Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DEE BROWN

Dee Brown was born in Louisiana, but grew up in rural Arkansas. As a child, he befriended a Native American pitcher on his local baseball team. This experience helped to teach Brown that Native Americans weren't as violent or backward as they were often portrayed as being. Brown later studied at the Arkansas State Teachers College. During the Great Depression, he worked as a librarian for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In World War Two, he worked as a librarian for the Department of War. In the 1950s, Brown wrote several works of fiction and nonfiction in his spare time, though none was particularly successful. In 1970, however, he published his defining work, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. The success of this book allowed Brown and his wife to retire to Little Rock, Arkansas. He died in 2002.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There are too many historical events in *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* to name, but some important milestones include Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americans in 1492, the end of the Civil War in 1865, and the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. These three events tower over Brown's book, representing, respectively, the beginning of the European colonization of America, the point at which the U.S. government escalated its military aggression against the Native American population, and the symbolic ending of the Native American resistance to white American imperialism. Other notable historical events covered in Brown's book include the government's expansion of the railroad system. In large part, the goal of this project was to allow settlers in the eastern United States to colonize the country and harvest its natural resources, including metal, grain, and buffalo. In order to pursue this project, the government sent in the military to evict Native Americans from their own land, and also propagated the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the notion that American citizens have the right or duty to colonize America "from sea to shining sea." The U.S. government's expansion provoked a strong backlash from the Native American population, the major episodes of which Brown describes in his book.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The most important literary text alluded to in *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* is Stephen Vincent Benet's 1930 poem "American Names." This poem concludes with the famous line, "Bury my heart at Wounded Knee." However, most critics doubt that Benet was alluding to the Wounded Knee Massacre. In general, one could argue, Benet's poem is an optimistic and even naïve ode to the grandeur of American culture, ignoring the genocide and racism that underlay much of modern American history, which seems to be the opposite of Dee Brown's project. Another important influence on Dee Brown's book is Helen Hunt Jackson's 1881 muckraking classic, *A Century of Dishonor*. Like Brown, Jackson paints a scathing picture of the United States' relationship with the Native American population. Brown's book was published at the time of the Native American Renaissance, a literary period during which Native American authors published many notable works that were acclaimed nationally and internationally. These include N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1969), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977), and the works of the Kiallam poet Duane Niatum. Finally, it's worth comparing *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* to other works of social history from the 1970s and '80s. One of the most notable of these was Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980), which, much like Brown's book, begins with critical look at the history of the colonization of America by European explorers.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West
- **When Written:** 1967-1970
- **Where Written:** Arkansas
- **When Published:** Fall 1970
- **Literary Period:** Native American Renaissance, Social History
- **Genre:** nonfiction, history
- **Setting:** Western United States, 1850s-1890s
- **Climax:** The Wounded Knee massacre
- **Antagonist:** The U.S. government, white settlers
- **Point of View:** third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

A high compliment? It's telling that when *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was first published, many readers assumed that Dee Brow was himself a Native American. They seemingly couldn't believe that a white American would be capable of writing such an emotional, sympathetic portrait of Native American history.

A prolific author. Dee Brown is remembered for one book, but

he wrote dozens. He penned a blistering satire of New Deal America, a history of the Union Pacific Railroad, multiple Civil War adventure novels, and a fictionalized life of Davy Crockett. His personal favorite of his own books was *The Year of the Century*, a study of the state of America in 1867.

PLOT SUMMARY

Dee Brown begins *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* with an overview of the major political forces in North America during the second half of the 19th century. During this period, the United States emerged from the Civil War battered on the one hand, and yet with its military and government more powerful than they'd ever been before. The government began to expand into the western half of North America, the territory it had gained in the Mexican American War of the 1840s. The U.S. government sent waves of settlers out to the Midwest and California, but much of the land west of the Mississippi was—according to treaties the U.S. government itself had proposed and signed—the property of Native American tribes.

Confronted with this problem, the U.S. government in many cases blatantly violated its own treaties and forced Native American tribes to relocate to small, desolate reservations in places where no white settlers wanted to go. Naturally, there were many Native American tribes that resisted the military's relocation project. In each chapter of the book, Brown discusses a different tribe and its troubled history of resistance against the United States military.

In many ways, the Navaho tribe of the Southwest fared better than almost any other Native American tribe in the 19th century. The Navahos had for centuries raided Mexican communities, but after the U.S. acquired a swath of Mexican land, it sent troops to protect its new citizens from the Navahos. Kit Carson, a military commander and explorer, was tasked with uprooting the tribe and relocating it to Bosque Redondo, a miserable reservation. In the mid-1860s, a Navaho chief named Manuelito began to resist Carson. Manuelito led his people across the Southwest, giving up only when they ran out of food. In part, his people went hungry because the U.S. military burned all Navaho land and slaughtered Navaho livestock.

