

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Period\_\_\_\_\_

American History 8 -- Mr. Ruppert

Chapter 18 -- The Last Frontier

CDrom -- 500 Nations

Portfolio Assignment Option 2: A Modern Day Letter of Apology to the Plains Indians

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In class over the next two plus days you will be learning about some of the saddest episodes in American History, "How The West Was Lost" to Native Americans between the Civil War and the year 1890 (end of the frontier and massacre at Wounded Knee). We will especially focus on the tragic stories of what happened to the Cheyenne (Southern Plains) and the Sioux (also known as the Lakota – Northern Plains).

**Assignment:** Native Americans have never received a formal apology from the U.S. government or railroad companies for our wrongful treatment of them and the destruction of their way of life. As President, it is time for you to do so. (Better Late Than Never!) As you view "500 Nations" take your own notes on the events you see which show the wrongful, hateful, and inexcusable treatment of Native Americans. These facts (names, places, details) should be included in your written apology. You may also want to use ideas from the attached reading by Helen Hunt Jackson ("A Century of Dishonor"), who tried to do for Native Americans, what Harriett Beecher Stowe had done for slaves in Uncle Tom's Cabin. In your "apology" on behalf of the government, please also include facts from your textbook (sections 18-1 and 18-2) which will further explain the disgraceful treatment of our "first Americans". For example, Chief Joseph's (Nez Perce) story is told in depth in your text and you may also want to make mention of in your apology.

YOUR ESSAY SHOULD BEGIN..."DEAR SURVIVING ANCESTORS OF THE PLAINS INDIANS..." AND SHOULD BE **APPROXIMATELY 1.5 to 2 PAGES IN LENGTH (TYPED)**. As usual with portfolios, a minimum of 3 visuals must be included.

**Extra Credit Options (up to +10 points straight extra-credit each):**

1. Continue your "apology assignment" with an extra-credit essay that begins as follows:  
"As for the future..." Do some research on the current status of Native American peoples who once inhabited the Plains (or other region). What is their current status? Do they currently have any lawsuits filed against the U.S. on their behalf? What is being done to rectify the historical wrongs committed against their ancestors (casinos, land rights, etc.). What do you think, if anything, the U.S. government should do in the future on behalf of Native American peoples?
2. Choose one great Native American leader. It can be someone you learned about from your textbook, from "500 Nations" cd-rom (Chief Joseph, White Antelope, Geronimo, etc.), or someone of your own choice. Write a **BIOPOEM** about that particular leader. Use the attached Bio-poem Worksheet and model (on Sitting Bull) to produce your finished product



*Ration day at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in 1891, as demoralized Sioux Indians wait their turn. Defeated by the nation's westward growth, the tribe resisted their forced transition from nomadic hunters to sedentary farmers.*



HELEN HUNT JACKSON

## A CENTURY OF DISHONOR

*The tale of the wrongs, the oppressions, the murders of the Pacific-slope Indians in the last thirty years... is too monstrous to be believed.*

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Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, Helen (Fiske) Hunt Jackson (1830–1885) was raised to be a conventional wife and mother. Her father taught Latin and philosophy at Amherst College, and she was a neighbor and lifelong friend of Emily Dickinson. As a girl, she attended private schools in Ipswich and New York, and in 1852, she married an army officer, Edward B. Hunt. She dutifully followed him as he was reassigned, and gave birth to two sons, one of whom died in infancy. Eleven years after her marriage, her husband died in an accident; two years later her second son died. Bereft, she began writing poems and articles for magazines. In 1875, she married William S. Jackson, and they settled in Colorado Springs. After hearing a lecture, she became interested in the plight of the Indians and embarked on extensive research to expose the government's mistreatment of the Indians. In 1881, she published *A Century of Dishonor*, which she sent to every member of Congress; an excerpt appears below.

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There is not among these three hundred bands of Indians [in the United States] one which has not suffered cruelly at the hands either of the Government or of white settlers. The poorer, the more insignificant, the more helpless the band, the more certain the cruelty and outrage to which they have been subjected. This is especially true of the bands on the Pacific slopes. These Indians found themselves of a sudden surrounded by and caught up in the great influx of gold-seeking settlers, as helpless crea-

tures on a shore are caught up in a tidal wave. There was not time for the Government to make treaties; not even time for communities to make laws. The tale of the wrongs, the oppressions, the murders of the Pacific-slope Indians in the last thirty years would be a volume by itself, and is too monstrous to be believed.

It makes little difference, however, where one opens the record of the history of the Indians, every page and every year has its dark stain. The story of one tribe is the story of all,

varied only by differences of time and place; but neither time nor place makes any difference in the main facts. Colorado is as greedy and unjust in 1880 as was Georgia in 1830, and Ohio in 1795; and the United States Government breaks promises now as deftly as then, and with added ingenuity from long practice.

