

# The Battle of Little Big Horn – a Plains Indian Victory?

The Black Hills were the sacred lands of the Sioux Indians. When gold was discovered in 1874, miners flooded into the area.



What is happening in the painting?  
What would the views of each group be?

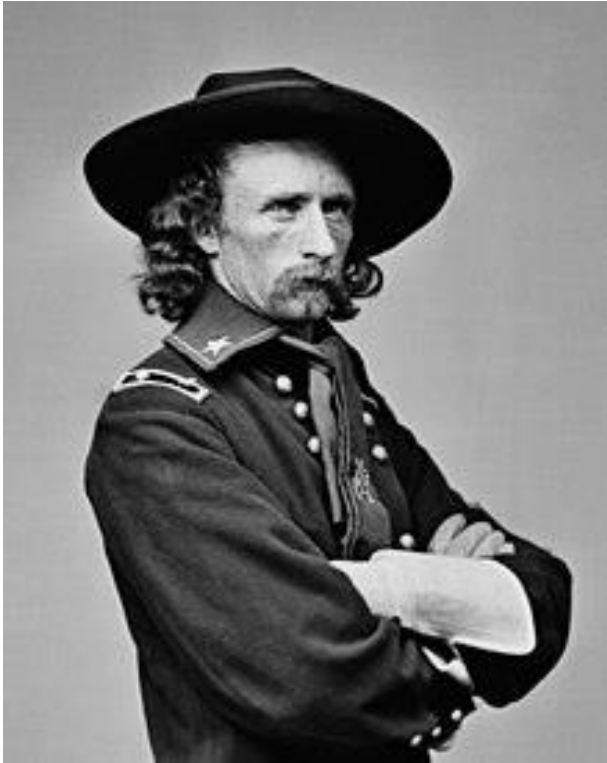
**Can you give any reasons why some members of the Sioux Nation would not trust the government or settlers?**

**How would these facts affect future attempts at keeping peace?**



- **They had failed to pay previous payments in return for Sioux hunting ground**
- **Settlers had continued to take Indian land and the government did not stop them**
- **The railroad companies threatened the buffalo and so Sioux survival on the Plains**
- **During previous Gold Rushes the US government did nothing to stop miners and prospectors using Sioux land**

# The Battle of Little Big Horn 1876



General Custer, General in  
the US Army



Chief Sitting Bull



Chief Crazy Horse

# What were the key events of the Battle of Little Big Horn?

In the second Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Sioux were given a large reservation in South Dakota which included the sacred Black Hills.

By spring over 7000 Indians were ready for war – Sioux, Arapaho and Cheyenne tribes came together to fight. Chief Sitting Bull said: 'The whites want a war and we will give it to them.'

General Custer and his men found the place where the Indians were camped. Recklessly he and 200 of his men decided to attack on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1876. Custer and his men were all killed. They were greatly outnumbered by the Indians. Custer had orders to wait for reinforcements but he was a maverick and did not.

The US government offered to buy the Black Hills from the Sioux for \$6 million, or pay \$400,000 a year for the right to mine there. Both these deals were rejected and the Sioux raided the prospectors camps. The government used these raids as an excuse to say the Sioux had broken their terms of the treaty.

From the 1830s to the 1870s, different Plains Indians tribes had agreed treaties to protect their way of life from white settlers with the US government, only to see those treaties fail each time and their rights and lands reduced. This was the background to the Battle at Little Big Horn.

Deep snow made it impossible for all the Sioux to return to obey President Grant's order, even if they had wanted to.

In December 1875, the government ordered the Sioux to return to the reservations. They were given 60 days to do so. After that, President Grant stated, any Sioux outside the reservations could be killed.

In disgust many Sioux and Cheyenne warriors left the reservations and joined up with Sioux leaders Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

The construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad being built at the time in the early 1870s, came close to these Sioux lands. General George Custer and his men (the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry) were there to protect the railway workers; however he also decided to prospect for gold and he found it in the Black Hills. Other prospectors followed, in clear breach of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

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## Why was the Battle of Little Big Horn (1876) a turning point in America's relationship with the Plains Indians?

Chicago Tribune 7<sup>th</sup> July 1876  
(newspaper)

*It is time to quit this Sunday school policy and let the army exterminate every Indian who will not remain in their reservations. The best use to make of an Indian who will not stay on a reservation is to kill him....*

**Question:** What can you learn from this newspaper report about attitudes to the Indians after the Battle of Little Big Horn?

### **Consequences of the Battle:**

Public opinion totally hardened against the Indians, there was enormous pressure on the Government to crush them....leading to...

**Plains Indians must stay on their reservations** – any found outside of their reservations were pursued and killed by the army. By the early 1880s almost all Cheyenne and Sioux were confined to reservations, totally dependent on the US government for food and shelter.

**Previous treaties were now ignored.** The government decided the Indians had forfeited the rights to have treaty deals. The Sioux were told if they did not give up the Black Hills they would no longer be given food.

**The Sioux's weapons and horses were taken.** Forts and soldiers in the areas increased.

The Battle took place on the exact 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence from British rule, a real embarrassment for the US nation.

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## What were the consequences of the Battle of Little Big Horn?

Read page 87 of The American West text book to help you answer the question

### Question

Explain **2** consequences of the Battle of Little Bighorn, 1876

8 marks

**Explain the results. What difference did the defeat make?**

**Include:**

*As a result....*

*The effect of this was.....*



# Question

## Explain 2 consequences of the Battle of Little Bighorn, 1876

8 marks

Use the mark scheme and answer below to mark your partners work

One of the most significant consequences of the Battle of Little Bighorn was the change in public opinion. The defeat of the US army by the Sioux meant white Americans now believed the Sioux were a direct threat. This can be seen in source D which is taken from a newspaper in 1876. It reads, "let...the army...exterminate every Indian who will not stay on a reservation." The article also calls for an end to the, 'foolish' peace policy. This shows that people believed the only way to resolve conflict on the Plains was to forcibly remove the Indians from it. This article shows us the public would now support a government policy of genocide on the Plains.

Explain 2 consequences of the Battle of Little Bighorn, 1876	
8 marks	
Target:	
Show knowledge and understanding of features and characters. (4 marks)	
Analyse consequences (4 marks)	
Mark	
0	No relevant information
1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Simple comments on the consequence</li><li>Some general information about the events showing a limited knowledge.</li></ul>
3 - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The events of Little Bighorn are analysed to explain a consequence.</li><li>Good knowledge and understanding of the event is shown and specific information is used to explain the consequence.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Award between 0 - 4 marks for each of the 2 consequences required.</li><li>If the answer gives only factual knowledge of the event and no <u>explanation of the consequence</u> it cannot be given more than 2 marks. (i.e. An answer which gives 2 descriptions of events cannot receive more than 4/8).</li></ul>	
Possible consequences the answer could include are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The change in public opinion</li><li>An increased pressure on the government to deal with the Plains Indians.</li><li>Previous treaties were now ignored by the government.</li><li>The increased use of the army to control the Plains Indians.</li><li>An increased drive to keep the Sioux on reservations.</li></ul>	