

American Indian Lesson Plan #2

Title: How should the government have approached relations between settlers and Indians on the Plains during the 1880s?

Grade Level: 11

Class Periods Required: One 90 minute block

Purpose and Background:

The silver and gold rushes along the Plains during the 1860s and 1870s brought white settlers and Indians into violent conflict with one another. From the Massacre at Sand Creek to the Massacre at Wounded Knee, millions of Indians were killed at the expense of white settlers. As the government came to realize that the reservation system wasn't working they tried to find an alternative to what they called the "Indian Problem." Their solution was the Dawes Act which aimed to "Americanize" Native Americans and assimilate them into white culture. The Dawes Act saw immense opposition from Indian communities even though it received mass support from white governmental leaders, including the president. The purpose of this lesson is for students to analyze the multiple components of the Dawes Act, understand its implications, and try to create alternative approaches to the settler-Indian conflicts that were taking place on the frontier during the 1880s. Students should gain a strong understanding of land allotment and assimilation and the effects these government policies had on Indian communities.

Goals/Objectives:

- Have students understand the process of assimilation by reading background information about the Carlisle School and the eventual breakup of reservations;
- Analyze the Dawes Act and understand its purpose and implications;
- Analyze Helen Hunt Jackson and President Chester Arthur's perspectives on Indian land claims and citizenship;
- Have students create solutions to the conflicts over land occurring between westward settlers and Indians along the Plains during the 1880s.

Materials:

- Excerpts from the Dawes Act and accompanying questions;
- Helen Hunt Jackson's views on Indian citizenship and allotment for Plains Indians and questions;
- Chester Arthur's views on Indian citizenship and allotment for Plains Indians and questions.

Procedures:

Day 1: Introduction to Lesson

Students will receive background information about conflicts between settlers and Indians both during and after the Civil War. I will lecture about the Sand Creek Massacre, Fetterman Massacre, Treaty of Fort Laramie, and the significance of Custer's Last Stand. Students will also gain an understanding of why reservations were created and why they were deemed unsuccessful by both Indians and the government. The class will discuss the implications of allotment and the resistance it received in Indian communities.

Day 2:

Procedure 1: 10 minutes

I will write the word "home" on the board and have students give me suggestions of what comes to their mind when they hear that word. Then I will lead a class discussion about what it means to be taken away from your home and what feelings are evoked when students are away from their home for long periods of time. This will lead into a wider discussion of allotment and assimilation of Indians.

Procedure 2: 15 minutes

As a class, students will read background information about the Carlisle School and assimilation during the 1870s and 1880s. The class will discuss the government's purpose of breaking up reservations and the different methods created by the government to try and assimilate Indians into white culture. Students will examine the meaning of a "civilized life" and what this phrase meant for Indians being assimilated by the federal government.

Procedure 3: 20 minutes

In groups of three to four, students will read excerpts from the Dawes Act and answer questions regarding the purpose of the document and its implications. Students will be asked to identify who had control of land allotments, what it meant for Indians to be held accountable to the state, the meaning of "equal protection," and which Indians had opportunities at citizenship.

Procedure 4: 20 minutes

Groups will read quotes from reformer Helen Hunt Jackson and President Chester Arthur representing their views on Indian allotment. Students will answer questions regarding their differing viewpoints and try to determine what Jackson and Arthur thought should be done with Indian lands.

Procedure 5: 25 minutes

In their same groups, students will create solutions to the problems occurring between white settlers and Indians along the Plains during the 1880s. Students will take the place of the government and create their own policy regarding Indian allotment. Groups will be asked to answer the following discussion questions: How should lands along the Plains have been divided up, how should power have been distributed, what role should the government have played, and should the government have attempted to assimilate Indians into white American culture?

Assessment of Outcomes:

- Students will answer questions that require them to interpret excerpts from the Dawes Act;
- Students will answer questions that require them to analyze two opposing viewpoints of the Dawes Act;
- Students will create solutions to problems of Indian allotment and violence between settlers and Indians;
- Students will take a comprehensive multiple-choice exam that will include questions about the Dawes Act and Indian-settler relations on the frontier.

Extensions and Adaptations:

- Have students create posters that represent visual support of the reforms they created for Indians allotment;
- Have students conduct a classroom debate with one side of the class representing the views of Helen Hunt Jackson and Native Americans and the other side representing the views of Chester Arthur and the government.

Resources:

Digital History. *Kill the Indian Save the Man*, taken from:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display_printable.cfm?HHID=557

Excerpt from the Dawes Act taken from:

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/eight/dawes.htm>

Jackson, Helen Hunt. *A Century of Dishonor*, 1881.

Richardson, James D., ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 1897.