In the 1860s, the Santee Sioux in the North were led by a chief named Little Crow. Little Crow began to lead his people against the U.S. when he realized that his ancestors had been pressured into signing deceptive land treaties that forced the Santee onto tiny reservations. He led raids on white settlements, but he eventually had to lead his followers north into Minnesota to escape punishment. Little Crow eventually surrendered to the military, and he and his men were sentenced to death.

In the 1860s, violence broke out between the Cheyenne tribe and the U.S. military. After the murder of an innocent Cheyenne warrior, the Cheyennes mounted attacks on U.S. troops. The conflict culminated in the Sand Creek Massacre, during which the U.S. army murdered hundreds of women and children. Black Kettle, the Cheyenne chief, agreed to give up his lands and relocate to a reservation. Around the same time, a Hunkpapa chief named Sitting Bull learned of the massacre. He and dozens of other important chiefs realized that the U.S. government was trying to wipe out the Native American population, and the only option left to them was to fight back.

Following the end of the Civil War, the government sent negotiators to Native American tribes in order to convince the chiefs to give up their people's land rights. One such chief was Red Cloud, leader of the Sioux. Red Cloud reluctantly negotiated with government officials. However, when he realized that white settlers were already violating the peace treaty, he began a guerilla war against the American army. Red Cloud's example inspired Cheyenne warriors to begin their own war with the U.S. Red Cloud eventually surrendered to the military and signed a peace treaty giving up Sioux land. Meanwhile, the Cheyennes continued to fight, led by Roman Nose. However, even Roman Nose was forced to surrender. The Cheyennes' most important leaders were now dead or imprisoned.

In the 1870s, the Apache tribe in the Southwest mounted its own resistance to the U.S. Although the Apaches were at first eager to maintain peace, the Apache chief Cochise became furious when he realized that his people were going to be forced off their lands. Cochise led attacks on white settlements, but after his death in 1874 the Apache resistance was temporarily weakened.

The Modocs of Oregon had been a peaceful tribe for centuries, even after they'd been relocated to California. But by the 1870s, they were starving because white settlers had deprived them of so much of their land and food. Kintpaush, the Modoc chief, led his people to the California Lava Beds. He begged the U.S. government to be allowed to return to Oregon with his people. The government refused, on the grounds that some young Modocs had been involved in a raid on American soldiers. Furious, Kintpaush killed Colonel Edward R. S. Canby during a negotiation. He was arrested and executed for the crime. Afterwards, however, the Modocs were allowed to return to Oregon.

The Kiowa tribe was led by Satanta and Lone Wolf, two powerful chiefs. However, the Kiowa way of life was under attack, as white settlers slaughtered millions of buffalo. In response, Lone Wolf led an army against white settlers encroaching on Kiowa land. His resistance continued for years, but in the end, he was forced to surrender, and from then on the Kiowas were a "broken people." In Nebraska, the Sioux tribe suffered a similar fate. White settlers discovered valuable gold mines, and the government tried to convince Sioux chiefs to

surrender the "mineral rights" to their land. However, the Sioux chief Crazy Horse led a guerilla resistance to the U.S. military in the area. His resistance culminated in the Battle of Little Bighorn, during which Crazy Horse defeated the army led by General George Armstrong Custer. However, Crazy Horse was arrested just one year later and fatally stabbed.

The Ute tribe had been peaceful for many years, but following a series of misleading treaties in the 1870s, the U.S. military began forcing the Utes off of their land. Incensed, a group of Utes murdered Nathan C. Meeker, the government commissioner in charge of the Utes. Afterwards, some Utes were tried and convicted of murder, and the rest of the tribe was relocated to Utah. During the same decade, the last of the great Apache chiefs, Geronimo, surrendered to the U.S. after years of guerilla warfare. He died shortly afterwards.

For years, Sitting Bull had led a resistance movement of Sioux warriors. But in the late 1870s, he led his people north into Canada. After his men began to starve, he was forced to come back into the U.S. There, he began an unlikely career as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. However, he remained a living symbol of Native American resistance. Near the end of his life, Sitting Bull became a major proponent of the Ghost Dance movement, a de facto Christian sect that incorporated Native American ritual into its practices. Sitting Bull was arrested for supporting the Ghost Dance movement, and in the struggle he was shot and killed.

Following Sitting Bull's murder, his followers were arrested and taken down to Wounded Knee Creek. There, soldiers disarmed the Native Americans. However, an elderly, partly deaf Native American, Black Coyote, waved his rifle in the air, complaining that he'd paid too much money for it. U.S. troops responded to this supposed act of aggression by opening fire, and a few moments later they'd murdered more than three hundred unarmed men, women, and children. The Wounded Knee Massacre is often considered the symbolic ending of the Native American resistance to U.S. expansion.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Christopher Columbus – Famous Italian explorer whose voyage to America in 1492, undertaken on behalf of the Spanish monarchy, is often regarded as the beginning of the Age of Exploration: a time in which the European nation-states became enormously wealthy and powerful as a result of their imperial landholdings. Though Columbus can be celebrated as a heroic pioneer and explorer, his brutal, militaristic actions in the New World toward the people he encountered there also paved the way for centuries of Native American genocide and betrayal.

