



## The Western Crossroads

### 14

### PRIMARY SOURCE READING

#### *“Massacre at Wounded Knee”*

*When the Paiute prophet Wovoka introduced the Ghost Dance to his people, white Americans interpreted it as a warning of retribution rather than as a religious ceremony and an attempt at tribal unity. Fearing his people would be massacred, Big Foot led the Lakota Sioux to Wounded Knee Creek. There the American Indians were surrounded by the U.S. cavalry, with very little to defend themselves. Even though Big Foot flew a white surrender flag, most of the Sioux were gunned down. This account of the tragedy comes from Black Elk Speaks, the oral autobiography of an Oglala Sioux holy man.*

#### *Black Elk Speaks*

That evening before it happened, I went in to Pine Ridge and heard these things, and while I was there, soldiers started for where the Big Foots were. These made about five hundred soldiers that were there next morning. When I saw them starting I felt that something terrible was going to happen. That night I could hardly sleep at all. I walked around most of the night.

In the morning I went out after my horses, and while I was out I heard shooting off toward the east, and I knew from the sound that it must be wagon-guns [cannons] going off. The sound went right through my body, and I felt that something terrible would happen.

I painted my face all red, and in my hair I put one eagle feather for the One Above. It did not take me long to get ready, for I could still hear the shooting over there.

I started out alone on the old road that ran across the hills to Wounded Knee. I had no gun. I carried only the sacred bow of the west that I had seen in my great vision. I had gone only a little way when a band of young men

came galloping after me. The first two who came up were Loves War and Iron Wasichu. I asked what they were going to do, and they said they were just going to see where the shooting was. Then others were coming up, and some older men.

We rode fast, and there were about twenty of us now. The shooting was getting louder. A horseback [scout] from over there came galloping very fast toward us, and he said: “Hey-hey-hey! They have murdered them!” Then he whipped his horse and rode away faster toward Pine Ridge.

A little way ahead of us, just below the head of the dry gulch, there were some women and children who were huddled under a clay bank, and some cavalrymen were there pointing guns at them.

We stopped back behind the ridge, and I said to the others: “Take courage. These are our relatives. We will try to get them back.”

Then I rode over the ridge and the others after me, and we were crying: “Take courage! It is time to fight!” The soldiers who were guarding our relatives shot at us and then ran away fast, and some more cavalrymen on the other side of the gulch did too. We got our relatives and sent them across the ridge to the northwest where they would be safe.

By now many other Lakotas, who had heard the shooting, were coming up from Pine Ridge, and we all charged on the soldiers. They ran eastward toward where the trouble began. We followed down along the dry gulch, and what we saw was terrible. Dead and wounded women and children and little babies were scattered all along there where they had been trying to run away. The soldiers had followed along the gulch, as they ran, and murdered them in there. . . .

When I saw this I wished that I had died too, but I was not sorry for the women and

children. It was better for them to be happy in the other world, and I wanted to be there too. But before I went there I wanted to have revenge. I thought there might be a day, and we should have revenge. . . .

It was a good winter day when all of this happened. The sun was shining. But after the soldiers marched away from their dirty work, a heavy snow began to fall. The wind came up in the night. There was a big blizzard, and it grew very cold. The snow drifted deep in the

crooked gulch, and it was one long grave of butchered women and children and babies, who had never done any harm and were only trying to run away.

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**UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ** After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What premonition did Black Elk have of the tragedy to come?

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2. Although the American Indians believed that they had rescued the women and children, what actually happened to them?

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3. How did Black Elk react to the massacre?

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4. How would you describe Black Elk's tone in narrating these events? How does it contribute to or detract from your understanding of the incident?

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### ACTIVITY

Use your imagination to narrate the events of a modern-day tragedy from the point of view of someone who witnessed the event. Include the thoughts and feelings of the witness, as well as a commentary on how you think the tragedy might have been avoided.

with their lives and jobs and that they felt a part of the plantation “family.” Part of wearing the mask involved pretending that the only freedom they sought was in the next world.

5. They went with a number of other slaves to the master’s house, and heard a U.S. officer read the Emancipation Proclamation.
6. Freedom was something that the slaves had wanted all their lives, but now that they had it, they were not sure what to do with it. Many were too old to make their own living, and they had no idea where they would go or what they would do. Many were so attached to the owner and his family that they could not think about leaving.

### ACTIVITY

Students’ journal entries will vary, but should express concerns regarding the plantation workforce and expenses.