Digital History

www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

[Back to Hypertext History: Our Online American History Textbook](#)

[Tragedy of the Plains Indians](#)

Kill the Indian and Save the Man

Period: 1860-1900

In 1879, an army officer named Richard H. Pratt opened a boarding school for Indian youth in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. His goal: to use education to uplift and assimilate into the mainstream of American culture. That year, 50 Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Pawnee arrived at his school. Pratt trimmed their hair, required them to speak English, and prohibited any displays of tribal traditions, such as Indian clothing, dancing, or religious ceremonies. Pratt's motto was "kill the Indian and save the man."

The Carlisle Indian School became a model for Indian education. Not only were private boarding schools established, so too were reservation boarding schools. The ostensible goal of such schools was to teach Indian children the skills necessary to function effectively in American society. But in the name of uplift, civilization, and assimilation, these schools took Indian children away from their families and tribes and sought to strip them of their cultural heritage.

By the late 19th century, there was a widespread sense that the removal and reservation policies had failed. No one did a more effective job of arousing public sentiment about the Indians' plight than Helen Hunt Jackson, a Massachusetts-born novelist and poet. Her classic book *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), recorded the country's sordid record of broken treaty obligations, and did as much to stimulate public concern over the condition of Indians as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did to raise public sentiment against slavery or Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* did to ignite outrage against environmental exploitation. Ironically, reformers believed that the solution to the "Indian problem" was to erase a distinctive Indian identity.

During the late 19th century, humanitarian reformers repeatedly called for the government to support schools to teach Indian children "the white man's way of life," end corruption on Indian reservations, and eradicate tribal organizations. The federal government partly adopted the reformers' agenda. Many reformers denounced corruption in the Indian Bureau, which had been set up in 1824 to provide assistance to Indians. In 1869, one member of the House of Representatives said, "No branch of the federal government is so spotted with fraud, so tainted with corruption...as this Indian Bureau." To end corruption,

Congress established the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1869, which had the major Protestant religious denominations appoint agents to run Indian reservations. The agents were to educate and Christianize the Indians and teach them to farm. Dissatisfaction with bickering among church groups and the inexperience of church agents led the federal government to replace church-appointed Indian agents with federally-appointed agents during the 1880s.

In 1871 to weaken the authority of tribal leaders, Congress ended the practice of treating tribes as sovereign nations. To undermine older systems of tribal justice, Congress, in 1882, created a Court of Indian Offenses to try Indians who violated government laws and rules.

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DOCUMENT 1**General Allotment Act (a.k.a. The Dawes Act) of 1887, excerpted**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in all cases where any tribe or band of Indians has been, or shall hereafter be, located upon any reservation created for their use, either by treaty stipulation or by virtue of an act of Congress or executive order setting apart the same for their use, the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, authorized, whenever in his opinion any reservation or any part thereof of such Indians is advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes, to cause said reservation, or any part thereof, to be surveyed, or resurveyed if necessary, and to allot the lands in said reservation in severalty to any Indian located thereon in quantities as follows:

To each head of a family, one quarter of a section; To each single person over eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section; To each orphan child under eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section; and

To each other single person under eighteen years now living, or who may be born prior to the date of the order of the President directing an allotment of the lands embraced in any reservation, one-sixteenth of a section: Provided, That in case there is not sufficient land in any of said reservations to allot lands to each individual of the classes above named in quantities as above provided, the lands embraced in such reservation or reservations shall be allotted to each individual of each of said classes pro rate in accordance with the provisions of this act: And provided further, That where the treaty or act of Congress setting apart such reservation provides for the allotment of lands in severalty in quantities in excess of those herein provided, the President, in making allotments upon such reservation, shall allot the lands to each individual Indian belonging thereon in quantity as specified in such treaty or act: And provided further, That when the lands allotted are only valuable for grazing purposes, an additional allotment of such grazing lands, in quantities as above provided, shall be made to each individual. . . .

Sec. 5. That upon the approval of the allotments provided for in this act by the Secretary of the Interior, he shall cause patents to issue therefor in the name of the allottees, which patents shall be of the legal effect, and declare that the United States does and will hold the land thus allotted, for the period of twenty-five years, in trust for the sole use and benefit of the Indian to whom such allotment shall have been made, or, in case of his decease, of his heirs according to the laws of the State or Territory where such land is located, and that at the expiration of said period the United States will convey the same by patent to said Indian, of his heirs as aforesaid, in fee, discharged of said trust and free of all charge or incumbrance whatsoever. . . .