Sitting Bull – The chief of the Teton Sioux tribe, Sitting Bull was a living symbol of resistance to the United States for most of his life. In the 1860s, outraged by the cruelty and aggression of white settlers in the western United States, Sitting Bull led raids on American soldiers and succeeded in killing or capturing many of them. Sitting Bull was an important strategist during the Battle of the Little Bighorn, during which Native American warriors defeated U.S. troops led by General George Armstrong Custer. However, Sitting Bull spent the next decade exiled in Canada. When his people began to starve, he returned to the U.S. and became a fixture of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Toward the end of his life, Sitting Bull was arrested because of his association with the Ghost Dance Movement, and—supposedly in a scuffle with the police—he was shot and killed.

Crazy Horse – Crazy Horse was an influential chief of the Oglala Tribe, who partnered with Sitting Bull to lead a series of successful guerilla attacks on the U.S. troops in the western United States—first at the Battle of Rosebud and then, most famously, at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In spite of his successes, Crazy Horse's followers were often on the verge of starvation, and in 1877 he had no choice but to surrender to the U.S. army. A few weeks later, he was stabbed and killed, supposedly because he'd tried to attack an American soldier. Crazy Horse was buried near Wounded Knee Creek, foreshadowing the **Wounded Knee Massacre** of 1890.

Manuelito – A Navaho chief who led a failed uprising against the U.S. army in the Southwest, Manuelito was one of the final holdouts against the U.S. military's relocation plan for the Navahos. Instead of leading his followers to Bosque Redondo, the tiny, barren reservation the government had allocated for the Navahos, Manuelito guided his people across the Southwest in a vain but heroic attempt to survive. In the end, however, Manuelito was forced to return to Bosque Redondo, since he was unable to find enough food to feed his people (largely because the U.S. military had destroyed most of the Navaho's food sources). In this way, Manuelito set a tragic pattern for Native American chiefs of the late 19th century: he held out against U.S. expansion, but ultimately was forced to submit to it.

General James Carleton – U.S. general who ordered the massacre of Apaches in the Southwest and ordered the relocation of the Navaho tribe onto small, barren reservations. Carleton is one of the most unambiguously cruel characters in *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*: he seems to relish the chance to enact murderous policies and clear the Southwest of Native Americans.

Little Crow – Santee chief who led a failed uprising against the U.S. government in the 1860s. Little Crow is notable for having initially supported peace with the United States; however, he declared war after his people called him a coward and pressured him into proving his strength. A weak and at times incompetent leader who failed to maintain control over his

followers, Little Crow won few victories against American troops and was later forced to flee into Canada with his remaining followers. He later returned to the U.S. and surrendered to the United States. Little Crow's career as Santee chief is of particular importance in Native American history because it partly inspired Sitting Bull to take up arms against the United States instead of pursuing peaceful means of negotiation.

President Abraham Lincoln – 16th president of the United States. When several hundred members of the Santee tribe were sentenced to death in retaliation for a battle that many of them hadn't fought, Lincoln refused to authorize the sentence. Instead, he insisted on a review of legal records to determine who had actually been involved, though he did ultimately order that most of the Santees should be imprisoned.

Black Kettle – Lean Bear's successor as leader of the Cheyennes. On the advice of William Bent, Black Kettle urged his people not to seek revenge through raids on white settlements. Convinced that the Cheyennes could never defeat the U.S. military, Black Kettle reluctantly agreed to cooperate with the government and relocate his followers away from their ancestral lands.

William Bent – A white man who lived among the Cheyennes, Bent advised Black Kettle to avoid conflict with U.S. troops by keeping his people from retaliating against white settlers, and he helped Black Kettle and members of the Arapaho tribe negotiate with the U.S. government. Bent married a Cheyenne woman, Yellow Woman, with whom he had two sons, Charlie and George, who later became involved in diplomacy on behalf of Native American tribes.

George Bent – Son of William Bent and brother of Charlie Bent. George and Charlie are notable for being two of the only half-white, half-Native American characters in the book. It's telling, then, that they chose to reject all white civilization following the Sand Creek massacre, during which American soldiers murdered dozens of Native American women and children. George Bent's choice reflected the escalating violence and cruelty of white society in the late 19th century: George believed that the Native American half of his heritage was morally superior to the white half.

Major Scott J. Anthony – Government agent who replaced Edward W. Wynkoop and later ordered the Sand Creek massacre, one of the darkest episodes in the history of the United States' relationship with the Native American population. Brown suggests that Wynkoop ordered the massacre of dozens of Native American women and children with the explicit intention of scaring the Native American population off of its ancestral (and highly valuable) lands.