One of its strongest supports in so doing is the wide-spread sentiment among the people of dislike to the Indian, of impatience with his presence as a "barrier to civilization," and distrust of it as a possible danger. The old tales of the frontier life, with its horrors of Indian warfare, have gradually, by two or three generations' telling, produced in the average mind something like an hereditary instinct of unquestioning and unreasoning aversion which it is almost impossible to dislodge or soften.

There are hundreds of pages of unimpeachable testimony on the side of the Indian; but it goes for nothing, is set down as sentimentalism or partisanship, tossed aside and forgotten.

President after president has appointed commission after commission to inquire into and report upon Indian affairs, and to make suggestions as to the best methods of managing them. The reports are filled with eloquent statements of wrongs done to the Indians, of perfidies on the part of the Government; they counsel, as earnestly as words can, a trial of the simple and unperplexing expedients of telling truth, keeping promises, making fair bargains, dealing justly in all ways and all things. These reports are bound up with the Government's Annual Reports, and that is the end of them. It would probably be no exaggeration to say that not one American citizen out of ten thousand ever sees them or knows that they exist, and yet any one of them, circulated throughout the country, read by the right-thinking, right-feeling men and women of this land, would be of itself a "campaign document" that would initiate a revolution which would not subside until the Indians' wrongs were, so far as is now left possible, righted.

In 1869 President Grant appointed a commission of nine men, representing the influence

and philanthropy of six leading States, to visit the different Indian reservations, and to "examine all matters appertaining to Indian affairs."

In the report of this commission are such paragraphs as the following: "To assert that 'the Indian will not work' is as true as it would be to say that the white man will not work.

'Why should the Indian be expected to plant corn, fence lands, build houses, or do anything but get food from day to day, when experience has taught him that the product of his labor will be seized by the white man to-morrow? The most industrious white man would become a drone under similar circumstances. Nevertheless, many of the Indians' (the commissioners might more forcibly have said 130,000 of the Indians) "are already at work, and furnish ample refutation of the assertion that 'the Indian will not work.' There is no escape from the inexorable logic of facts.

"The history of the Government connections with the Indians is a shameful record of broken treaties and unfulfilled promises. The history of the border, white man's connection with the Indians is a sickening record of murder, outrage, robbery, and wrongs committed by the former, as the rule, and occasional savage outbreaks and unspeakably barbarous deeds of retaliation by the latter, as the exception.

"Taught by the Government that they had rights entitled to respect, when those rights have been assailed by the rapacity of the white man, the arm which should have been raised to protect them has ever been ready to sustain the aggressor.

"The testimony of some of the highest military officers of the United States is on record to the effect that, in our Indian wars, almost without exception, the first aggressions have been made by the white man, and the assertion is supported by every civilian of reputation who has studied the subject. In addition to the class of robbers and outlaws who find impunity in their nefarious pursuits on the frontiers, there is a large class of professedly reputable men who use every means in their power to bring on Indian wars for the sake of the profit to be realized

from the presence of troops and the expenditures of Government funds in their midst. They proclaim death to the Indians at all times in words and publications, making no distinction between the innocent and the guilty. They irate the lowest class of men to the perpetration of the darkest deeds against their victims, and as judges and jurymen shield them from the justice due to their crimes. Every crime committed by a white man against an Indian is concealed or palliated. Every offence committed by an Indian against a white man is borne on the wings of the post or the telegraph to the remotest corner of the land, clothed with all the horrors which the reality or imagination can throw around it. Against such influences as these the people of the United States need to be warned."

## Biopoem Worksheet

Line 1: First name \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2: Four traits that describe the character \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 3: Position or job \_\_\_\_\_

Line 4: Longing for (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 5: Who feels (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 6: Who needs (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 7: Who fears (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 8: Who gives (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 9: Who would like to see (list three things) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Line 10: Resident of \_\_\_\_\_

Line 11: Indian name \_\_\_\_\_ Hinmaton-Yalaktit \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate for last line: Kopet ("That is all" in Joseph's language)

# Model Biopoem

## *Sitting Bull*

### *Sitting Bull*

*Powerful, wise, stubborn, and courageous.*

*Medicine man and Hunkpapa Sioux leader.*

*Longing for justice, freedom, and peace for his people.*

*Who feels hatred, hostility, and distrust toward whites.*

*Who needs many warriors, good ponies, and victory over Long Hair, Three  
Star Crook, and the Great White Father.*

*Who fears no victory is in sight, no end to the wars, and no return of the  
buffalo.*

*Who gives sacrifices to the Wakantanka, cures to the sick, and counsel to the  
chiefs.*

*Who would like to see the defeat of the Cavalry, reservations disappear, and  
the Sioux free to return to their traditional hunting grounds.*

*Resident of the buffalo country.*

*Tatanka Iyotake.*