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# Native American Leaders

## Red Jacket (1758–1830)

Many Native American tribes showed great respect for those who could change minds and influence others with their speaking skills. Red Jacket was highly admired in his Seneca tribe and among all the members of the Iroquois Confederation for his talents as an orator. He became a “peace chief” and managed his tribe’s affairs that did not deal with wars.

Red Jacket was opposed to the spread of Christianity among Native Americans. He astutely pointed out that whites were constantly arguing amongst themselves about many points of their faith. He argued that Native religion had been handed down from father to son and that it taught them to be thankful for all favors they received, to love each other, and to be united. Throughout his life, Red Jacket tried to promote Native American unity of all tribes in the face of white settlement.

## Sequoyah (1767–1843)

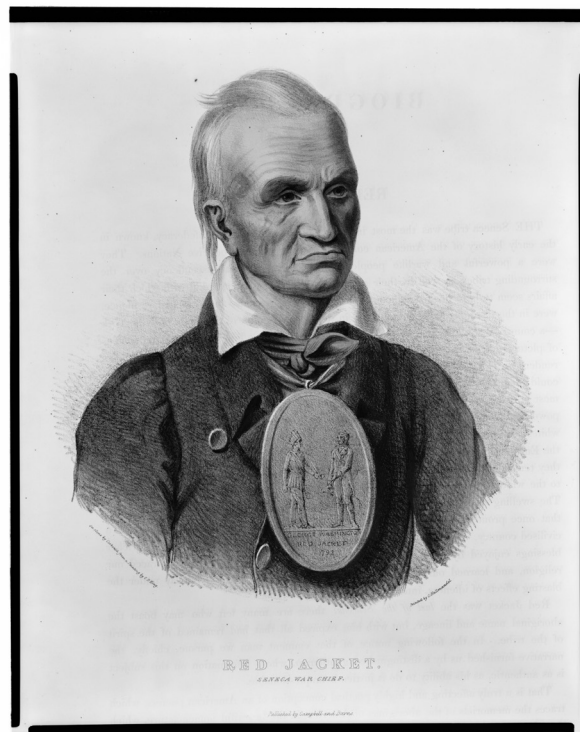
Sequoyah was born in the Cherokee village of Tuskagee in 1767. He married a Cherokee woman and found work as a silversmith. He was also a farmer and a blacksmith and was a gifted artist of people and animals, as well.

Sequoyah fought on the American side in the War of 1812 with his Cherokee tribesmen under Andrew Jackson’s leadership. He became fascinated by the idea of the white soldiers writing home to their families during the war.

After the war, Sequoyah set out to create an alphabet and a writing system for the Cherokee language. It took Sequoyah 12 years to invent the alphabet that would create words and sentences in the Cherokee language. He was able to invent 86 symbols (letters) to represent

each of the sounds of the Cherokee language. He taught the sounds to his daughter, Ah-yo-keh.

In 1821, Sequoyah showed the members of his tribe how the system worked using his daughter as a model. In a few months, thousands of his Cherokee brethren learned to read and write. Four years later, the Bible and many religious hymns had been translated into the Cherokee language. Books, pamphlets, educational writings, and many other documents were translated, as well. In 1827, the Cherokee Constitution was written down. In 1828, the first Native American newspaper, *Cherokee Phoenix*, was created. It was bilingual, written in both Cherokee and English. In 1828, Sequoyah, himself, left on the Trail of Tears with many other Cherokees.



Chief Red Jacket

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-05086



Reading  
Passages

## Native American Leaders *(cont.)*

### Chief Seattle (1780–1866)

Seattle, Washington, is the largest city in the United States named for a Native American. It also honors the chief who showed great friendship toward Americans. Chief Seattle inherited the position of chief in his father's tribe called the Suquamish. He later became the primary chief of a confederation of tribes. He earned this position because he was an effective war leader against other tribes. He kept the job even though he never again led a major fighting force into battle.

Chief Seattle converted to Christianity. In the 1850s, he welcomed the first permanent white settlers into Puget Sound, which is present-day Washington. Recognizing the inevitable, he and his followers accepted life on a reservation and continued to advocate for peace.

Chief Seattle is particularly famous for a speech made to the governor of the territory in 1854. He spoke in the Duwamish language of his mother, and his words were recorded and translated by a white listener. The final lines showed both resolve and an almost mystical feeling: "The White Man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds."

### Chief Joseph (1840–1904)

Chief Joseph was chief of the Nez Perce tribe. The tribe lived on land that stretched from Idaho to Oregon. However, a gold rush into their territory caused the government to take back nearly six million acres of their land. Despite young Chief Joseph's efforts to keep the peace, about 20 Nez Perce braves started attacking white settlers who encroached on their land. General Oliver Howard was

ordered to round up the tribe and force them onto a reservation. Chief Joseph began leading his tribe toward the Canadian border to avoid reservation life.

For more than four months, the 550-member Nez Perce (including about 150 warriors) led General Howard and his army over a 1,700-mile trek from western Idaho through Montana. They consistently outwitted, outfought, and outmaneuvered the army. A final series of battles in October were fought just 30 miles from the Canadian border and freedom. With his people exhausted, starving, and severely outnumbered, Chief Joseph finally surrendered. Chief Joseph's surrender speech was recorded by an army officer and included these lines: "I am tired of fighting... my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."



**Chief Joseph (Nez Perce)**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ61-2088*

Reading  
Passages

## Native American Leaders *(cont.)*

### Sitting Bull (1831–1890)

Sitting Bull was born to the Hunkpapas, one of the seven tribes that made up the mighty Teton Sioux nation living on the Dakota plains. He earned prestige as a young teenager for attacking and killing a powerful Crow chief. They were ancient enemies of the Sioux.