Charlie Bent – Son of William Bent and brother of George Bent. Charlie, along with his brother, is notable for being one of the only half-white, half-Native American characters in the book. It's telling, then, that they chose to reject all white civilization following the Sand Creek massacre, during which American soldiers murdered dozens of Native American women and children. Charlie's choice reflected the escalating violence and cruelty of white society in the late 19th century: he believed that the Native American half of his heritage was morally superior to the white half.

Roman Nose – Cheyenne chief who led a failed resistance to U.S. expansion in the mid-1860s. Roman Nose was, in many ways, a good example of the kind of Native American chief who became increasingly common in the late 19th century: he was wily, aggressive, and almost as frightening to his own followers as he was to his enemies. Roman Nose led raids on white settlements on Cheyenne land, and at one point he contemplated murdering U.S. government negotiators, choosing not to only because he knew doing so would effectively wipe out the Cheyenne tribe. Although Roman Nose participated in peace talks with the U.S., he later led a group of soldiers against the U.S. military, and was shot in the ensuing battle.

General George Armstrong Custer – Famous American general who took a hard line against Native Americans. He consistently fought them, disrespected them, and refused to negotiate even over reasonable demands. Custer led the massacre of the Cheyennes who remained on their land after Roman Nose's death (the massacre in which Black Kettle died), and he later refused to shake hands with Kiowa chiefs during a negotiation, ordering their arrest and threatening their destruction rather than acknowledging their previous treaty. In 1874, Custer broke a treaty by leading U.S. troops onto Native land in the Black Hills, hoping to clear the land for white settlers to prospect for gold. After a series of failed negotiations, Custer fought a coalition of Plains Indian tribes led by Crazy Horse in a battle that would come to be known as the Battle of Little Bighorn. Custer died in the battle, and Crazy horse emerged victorious after killing huge numbers of U.S. troops—a victory that irreversibly escalated the U.S. government's resolve to subdue and relocate Native Americans. Custer could be considered the embodiment of the racism that underlay much of American expansion during the "Manifest Destiny" era.

General William Sherman – General William Sherman is a minor character in the book, but he appears in more chapters than any other. A famous, and infamous, Civil War general, Sherman organized the "March to the Sea," which destroyed huge amounts of Southern agriculture in the mid-1860s. Later in his military career, he participated in the colonization of the western United States, an endeavor which required him to approve the relocation and, in some cases, the murder of thousands of Native Americans. In spite of his bloodthirsty reputation, Sherman is portrayed as a deeply conflicted man—someone who's willing to spill blood for his country, but

who "had suffered and knew the pain of it in others." (Notably, Sherman's middle name was Tecumseh, after the Pawnee chief.)

President Ulysses S. Grant – Civil War general and later president of the United States. Grant is notable, at least among post-Civil War American presidents, for being both a distinguished soldier and relatively sympathetic to Native American issues. As president, he appointed his old friend Donehogawa to the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and in general he tended to take a softer line against Native American resisters than other American politicians of the era. For example, he ordered a thorough, fair investigation into the rumors of the massacre of the Blackfeet tribe. However, Grant also supported the westward expansion of American industry and society, meaning that his policies undeniably hastened the decline of Native American society.

Donehogawa / Ely Samuel Parker – Iroquois man who rose to become a successful engineer and later, through his friendship with President Ulysses S. Grant, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Parker fought to protect Native Americans from theft and attack during his tenure as Commissioner, but he was pressured out of office by his rivals, many of whom resented that a Native American should have risen so far in the U.S. government. Donehogawa is a poignant character because he believes that he can "work within the system" of American society, using his intelligence, training, and passion to protect his fellow Native Americans. His failure to do so could be considered the ultimate counterexample to the argument that the Native Americans could have pursued peaceful means of resistance to the United States at the end of the 19th century—in the end, violent leaders like Sitting Bull probably did more to protect Native American lives than did peaceful government figures like Donehogawa.

Cochise – Apache chief who, inspired by his father-in-law, Mangas Colorado, waged war against white settlers in the Southwest. Cochise was a beloved, influential Apache chief, and as a result he was an important part of the government's negotiations with the Apache tribe in the 1870s. Cochise died in 1874, leaving the Apaches without a strong leader.

Red Cloud – Sioux chief who led a long but failed resistance to the U.S. military, culminating in the Sioux Peace Treaty of 1868, a document that paved the way for thirty more years of unlawful U.S. expansion into the west. Though he excelled as a soldier and a military strategist, Red Cloud believed that he could use political savvy to negotiate a fair land deal for his tribe—a belief that caused many of his followers to conclude that he'd "gone soft." In his final years, Red Cloud lost many of his followers, who were more attracted to the bellicosity of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

General George Crook – George Crook is, along with General William Sherman, the most complex and ambiguous white character in the book. A brutal, notoriously cruel general in the 1870s, Crook was responsible for the forced relocation of the Apache tribe, and the long manhunt that culminated in the killing of the Apaches' leaders. But in the 1880s, Crook began using somewhat gentler methods to do business with the Apaches, and in 1886, he resigned from his position rather than participate in mass-murder. Much like Sherman, Crook is a man whose cruelty catches up with him.

