

A Cheyenne Odyssey Glossary

As students play Mission 3: “A Cheyenne Odyssey,” they will encounter many of the terms below. Some of the terms, listed in this document in purple, are included as “smartwords” in the game. See the Mission 3 “At A Glance” document in the Overview section of the Teacher Materials for information on when the smartwords are included in gameplay.

ambush—a surprise attack.

annuity—a yearly payment, consisting of cloth and supplies like blankets, kettles and tools, which the US government gave to American Indian tribes in exchange for access to their lands. Many treaties with American Indian tribes designated the amount of supplies to be provided and the length of time the annuities were to be distributed.

Arapaho—a Plains Indian tribe, which has traditionally had a close relationship with the Cheyenne people. The tribe divided into Southern and Northern groups in 1835. Today, the Northern Arapaho tribe is based in Wyoming, while the Southern Arapaho tribe is based in Oklahoma.

archery—the practice of shooting with a bow and arrow.

articles—parts of a treaty or other legal document that address specific issues/subjects.

Ash Creek—a branch of Redwater Creek that is located south of current-day Brockway, Montana. The Battle of Ash Creek took place December 18, 1876.

band—a group of people within a tribe.

banks—the raised ground beside a river.

beaver—a large aquatic rodent that uses its sharp teeth for building dams and underwater lodges. Northern Cheyenne and other Plains Indian tribes traded beaver pelts for guns, European goods, etc.

buffalo— a term used to describe the North American bison. European settlers incorrectly identified these large cow-like mammals as buffalo, and the name stuck. The buffalo was the most important natural resource for the Cheyenne and other Plains Indian tribes. Plains Indians made use of the entire animal for food, clothing, shelter and other items, not letting any part go to waste. They also traded buffalo hides for guns, European goods, etc.

buffalo hunt—Plains Indian tribes relied heavily on buffalo for survival. They would often move the location of their camp to follow the migration of buffalo herds. There were several different methods used for hunting buffalo. Some hunters rode on horseback into a herd and used bows and arrows to kill the animals, while others chased the buffalo off the edge of a cliff.

buffalo robe—the fur and hide of a buffalo.

camp—a place where people live for varying amounts of time, including tipis, cabins, huts, or other homes.

chokecherries—an edible wild fruit of the Plains and prairie regions; traditionally a part of the Plains Indian diet.

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coulee—a ravine or narrow valley between hills.

counting coup—an honorable action performed by warriors in battle, involving touching or hitting an enemy (with a hand, weapon or stick) without getting harmed.

courting—the process by which a suitor tries to seek the affections of another person, often with the hopes of eventually marrying that person.

Crazy Dog Soldiers—a Cheyenne warrior society known for its bravery in battle.

creation story—a story, containing rich symbolic meaning and cultural values, which is traditionally passed down by oral storytelling. Plains Indian creation stories often include mythical creatures that make the world safe for human survival.

Creator—a god or spirit considered to be responsible for creating the earth and all its inhabitants.

crest—to reach the top of a hill or mountain.

Crow—a Northern Plains Indian tribe. The Crow were enemies of the Cheyenne and Lakota, with whom they fought over buffalo hunting grounds. Horse raids between the Crow and Northern Cheyenne were common.

deed—an act or action.

Dog Soldiers—a Cheyenne warrior society known for bravery in battle.

earth pigments—naturally occurring minerals used to paint.

Elk Soldiers—a Cheyenne warrior society, also known as the Elk Horn Scraper Society. Chief Little Wolf was an Elk Soldier.

favor—approval.

ford—part of a stream, river or other body of water, shallow enough to walk across.

fort—a strong or fortified place occupied by troops; a permanent army post.

game—wild animals hunted for sport or food.

goods—items that can be used or consumed.

haahe—a common way for Cheyenne men to greet one another, similar to “hello.”

hides—animal skins.

homesteader—a person settling on public land in the West that was given to individuals under the Homestead Act of 1862, which required them to live on and farm the land for at least five years.

