

Name _____

Date _____

Sitting Bull Biography

Sitting Bull was a spiritual, political, and military leader of the Lakota Sioux warriors. The Lakota are one of the tribes who took part in the Battle of Little Big Horn against the US army. Sitting Bull's leadership led the his American Indian warriors to completely wipe out General George Armstrong Custer's force, and it marked the greatest American Indian armed resistance to the US government. Later in his life, Sitting Bull starred alongside white performers in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show. He led a complicated life fighting for the rights of his fellow American Indians.



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Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was born in present-day South Dakota to a great Lakota warrior, and he aspired to be the same. Unfortunately up until age 14, he seemed to lack any fighting skills and was named "Slow." But after winning a fight with a rival, he earned the name, "Tatanka Yotanka," or Sitting Bull. He became the Lakota tribe's chief and protected their land through a peace treaty with the United States. However, several years later, gold was discovered in nearby sacred American Indian land called the Black Hills.

The government commanded the American Indians move to a reservation, but Sitting Bull refused. He had a vision that his tribe would win against the American troops. He banded the Lakota and Cheyenne troops together, which meant thousands of American Indian warriors awaited General George Cluster's small battalion of 200–300 men. The General's troops were decimated in less than an hour.

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*Sitting Bull and
Buffalo Bill*

The US army soon spread troops throughout the entire area, and Sitting Bull and his people retreated to Canada for several years. When he tried to return to the United States, he was imprisoned for two years. Once released, Sitting Bull joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show, likely to avoid further persecution from the US government. The show travelled around the country performing the live outdoor show. Sitting Bull made \$50 a week just for riding once in the procession on horseback, in addition to money he made from signing autographs. He got along relatively well with the members of the show, but sometimes the public treated Sitting Bull poorly for his military past. Once in Pittsburgh, Sitting Bull was even attacked by the brother of a soldier that died in the Little Big Horn battle.



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*Sitting Bull in full
Indian dress*

Sitting Bull was not a fan of life on the road; the poverty he saw throughout the nation surprised and confused him. After touring with the show for just one season, Sitting Bull returned home.

In 1889, a Paiute prophet had a vision that if Indians performed "Ghost Dances," the white settlers would disappear. Sitting Bull took part in this Ghost Dance movement, and the US government became afraid that an uprising would occur. American Indian police went to arrest Sitting Bull, and when he would not cooperate, those supporting Sitting Bull began to gather around. A shot was fired and in response the police shot and killed Sitting Bull. A monument now stands in his honor at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in South Dakota, overlooking the Missouri River. It serves as a stark reminder of Sitting Bull's tragic death and the poor treatment of American Indians by the United States government.

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Answer the following questions:

1. Who was Sitting Bull?

2. What led to the conflict between the Sioux and white settlers?

3. What did Sitting Bull do after the Battle of Little Big Horn?

4. Why did he travel around the nation?

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5. How did the public receive Sitting Bull? Why?

6. Why did police try to arrest and ultimately kill Sitting Bull?

[Sources: <https://why.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/americon-lp-sitting-bull/lesson-plan/#.WOUvbIXanYw> and https://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s_z/sittingbull.htm]