Kintpuash – Young chief of the Modoc tribe who cooperated with the U.S. government until some of his men became involved in a violent conflict with U.S. soldiers in the early 1870s. Forced to choose between surrendering his own men and protecting them (thereby risking war with the U.S.), Kintpuash chose to fight against the U.S.—partly out of loyalty and partly because he feared that his own followers would rebel. He killed Colonel Edward R. S. Canby, and was afterwards executed himself. He was rumored to have said, "You white people conquered me not; my own men did."

Young Joseph – Nez Percé chief and son of Old Joseph, who led a heroic but failed resistance to the U.S. military. Joseph is typical of Native American chiefs of the era: he first tried to cooperate with the U.S. government, then he tried to fight the military, then he and his people fled, and ultimately he surrendered when his followers ran out of food. He later died on a reservation, supposedly of a "broken heart."

Big Snake – Brother of a powerful Ponca chief, who was arrested and killed by U.S. troops for exercising the legal right to travel across the country and join his people in Nebraska. Big Snake's death—supposedly an accident, but quite possibly murder—sent a message to the Ponca tribe that the United States wouldn't permit Native Americans to exercise their freedoms, even if their own laws allowed them to do so.

Nathan C. Meeker – Government agent who led negotiations with the Utes but later launched a full-scale smear campaign against them. Meeker was an important agent of cultural genocide against the Native American population: he made it his explicit mission to wipe out Ute culture, forcing the Utes to abandon their hunter-gatherer traditions. Meeker's argument that the Utes lacked the mental capacity to own property proved highly popular with U.S. audiences at the time, because it provided a convenient justification for the theft of Native American lands.

Geronimo – Famous Apache-Chiricahua rebel and guerilla fighter who led a series of successful attacks on white settlers' communities and supply lines, and later died a prisoner of war. Although Geronimo is one of the most famous Native Americans in history, he's a surprisingly minor character in the book. Ironically, Geronimo isn't even portrayed as having been the most violent or bloodthirsty Apache leader of his era. His reputation as a sadistic killer is largely the product of 19th century smear campaigns designed to poison the white population against all Native Americans. This doesn't mean that Geronimo didn't organize murderous raids against white settlements in the Southwest—he did. However, his brutality

arguably pales in comparison with that of many of the generals and soldiers in the U.S. military at the time.

Victorio – Ally of Geronimo, who was later captured and executed for his guerilla warfare against the United States. Between the late 1870s and the end of 1880, Victorio led some of the most destructive raids on white settlements in the Southwest; like many of the more notorious Native American chiefs of the era, he was feared by his own men, not just white settlers.

Buffalo Bill – Famous western explorer and soldier who, in the second half of his life, reinvented himself as an entertainer, whose Wild West Show was hugely popular in the Eastern United States. Buffalo Bill is a peripheral character in the book, but his Wild West Show has attracted a lot of attention from cultural historians in recent years: some of the most famous, long-lived stereotypes about the American West (heroic white settlers, "savage Indians," and even cowboy hats) were popularized by Bill's show.

The Paiute Messiah – Mysterious Native American figure who launched the Ghost Dance movement in the 1880s and 1890s. The Ghost Dance movement was, for all intents and purposes, a Christian sect that embraced many Native American customs and rituals. While the movement was pacifist, it was regarded as a threat to the U.S. establishment. Though Brown mentions the Messiah only a handful of times in his book, the Messiah's influence in the late 19th century was massive: he succeeded in uniting dozens of disparate tribes. And this, some historians have argued, is precisely what the United States found so dangerous about the Messiah, and the Ghost Dance Movement: the less divided the Native Americans became, the harder they were to conquer.

Black Coyote – Unfortunate Sioux man whose age, confusion, and deafness may accidentally have sparked the **Wounded Knee Massacre** (although it's possible that Black Coyote was a scapegoat). After U.S. soldiers marched Black Coyote and his fellow Sioux to the Wounded Knee Creek, they ordered the Sioux to surrender all weapons. Black Coyote began waving his rifle, though it's unlikely that he was trying to shoot American troops: mostly likely, he was confused and was simply grumbling about having paid a lot of money for his weapon. Brown suggests that Black Coyote's supposed "act of aggression" was just a flimsy alibi for what followed: the U.S. army proceeded to murder hundreds of innocent Sioux men, women, and children.