In the 1860s, the army built Fort Buford deep in Sitting Bull's home territory. He recognized it as a threat to his people's survival and way of life. He led a group of elite warriors called the Strong Hearts against the fort and the surrounding white settlements. At the same time, Chief Red Cloud was attacking forts and travelers all along the Bozeman Trail. In 1868, the U.S. government tried to negotiate peace. It agreed to abandon the Bozeman Trail and set aside a large area of the Dakota Territory as a permanent reservation for the Sioux and the other plains tribes. Many chiefs, as well as Sitting Bull and Red Cloud, refused to attend the peace council.

In 1875, the U.S. government sent in troops to forcibly round up the Native Americans not living on the reservation. After some skirmishes between the advancing troops and the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes, a regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Custer attacked the Native Americans. A Civil War hero, Custer had a low opinion of the fighting skills of Native Americans. The Battle of the Little Bighorn taught him a costly lesson. He divided his forces, sending three companies to create a diversion while he attacked the main force of Native Americans. The diversion did not work, and many of the men in the three companies were killed, wounded, or went missing. Custer and his troops were immediately attacked and wiped out. At least 220 soldiers died in the worst

defeat ever suffered by the U.S. Army in a battle with Native Americans.

After "Custer's Last Stand," as it was called in the newspapers, the army pursued Sitting Bull, the other chiefs, and their warriors across the Black Hills and the Powder River country. As the other chiefs and their people were forced onto reservations, Sitting Bull led some of his people to Canada where he and his people stayed for four years. Unable to find food because white settlers had hunted the buffalo there to near extinction, Sitting Bull and his small group of remaining followers returned to Fort Buford in 1891 and surrendered.



**Sitting Bull**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-12277*





Reading  
Passages

## Native American Leaders *(cont.)*

### Quanah Parker (1845–1911)

A white girl was captured from a Texas ranch in a Comanche raid. She adapted to Comanche culture and married a Comanche warrior. She then gave birth to a son named Quanah Parker. When she was “rescued” by Texas Rangers years later, she starved herself to death because she missed her Comanche family.

As a teenager, Quanah Parker was left without a family. He joined the independent and extremely warlike Kwahadis. They were the most independent of the Comanche bands. He soon became a respected war chief.

In 1867, most of the Comanche and Kiowa bands agreed to settle on a reservation in Indian Territory. The Kwahadis refused. They were soon joined by more warriors who resented the restrictions, poverty, and boredom of reservation life. In the 1870s, an American cavalry force composed of Civil War veterans chased these Comanche rebels all over the Staked Plains of Texas. The cavalry often found themselves being attacked by war parties led by Quanah and other Comanche chiefs. The cavalry were able to keep the Comanche on the run, but they could not capture the guerilla fighters.

White buffalo hunters with high-powered rifles proved to be the Kwahadis’ undoing. They slaughtered the buffalo on the plains for their hides and left the meat to rot. The buffalo had been the main food of the Plains Indians for centuries. The large herds were wiped out in just a few years. Native Americans on and off the reservations were outraged by the slaughter, but many American leaders thought it was the only way to completely control and entirely defeat the Plains Indians.

In 1874, Quanah led a force of 700 warriors in an attack on 28 hunters at Adobe Wells, a trading post. Despite several charges, the Indians lost about 30 warriors while the hunters lost only three men. The advantage of the hunters’ high-powered rifles made the difference. Quanah and his followers surrendered on June 2, 1875, at Fort Sill. They were the last Native Americans on the southern plains to surrender.

Although he only spoke a few words of English at the time of his surrender, Quanah would go on to lead a very successful life. He became a wealthy rancher, a stockholder in a railroad company, a deputy sheriff, and a friend of congressmen and later President Theodore Roosevelt.



**Quanah Parker**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-98166*

# Native American Leaders Quiz

**Directions:** Read pages 31–34 about Native American leaders. Answer each question below by circling the correct answer.

1. Which Native American invented an alphabet and a writing system?
  - a. Chief Seattle
  - b. Red Jacket
  - c. Sequoyah
  - d. Sitting Bull
2. Which member of the Seneca tribe was highly admired for his talents as an orator?
  - a. Quanah Parker
  - b. Sequoyah
  - c. Red Jacket
  - d. Sitting Bull
3. Which leader became a wealthy rancher, stockholder, and friend of President Theodore Roosevelt?
  - a. Quanah Parker
  - b. Chief Seattle
  - c. Chief Joseph
  - d. Sequoyah
4. Who led the heroic flight of the Nez Perez?
  - a. Chief Seattle
  - b. Chief Joseph
  - c. Red Jacket
  - d. Sitting Bull
5. Who was a leader of the Kwahadis, a fiercely independent band of Comanches?
  - a. Sitting Bull
  - b. Quanah Parker
  - c. Chief Joseph
  - d. Geronimo
6. Who was particularly famous for a speech he made as a leader of the Suquamish tribes in what is now Washington State?
  - a. Chief Seattle
  - b. Sequoyah
  - c. Quanah Parker
  - d. Red Jacket
7. Which Sioux leader helped defeat Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn?
  - a. Sitting Bull
  - b. Quanah Parker
  - c. Red Jacket
  - d. Chief Seattle
8. Who was the first person to learn the Cherokee alphabet after its inventor?
  - a. Chief Seattle
  - b. Ahoykeh
  - c. his wife
  - d. Red Jacket
9. How close did Chief Joseph and his people come to reaching Canada?
  - a. 750 miles
  - b. 1,000 miles
  - c. 320 miles
  - d. 30 miles
10. Who was born in the Hunkpapas branch of the Teton Sioux tribe?
  - a. Geronimo
  - b. Quanah Parker
  - c. Sitting Bull
  - d. Chief Joseph