

The Sand Creek Massacre: Comparing Primary Sources

7th-8th grade

Developed for Teaching with Primary Sources from the Library of Congress:
“Not Just Flyover Country: Exploring Kansas History through Primary Source” , 2016

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Overview – The students will be familiar with the events preceding and during the Sand Creek Massacre after reading an expository text. They will then analyze two primary source accounts from eye-witnesses to the event. Finally, they will write a short account of the event from the point of view of one of the Native Americans involved in the incident.

Standards

Kansas History, Government and Social Studies

Standard #1 - Choices have consequences

Benchmark 1.1 – The student will recognize and evaluate significant choices made by individuals, communities, states, and nations that have impacted our lives and futures.

Benchmark 1.2 – The student will analyze the context under which choices are made and draw conclusions about the motivations and goals of the decision-makers.

Standard #5 – Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic.

Benchmark 5.3 – The student will investigate the relationship among people, places, ideas, and/or the environment and connect those relationships to contemporary issues.

Kansas College and Career Ready Standards

Reading Standards for Literacy

RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

RH. 6-8.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Writing Standards for Literacy

WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST. 6-8.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening Standards

SL.7-8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7-8 topics, texts, and issues, build on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives

Content

- The student will read a brief secondary account of the Sand Creek Massacre.
- The student will compare and contrast Colonel Chivington and John Smith's eye-witness accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre
- The student will evaluate the limitations of using primary sources when examining an historical event.
- The student will write an eye-witness account reflecting the point of view of one of the Native American participants in the Sand Creek Massacre

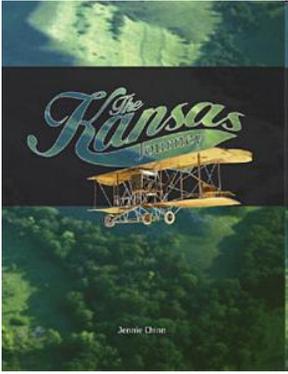
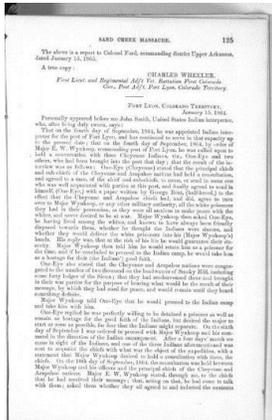
Skills

- The student will compare and contrast two primary source accounts of the same event.
- The student will effectively engage in a variety of group discussions
- The student will write a clear and coherent narrative account of the Sand Creek Massacre from the Native American point of view.

Compelling Questions

1. What prior events to the Sand Creek Massacre contributed to the tensions between Natives and the Colorado Militia?
2. What are the limitations to using primary sources in an effort to fully understand an historical event?
3. Why are there usually only few or limited primary sources from Native Americans?

Resource Chart

Image	Description	Citation	URL
	<p>Sand Creek Massacre reference on pg. 117 of The Kansas Journey textbook</p>	<p>Chinn, Jennie. <i>The Kansas Journey</i>. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2005</p>	<p>https://www.kshs.org/p/the-kansas-journey/14883s</p>
	<p>Letter from Colonel John M. Chivington to Major General S.R. Curtis concerning the events at Sand Creek. Dated Dec. 16, 1864</p>	<p><u><i>Kansas Memory</i></u> Kansas Historical Society</p>	<p>http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/211148</p>
	<p>Affidavit of John Smith to the U.S. military court concerning the events at Sand Creek. Dated January 15, 1865</p>	<p><u><i>Kansas Memory</i></u> Kansas Historical Society</p>	<p>http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/211654</p>

Lesson Procedure

1. Begin by asking the class to define the word ‘massacre’. Does it mean a certain number or type of victims killed or the circumstances under which they are killed? Tell students that the event they will be studying was almost immediately named “The Sand Creek Massacre” based on all of these criteria.
2. Instruct students to read the section on the Sand Creek Massacre (pg. 117) in *The Kansas Journey*. Conduct a follow-up discussion in which students analyze the events leading up to the Sand Creek Massacre that created tensions

between the Native Americans and the military and how this incident affected future relations between the two groups.

3. Tell students that this incident immediately caused concern among military leaders. Chivington and many others involved were asked to testify in a military court as to what occurred and whether or not the Native Americans were treated appropriately. Have students read Colonel John M. Chivington's letter to Major General S.R. Curtis and the Affidavit of John Smith (page 4) from the Kansas State Historical Society's *Kansas Memory* site.
4. Students will next complete a primary source analysis chart in which they use the **SOAPS** method (source, occasion, audience, purpose, summary) for both Chivington and Smith's accounts.
5. Divide the class into 6 groups. Each will discuss one of the following questions, come up with a consensus opinion, and choose a spokesperson to report back to the class.
 - a. Compare and contrast Chivington and Smith's accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre.
 - b. Give possible explanations as to why Smith and Chivington's accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre are so different.
 - c. Which of the two men would have more empathy for the Native Americans and why?
 - d. Which of the two men might be motivated to embellish or stretch the truth and what would motivate him to do so?
 - e. What do we have to be careful about in general when using primary sources to understand the past?
 - f. While there are several primary source accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre from the white witnesses, why would you guess there are no accounts from Native American witnesses?