Satanta – Kiowa Chief who fought a war against the U.S. military for the sake of his people's land rights. In the short term, Satanta was successful in raiding white settlements disrupting the American train system of the era. But he was eventually defeated in battle and convicted on trumped-up charges. Though Satanta was allowed to live, he'd lost all political power.

MINOR CHARACTERS

President Andrew Jackson – Tenth president of the United States and supporter of the infamous Indian Removal Act, which relocated Native Americans to the western United States.

Mangas Colorado – Apache Chief (father-in-law of Cochise) who waged war against U.S. settlers in the Southwest and was murdered by American soldiers while waving a truce flag.

Colonel Edward R. S. Canby – U.S. general who fought Manuelito in the 1860s and later waged war against the Modoc tribe, using deception and other "dirty tricks." Canby was later slain by Kintpuash, the young chief of the Modoc tribe.

Kit Carson – Famous (and infamous) American explorer who, under orders from General James Carleton, was responsible for massacring Navahos and burning their fields in order to clear Navaho lands for white settlers. Carson followed Carleton's cruel orders, despite the fact that he was married to a Native woman.

A. B. Norton – Navaho reservation superintendent who advocated for better reservation conditions. His advocacy, however, seemed centered on the fact that with better soil, the Navahos could grow their own food thereby saving the U.S. government money.

Thomas Galbraith – Government commissioner in charge of the Santee tribe who refused to allocate the tribe badly needed resources.

Wowinapa – Teenaged son of Little Crow who was imprisoned by U.S. troops and later became a Christian deacon.

Medicine Bottle – Follower of Little Crow who (with Shakopee) led the exiled Santees after Little Crow's death. Medicine Bottle was captured by U.S. forces, unfairly tried, and sentenced to death.

Shakopee – Follower of Little Crow who (with Medicine Bottle) led the exiled Santees after Little Crow's death. Shakopee was captured by U.S. forces, unfairly tried, and sentenced to death.

Lean Bear – Cheyenne chief who was killed in cold blood by American troops in 1864, sparking a wave of conflict between the Cheyennes and the U.S. military.

Governor John Evans – Governor of Colorado during the early 1860s, notorious for having taken a "hard line" against the Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapahos and for dismissing any government officials who favored compromise with the Native Americans.

Edward Wynkoop – U.S. military officer who became a friend and ally of the Southern Cheyennes, negotiating with and on behalf of Black Kettle. Though his friendliness with the Native Americans led Governor John Evans to fire him, Wynkoop later became a U.S. tribal agent on behalf of the Cheyenne reservation.

Black Bear – Chief of the Northern Arapaho tribe, who led his people west after the Sand Creek Massacre.

Yellow Woman – Wife of William Bent and mother to Charlie and George Bent.

Colonel Henry Maynadier – U.S. colonel who attempted to negotiate with Red Cloud.

John Sanborn – U.S. government commissioner who tried to contact Red Cloud.

Little Wound – Oglala chief who, along with Pawnee Killer, negotiated unsuccessfully with General George Armstrong Custer over the expansion of the railway system.

Pawnee Killer – Oglala chief who, along with Little Wound, negotiated unsuccessfully with General George Armstrong Custer over the expansion of the railway system.

Nathaniel Taylor – U.S. government commissioner who successfully negotiated with Red Cloud for land rights.

General Winfield Scott Hancock – American general who waged war against Roman Nose and later met with him to negotiate. Hancock narrowly avoided being murdered by Roman Nose during these negotiations.

General Philip Sheridan – U.S. general who fought Roman Nose's Cheyenne forces in the late 1860s, and uttered the infamous words, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead." Sheridan was also instrumental in waging war against the Cheyenne and Comanche tribes in the late 1860s.

Tall Bull – Southern Cheyenne leader who led raids on American supply trains, largely in retaliation for the U.S. military's crimes against Native Americans.

Eskiminzin – Apache leader who lobbied the U.S. government for food for his people and was pressured into making a deal whereby his men would work on a government mescal farm.

Commissioner Vincent Colyer – U.S. government commissioner who dealt with the Apache tribe and persuaded Eskiminzin to preserve peace.

Lone Wolf – Kiowa chief who led a large faction against the U.S. government, arguing that the Kiowas should celebrate their own culture instead of embracing the white man's civilization.

Old Joseph – Nez Percé chief who refused to sign a treaty that surrendered the tribe's lands to the U.S.

Little Wolf – Cheyenne chief who led his starving people off their reservation in search of food, and was later arrested for doing so in defiance of the U.S. government.

White Eagle – Ponca chief at a time when the Poncas were being relocated to a dry, barren reservation in Kansas.

Ouray – Ute leader who negotiated with the U.S. government on behalf of his people, but arguably sold out by accepting lavish gifts in return for signing over the Utes' land rights. In the 19th century, the U.S. used similar bribery tactics on any number of Native American chiefs.

Taza – Chief of the Chiricahua tribe in the 1870s, a time when the tribe was splitting into many antagonistic factions.

