

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part 3: Raiding the Iron Horse

MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one to respond to. You may assign one or more to the entire group. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intention of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions, and they are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history or in historical events. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of the prompts before students encounter the history because thinking about them sets the students up to understand and relate to it better.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when and how much students should write. We suggest that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you should encourage them to focus on content rather than mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared formally, such as on a bulletin board or in a newsletter.

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Read through all the topics first, and then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

- 1. Northern and Southern Cousins.** At the beginning of Part 3, Black Moon and Little Fox ride south to the camps of the Southern Cheyenne. Why are they going on this trip? Who is Roman Nose, and why does Black Moon want to speak with him? What does this tell you about the relationship between the Northern and Southern Cheyenne?
- 2. Journey Interrupted.** Before reaching the Southern Cheyenne camp, Black Moon and Little Fox meet Porcupine. What does he tell them, and how do Black Moon and Little Fox respond to the information they receive? Why do you think the arrival of the "iron horse" is so troubling to the Plains Indians?
- 3. Guns, Guns, Guns.** Porcupine and his men recover two rifles from the men on the wagon, but they think they are broken. In fact, these rifles are **breechloaders**, a new style of gun that made loading bullets and gunpowder faster, more efficient, and less dangerous. Why do Black Moon and Porcupine think the guns are broken? Think of a time when you or a member of your family encountered a new technology, and didn't know how to use it. How did you or your family member feel? Did you or your family member adopt the new technology or abandon it? What resources were available for you to learn about the new technology and its possible uses?
- 4. Moral Dilemmas.** At several points during the attack on the railroad, Black Moon and Little Fox have the opportunity to harm white men who are either running away or unarmed. What did you decide to do in each instance? Why did you make that decision? Do you agree with Black Moon's decision to kill the men in both instances? Be prepared to participate in a brief debate arguing when, if ever, it is moral to attack unarmed people.
- 5. Counting Coup.** A traditional practice among Plains Indian warriors was to "count coup," thereby gaining prestige by demonstrating great bravery during battle. There were many ways to "count coup," including touching the body of an opponent with your hand, weapon, or a coup stick. Warriors who "counted coup" would retell their feats of bravery when they returned to camp, and were entitled to add an eagle feather to their headdresses for each coup counted. Why is it important to Little Fox as an aspiring warrior to "count coup"?

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6. **A Beginning or the End?** After the train is attacked, Black Moon explains to Little Fox that the railroads will destroy the Cheyenne way of life. To many whites, the railroads represented progress. Write a letter from a white settler or soldier to Little Fox explaining how railroads have transformed the settler's or soldier's life. Does he or she think railroads are good or bad? Why would his or her perspective be different from that of Black Moon?

7. **A Treaty of Sorts.** In 1868, the US government negotiated a peace treaty with the Cheyenne and the Lakota, ultimately surrendering the forts built on Indian territories. The Treaty of Fort Laramie was signed the next summer and, upon the evacuation of the forts, Northern Cheyenne Chief Little Wolf burned Fort Phil Kearny so that the soldiers could not come back. Since the US Army already surrendered the forts, why did Chief Little Wolf believe it was necessary to destroy the fort? What does this tell you about the Northern Cheyenne's attitude toward the US government in 1868?

8. **Wedding Bells.** At the end of Part 3, Calling Bird marries the suitor chosen for her by her family. How is the marriage celebrated? How was a Northern Cheyenne marriage in the 19th century similar to, and different from, weddings and marriages today?