Sec. 6. That upon the completion of said allotments and the patenting of the lands to said allottees, each and every member of the respective bands or tribes of Indians to whom allotments have been made shall have the benefit of and be subject to the laws, both civil and criminal, of the State or Territory in which they may reside; and no Territory shall pass or enforce any law denying any such Indian within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law. And every Indian both within the territorial limits of the United States to whom allotments shall have been made under the provisions of this act, or under any law or treaty, and every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States, and is entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of such citizens, whether said Indian has been or not, by birth or otherwise, a member of any tribe of Indians within the territorial limits of the United States without in any manner, impairing or otherwise affecting the right of any such Indian to tribal or other property. . . .

Sec. 8. That the provision of this act shall not extend to the territory occupied by the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Seminoles, and Osage, Miamies and Peorias, and Sacs and Foxes, in the Indian Territory, nor to any of the reservations of the Seneca Nation of New York Indians in the State of New York, nor to that strip of territory in the State of Nebraska adjoining the Sioux Nation on the south added by executive order.

Questions

1. According to the document, what is the president doing to Indian reservations?
2. Who really has control over these land allotments? What does it mean to hold these lands in trust?
3. According to the document, who are the Indians being held accountable to in terms of the law? Why is this significant and how does it change things for Native Americans?
4. Do you think Indians will get “equal protection under the law?” Why or why not?
5. What do you think it means when the document asks Indians to “adopt habits of a civilized life?”
6. According to the document, which Indians had the opportunity at gaining full U.S. citizenship?
7. Look at your map of American Indian tribes. Which tribes is this document referring to?
8. List at least three ways that assimilation is implied in this document.

DOCUMENT 2

Reformer Helen Hunt Jackson's Viewpoint

To assume it would be easy, or by any one sudden stroke of legislative policy possible, to undo the mischief and hurt of the long past, set the Indian policy of the country right for the future, and make the Indians at once safe and happy, is the blunder of a hasty and misinformed judgment. The notion which seems to be growing more prevalent, that simply to make all Indians at once citizens of the United States would be a sovereign and instantaneous panacea for all their ills and all the Government's perplexities, is a very inconsiderate one. To administer complete citizenship of a sudden, all round, to all Indians, barbarous and civilized alike, would be a grotesque blunder as to dose them all around with one medicine. . . . Nevertheless, it is true that. . . "so long as they are not citizens of the United States, their rights of property must remain insecure against invasion. The doors of the federal tribunals barred against them while wards and dependents." All judicious plans and measures for their safety and salvation must embody provisions for their becoming citizens as fast as they are fit.

Source: Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881).

Questions

1. According to the first sentence, how does Jackson view the difficulty of approaching the problem between settlers and Indians?
2. Why does Jackson feel that trying to make all Indians citizens at once would cause a panic? What does she compare this process to?
3. What does Jackson say causes Indians to be insecure about not being citizens?
4. What does Jackson imply about the pace at which Indians should become citizens in the last sentence? How could this be beneficial to Indians?
5. What do you think is Helen Hunt Jackson's overall viewpoint on Indian citizenship and relations between the government and Indians along the Plains?

DOCUMENT 3

President Chester A. Arthur's Viewpoint

"It has been easier to resort to convenient makeshifts for tiding over temporary difficulties than to grapple with the permanent problem, and accordingly the easier course has been pursued. . . . It was natural, at a time when the national territory seemed almost illimitable and contained many millions of acres far outside the bounds of civilized settlements, that a policy should have been enacted which more than anything else has been the fruitful source of our Indian complications. I refer, of course, to the policy of dealing with the various Indian tribes as separate nationalities, of relegating them by treaty stipulations, to immense reservations in the west, and encouraging them to lead a savage life, undisturbed by any earnest and well directed efforts to bring them under the influences of civilization. The results of this policy are increasingly unsatisfactory. White settlements have crowded the borders of reservations. . . . Indians transferred to new hunting grounds (which have soon become) new homes desired by adventurous settlers. Frequent and disastrous conflicts between the races have resulted. . . thousands of lives have been sacrificed and. . . millions of dollars expended to solve the Indian problem which exists today as it did half a century ago. The very existence of the Indian prompts us to act now, to introduce among the Indians the customs and pursuits of civilized life and gradually to absorb them into the mass of our citizens, with equal sharing of rights and responsibilities, before the very Indian culture itself evaporates."

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897).

Questions

1. Who does the president feel is the problem in this conflict along the Plains?

2. What kinds of words are used to describe Indians and their ways of life? What does this imply about President Arthur's view on Indians?

3. How does the president feel about the process of putting Indians on reservations? What are his reasons for feeling that way towards reservations?

4. What is the president's solution to the problems occurring between westward settlers and the Indians? What do you think he means when he says Indians should adopt a more "civilized life?"