John Clum – Government agent for the Chiricahua tribe.

General Nelson Miles – General in charge of the Southwestern United States in the 1870s and 1880s, often remembered for capturing and imprisoning Geronimo after years of war.

Big Foot – Sioux leader who succeeded Sitting Bull and was the chief of the Sioux at the time of the **Wounded Knee Massacre**, during which Big Foot and hundreds of other Native Americans were murdered.

Kicking Bird – Kiowa chief who, in contrast with Lone Wolf, believed that his people should adopt a moderate policy when interacting with the United States. However, Kicking Bird later saw the error of his ways and led attacks against the U.S. military.

General Patrick E. Connor – Sadistic U.S. general who presided over a fort built on Cheyenne lands, and was later tasked with massacring entire villages of Arapahos.

Colonel Henry H. Sibley – Colonel and fur trader who fought against the Santee tribe and later attempted to negotiate with Little Crow.

Wabasha – Santee warrior who betrayed his leader, Little Crow, thinking that Colonel Henry H. Sibley would reward him for bringing down the Santee tribe from within (though, as it turned out, Sibley just arrested Wabasha along with all the other Santees).

Newton Edwards – Governor of the Dakota territory, who played a pivotal role in pressuring Sioux chiefs into signing unfair treaties that allowed white settlers to claim Sioux lands.

General Henry B. Carrington – American general who fought Red Cloud's Sioux forces and tried in vain to negotiate with Red Cloud.

Lieutenant Royal E. Whitman – American commander who negotiated with Eskiminzin and offered the Apaches menial jobs harvesting mescal.

Yellow Bear – Arapaho chief who led his tribe to a government-organized reservation, and is said to have told General Philip Sheridan that he was a "good Indian," to which Sheridan infamously replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

Samoset – Chief of the Pemaquid tribe in the early 17th century, said to have "given away" New England to European settlers (though, in reality, he thought he was humoring the settlers, and never agreed to vacate the land).

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-

coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

GENOCIDE

Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee is a book about genocide, the deliberate and systematic murder of an ethnic group. The title of the book refers to the **Wounded Knee Massacre** of 1890, when U.S. troops marched hundreds of followers of Sitting Bull to Wounded Knee Creek, which is located inside the Pine Ridge Lakota Reservation in South Dakota. There, the troops shot and killed more than three hundred Native Americans, many of them children. While the government of the United States claimed that the massacre was an "accident," supposedly set off because a single Native American man was waving his rifle, it's almost impossible to imagine that such an incident could have caused three hundred accidental deaths. As Brown makes clear, the troops who marched the Native Americans to Wounded Knee despised Native Americans, and many of them relished a chance to hurt their enemies.

In the early chapters of his book, Brown discusses the United States' motives for genocide. The U.S. had acquired a large amount of territory in the Mexican American War, and powerful elites wanted to use the land to build railroads, mine for gold, etc. The problem, of course, is that the land was already occupied by Native American tribes, many of which had been based in the same place for many centuries. Elites, then, had an economic incentive to support policies that would remove Native Americans from their land, either by relegating them to small, barren reservations where the quality of life was miserable, or by killing them.

Brown is careful to distinguish between different forms of genocide—in particular, between attempts to literally kill Native Americans, and attempts to systematically eradicate Native American culture and identity. In the former category, Brown lists several instances during which generals in the U.S. army were given instructions to murder Native Americans even if they hadn't committed any crimes—for example, in Sand Creek in 1864. But Brown also discusses instances in which the United States practiced genocide by slower means. The military and the federal government supported white settlers' efforts to slaughter buffalo, often with the explicit goal of depriving Native Americans of food. Furthermore, the military marched tens of thousands of Native Americans off of their homeland and onto a distant reservation; during these long marches, significant numbers of Native Americans died of exhaustion or hunger, largely because U.S. soldiers wouldn't give them help of any kind. For those who made it to Native American reservations, life was difficult—the soil was dry, and there was almost never enough food. Without a doubt, the results of the Native American relocation process were genocidal. And in a great many cases, Brown shows, the process's *intent* was genocidal, too. One American military commander said of the Santee tribe, which was starving on its tiny, barren reservation, "If they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung." One of Brown's key insights, then, is that the relocation process was not an alternative to extermination—it was just a slower, arguably crueler form of extermination.

Finally, Brown comments on the U.S. government's acts of *cultural* genocide—in other words, its systematic attempts to wipe out Native American culture. To name one particularly horrifying example, Nathan C. Meeker, government agent in charge of the Ute tribe, made it his mission to wipe out the Ute language, Ute artistry, and Ute religion. He forced Ute children to attend English-language schools that trained them in agricultural work—a kind of labor alien to Ute society. More generally, one could even argue that the relocation of the Native Americans onto reservations was itself an act of cultural genocide, because many Native American societies attached enormous cultural importance to their land: to force the Native Americans to live on a reservation was, in a great many cases, to force them to live without a culture.