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horses—the horses of the Plains Indians were first brought to North America by the Spaniards; they typically are smaller than other breeds, but are very tough, require less food, and can survive difficult weather conditions.

hostile (*as used in the context of the game*) — someone considered to be an enemy at war with the US army; American Indians who resisted white encroachment on their territory and refused to remain on reservations.

iron horse—a nineteenth-century term to describe a steam train.

keepsake— a small item kept in memory of the person who owned it.

kettle—a pot for boiling liquids.

Lakota—a northern Plains Indians tribe also known as the Teton, or Western Sioux, who were allies of the Northern Cheyenne.

Manifest Destiny- the 19th century American belief that the westward expansion of the United States was right, profitable, and supported by God; this belief encouraged settlers to push the American frontier further and further into lands previously unexplored by Europeans.

moccasin—a soft but sturdy shoe or boot traditionally made out of animal skins, and often decorated with beads, fringe, porcupine quills, and/or other ornaments.

negotiate—to deal or bargain with others when preparing a treaty, sale, or contract.

odyssey—a long, complicated journey or series of travels.

quiver—a case for holding and carrying arrows.

raid—the act of going into enemy territory to take valuable goods. Raiding was a common and effective way for Plains Indians to get more horses. It also gave warriors the chance to develop skills and count coup.

railroad surveyors—people who gather information about land and its elevation in order to plan for railroad construction.

rations—specific amounts of food the US government provided to American Indians to keep them on reservations and discourage them from hunting buffalo. Rations usually consisted of flour, lard, bacon, sugar, coffee, and beef.

ravine—a small, narrow valley with steep sides, carved by running water; it is smaller than a canyon and larger than a gully.

reservation—an area of land set aside by the US government as a place for American Indians to live.

ricochet—a bullet or shot that bounces off a hard surface and then goes in a different direction.

ridge—a raised area; a range of hills or mountains.

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scout (as used to refer to an American Indian scout for the US Army) —an individual hired to get information about an enemy. In 1866, the US Army began to enlist American Indians in the western territories and Indian country to serve as scouts. They received the same pay as white cavalry soldiers, but usually served only for brief periods.

settlers— people who go to live in a new area, where there are usually few individuals.

shelter—a place to live; a place offering protection from bad weather.

sign language (specifically, Plains Indian sign language) —a set of hand signals used by Plains Indians to communicate with different tribes and with European explorers as early as the 1530s.

Southern Cheyenne—a tribe related to the Northern Cheyenne that lives in the Southern Plains, especially Oklahoma. The Cheyenne split into the Northern and Southern Cheyenne tribes in the 1830s.

Sun Dance—a sacred dance to celebrate life, held by tribes of Plains Indians every summer. For the Cheyenne, the Sun Dance is considered essential for tribal unity and cultural continuity.

suitor—someone who is courting and/or wants to marry someone else.

surveyor —see “railroad surveyors.”

territory—a geographic area belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a governmental authority.

tipi—a tent-like structure traditionally made from buffalo hides wrapped around wooden poles. Used by most American Indian tribes on the Great Plains, tipis are strong, but portable and well-suited for a nomadic lifestyle

trade— an exchange of goods, usually without money.

trading post—a station or store where traders exchange goods, usually without money.

treaty—an agreement or contract between two or more nations. Language differences often produced conflicting interpretations of treaties between the US government and Plains Indians. (Note: American Indian tribes were separate nations with their own system of government and claim to lands.)

tribe—a grouping of people, larger than a band and smaller than a chiefdom, which is usually organized by kinship and for which selected leaders govern by consensus.

virtues—good and moral qualities; desirable traits, such as bravery, generosity, and wisdom.

war face—the painted face of an American Indian warrior going into battle. Tribal members painted their bodies and/or faces in preparation for battle and various rituals. Each tribe’s war paint featured different colors, shapes, and symbols.

warrior society—a group of men who fought in battle; an important part of Plains Indian life, the warrior society served as a social club for its members. Each warrior society had its own songs, dances, and costumes.

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warrior—someone who fights in battle.

war shield—a small decorated shield which could block arrows; made of strong buffalo hide and mostly used on horseback.

wealth—a measure of things of value. Many American Indians valued horses greatly, in addition to buffalo hides and other goods.