### BIOGRAPHY

1. Possible answer: She knew firsthand what it was like to be a victim of discrimination.
2. In 1892, three black businessmen who were friends of hers were lynched.
3. She risked being the target of physical violence herself, and she risked her newspaper business.
4. Possible answer: As a woman and as an African American who had been denied equal rights, she probably viewed the right to vote as an important right and as a tool for enacting social change.

### ACTIVITY

Students’ responses should present convincing arguments against what they consider to be social injustices.

## CHAPTER 14

### LITERATURE

1. The Shimerdas had just arrived in the area. They had little to live on in a wild place that had no garden, chicken-house,

or cultivated land. The Grandmother and the narrator are taking provisions to the family.

2. They can easily be taken advantage of because no one besides the man from whom they purchased the farm can speak their language. They had already paid more for the homestead than it was worth.
3. Although the narrator admits to the roughness of the territory, this person also loves and appreciates the prairie. Using words like *glittering* and *shining*, the narrator describes a fall scene with gold and silver trees as if it were a fairy tale.
4. Mrs. Shimerda is probably upset about everything from the cave they must live in to the fact that she does not have shoes to wear.
5. Their life is very difficult. To make the cave warm enough, they have to insulate it by stuffing fabric at the bottom of the door, which makes the cave dark and airless. They have only one window and one lantern. They get provisions that others have thrown out, such as the frozen potatoes from Mr. Bushy at the post office. The girls are forced to sleep in a hole dug out of the wall because the floor is too cold.
6. Some students may respond by saying that the Shimerdas will get used to their new home and to the prairie in general, which will make life easier. However, the narrator has suggested that their homestead is unsuitable for farming. Therefore, they will find it hard to make a living.

### ACTIVITY

Students’ drawings will vary, but should represent the descriptions in the readings.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

1. He sees soldiers gathering and hears sounds that he assumes are guns.
2. The women and children were butchered, either huddled together as a group or separately as they were trying to run away.
3. He is horrified by it. He wishes that he

could be in the other world with them.

4. His tone is mournful but not angry, except when he speaks of revenge. His tone allows the reader to see things as they happened and to interpret the event in light of its historical context.

### ACTIVITY

Tragedies may include: plane crash, school shooting, terrorist bombing. Students should offer probable methods by which these tragedies could be avoided.

### BIOGRAPHY

1. He was trained as a warrior and learned to raid Mexican villages and pack trains. This enabled him to be a courageous leader in the Indian Wars later in life.
2. Possible answer: He fought for over twenty years when many American Indians resigned themselves to living according to the terms of white Americans.
3. Many students will be bothered by the fact that he spent his last decades as a prisoner of war and became a tourist attraction at fairs and public events.
4. Possible answer: Americans who wanted to live in the Southwest probably considered him dangerous and violent, while some people who had no vested interest in the region probably thought his fighting was justified.

### ACTIVITY

Students' letters should provide adequate support for their argument.

## CHAPTER 15

### LITERATURE

1. Students may write that the locomotive has a black, cylindrical body, trimmed with brass and steel side bars and connecting rods. It has a large, protruding headlight in the front and other signal lamps, and spouts vapor from its smokestack. Its sound is described as a throb or beat, a pant or roar, shrieks, madly whistled laughter, and earthquake rumbles. By

comparing the locomotive to a person or animal, Whitman brings it to life.

2. Students may write that it runs on its own track and does not depend on outside influences. The way Whitman describes the locomotive, he makes it seem as if the machine operates independently, thereby increasing its power.
3. Students may write that its sound can be heard literally and figuratively throughout the country. Not only does it respond to the need for goods and transportation, but it also seems to control that need.
4. Students may write that regardless of the cold, ice, poor visibility, or any other condition that winter can introduce, the train keeps rushing along.
5. Students may write that the locomotive might represent economic leadership in the United States. Regardless of conditions, it keeps going everywhere with its train of cars following obediently behind it.
6. Students may write that this was a time when industry in the United States was growing rapidly in all directions. The locomotive represents forward motion, strength, and power. Its possibilities are endless, and its benefits are far-reaching.

### ACTIVITY

Students should animate the machines in their poems and create a general metaphor for modern America.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

1. The writer says that people could only purchase what Mr. Wanamaker wanted to sell. He was probably only partially serious. People got the best deals only on what Mr. Wanamaker purchased in bulk, but they could buy other things as well.
2. People wanted to take advantage of good deals.
3. Students may write that he probably used the adjective *Napoleonic* to describe Mr. Wanamaker's system because Napoleon conquered most of Europe in the same way the department store owner conquered his competition. He used the