioux War was to follow in 1876-77. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was the USA's worst defeat yet to the Indians, and by 1868 the government was convinced that it would have to negotiate rather than continue fighting. • The government created a different route to the gold mines of the Rocky Mountains and agreed to withdraw the army from the forts.