Assessment

After reading the secondary account of the Sand Creek Massacre and analyzing the two primary source accounts from the white point of view, students will be asked to write an account of the incident from the point of view of either of the Cheyenne chiefs Black Kettle or White Antelope. Accounts will be evaluated on use of details from the incident and a tone which accurately reflects how this event would have been viewed from the Native American perspective.

Extension – As a way to connect history to the present, ask students, “What contemporary issue is similar to the Sand Creek Massacre in which two groups who don't always understand or trust one another are increasingly having conflicts with tragic results?”

For the Teacher

Discussion questions –

1. What is a massacre? Possible answers: a surprise attack, a large number of people killed, intentional cruelty toward the victims, etc.
2. What events leading up to the Sand Creek Massacre contributed to the tensions between Native Americans and the military? Possible answers: Gold hunters had been crossing Native hunting grounds, scaring the buffalo off; There had been previous incidents in which some of the Natives had attacked white settlers; Native American leaders didn't agree on how to respond to increased presence of white settlers on their lands, etc.

Primary source analysis SOAPS activity:

Document #1 - Source- Colonel John M. Chivington, Denver, Colorado; Occasion – letters giving official military report; Audience – Major General S.R. Curtis; Purpose – Chivington was giving his official report/ account of the events at Sand Creek to Major General Curtis, commanding officer at Ft. Leavenworth; Summary- Answers will vary.

Document #2 – Source – John Smith, United State Indian Interpreter, Ft. Lyon, Colorado; Occasion – sworn testimony at military commission; Audience-Colonel Ford, commander of the Upper Arkansas District; Purpose – Smith was an eye-witness to the event, so he was called to give his testimony to the military commission which was investigating Chivington's actions at Sand Creek; Summary- Answers will vary.

Group questions (possible answers)

- A. Comparison – Both said there were approximately 500 Indians in the camp, both said the soldiers were the aggressors. Contrast: Chivington leads the reader to believe that the dead were primarily warriors, whereas Smith claims two-thirds were women and children; Chivington says all in his command “did nobly”, whereas Smith claims Black Kettle had hoisted a flag of peace but that he and others were shot at anyway and that several victims were “mutilated in the most horrible manner.”
- B. Eye-witness accounts can be different based on the personal bias of the witness, the actual physical vantage point of the witness, and any fabrications of the truth one eye-witness might make.
- C. John Smith would most likely have more empathy for the Native Americans because he traded with them, lived among them, and knew their language, giving him insights into their humanity. Chivington would most likely view them as a menace to be taken care of in whatever way he saw fit.

- D. Chivington would be motivated to embellish the truth, such as exaggerating number of dead and captured ponies and also hiding the fact that he killed many women and children as a way to gain favor with his commanding officers and to avoid getting in trouble for not following military protocol concerning dealings with Natives.
- E. Modern readers need to be careful when examining primary sources, because the context in which it was written, the audience it was intended for, and the personal bias and motivations of the writer could all be influences on content.
- F. There are most likely no Native American accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre due to the oral (non-written) traditions of most tribes as far as passing on history, language barriers, and a lack of respect or interest in the Native views of the incident from the military court who took the white men's' testimonies.

Assessment

1. Evaluate the student's ability to appropriately participate in their group discussion and come up with a sufficient answer to their discussion question.
2. Evaluate the students' ability to accurately fill out the SOAPS primary source analysis chart for both Chivington and Smith's accounts.
3. Evaluate the students' Native American accounts, which should include details from Black Kettle or White Antelope's perspective. These should be checked for accuracy based on details given in the secondary and two primary sources accounts they studied. They should also reflect students' knowledge of Native culture and what would have most troubled these chiefs about this incident, as well as their thoughts about what the future would hold for their people in the face of increased white settlement.

Extension: Students should be able to find parallels between the Sand Creek Massacre and the increase in incidents of violence between police and African-Americans.

The Sand Creek Massacre Primary Source Analysis

Directions: Follow the SOAPS strategy to analyze two primary source accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre.

Document #1

S – Source (Who wrote it? Where is it from?)

O – Occasion (What is the format? – i.e. letter, diary, speech, etc.)

A – Audience (Who was intended to read the document?)

P – Purpose (Why was it written?)

S – Summary (Write a three sentence summary including three specific pieces of information given about the incident)

Document #2

S – Source (Who wrote it? Where is it from?)

O – Occasion (What is the format? – i.e. letter, diary, speech, etc.)

A – Audience (Who was intended to read the document?)

P – Purpose (Why was it written?)

S – Summary (Write a three sentence summary including three specific pieces of information given about the incident)