While Brown is highly critical of the United States during the 19th century, he's emphatically *not* saying that all white Americans were genocidal during this era. Indeed, there are many instances in *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* of white settlers and soldiers developing great respect and trust for Native Americans, and transcending the racism of the era. On a similar note, Brown never suggests that the U.S. government *only* supported genocidal policies. At times, it tried other means of dealing with Native Americans, such as negotiation, bribery, and intimidation. Nevertheless, Brown makes a convincing case that the fundamental, unalterable goal of the United States' leadership during the second half of the 19th century was genocidal: to eliminate the Native American population either through murder or by relocating Native Americans to miserable reservations where the population would inevitably decrease. According to the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian John Toland, Adolf Hitler was a great admirer of the U.S. government's Native American policies in the 19th century, and used them as a model for his own genocidal policies. After reading *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, it's not hard to understand why.

EXPANSION AND MANIFEST DESTINY

Dee Brown makes a convincing case that the U.S. government's Native American policies in the 19th century were genocidal. But American leaders (at least for the most part) weren't explicit about the destructive intent of their country's policies. Sickeningly, they used propaganda to give a benign and even moralistic gloss to policies that were, in their effects, genocidal. The doctrine of

Manifest Destiny was perhaps the most important form of ideology that was used to justify America's murderous policies against the Native Americans. Manifest Destiny argued that white American have both the right and the duty to "Go West" and colonize North America, an idea that proved hugely influential in the U.S. Inspired by the bold slogans and almost religious intensity of the movement, millions of white settlers left their homes in the eastern United States to make their fortunes in California, Oregon, and Oklahoma. Without Manifest Destiny to support it, one could even argue, the United States couldn't have convinced its citizens to expand westward.

Manifest Destiny presupposed that some of the people who lived in North America—citizens of the United States, especially white males—were "real" Americans, and that Native Americans were mere obstacles to the rightful claim of American land by white men. At the most fundamental level, Manifest Destiny was a racist doctrine. Brown makes this clear throughout his book by studying the beliefs of the white settlers and soldiers who went out west in the late 19th century. Many of the most powerful authorities in the U.S. army—such as General George Armstrong Custer, who wouldn't even shake hands with Native Americans during negotiations—thought of Native Americans as savages who had no right to live in America, or even to live at all. The blatant racism at the core of Manifest Destiny is perhaps best summed up by the infamous words of General Philip Sheridan, expressed to leaders of the Arapaho tribe: "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

Brown's discussion of American expansion doesn't just paint a disturbing picture of 19th century history. It also situates *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* within its own time period. The book was published in 1970, at a time when the United States was at war with Vietnam and numerous Native American political organizations protested the corruption and hypocrisy of the United States' treatment of minorities at home and overseas. Native American activists saw that the arrogance and aggression that led United States to invade Vietnam under the guise of promoting democracy was a descendant of sanctimonious ideology that in the 19th century led Americans to colonize the Western United States. Understood in this way, *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* isn't just a scathing critique of the ideas that guided the United States in the 19th century; it's a critique of the ideas that continue to guide the United States to the present day.

LAW AND PROPERTY

For most of the 19th century, the government of the United States was locked in a land dispute with the Native American population. In the 1830s, during the Andrew Jackson presidency, the U.S. government passed the infamous Indian Removal Act, which ordered all Native Americans to relocate west of the Mississippi River. Though the Supreme Court found the law to be unconstitutional, the Executive Branch continued to enforce it, relocating large numbers of Native Americans to land that, according to the law, was now legally theirs. Ironically, this policy later caused a major problem for the United States. Once the U.S. government saw value in encouraging white settlers to occupy land west of the Mississippi, white Americans had to decide whether to honor their word or whether to force Native Americans from land that the government had formally acknowledged their right to occupy. The government chose to break their word and use any means necessary—typically violence and treachery—to relocate Native Americans once again, laying bare their own hypocrisy. Each chapter of *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* discusses a regional land dispute between Native American tribes and the government-backed white settlers who forced them from their land.

In the myriad land disputes between Native Americans and white settlers, Brown identifies many common themes. The United States government wanted legal cover for westward expansion, so having tribal chiefs sign treaties depriving themselves of their own land was a top U.S. priority in most land disputes. To "persuade" chiefs to sign such treaties, the U.S. used several strategies over and over. First, some government negotiators took advantage of the Native Americans' concept of property rights, which was much different than the view of white settlers. Native Americans tended to view land as a free, collective resource, which couldn't be claimed as any single person's "property." In this way, Brown suggests that certain chiefs thought they were humoring U.S. government officials by allowing them to own the land. Second, and somewhat similarly, Brown suggests that certain tribes, such as the Nez Percé, may have had a similar conception of property as citizens of the United States, but believed that there was enough land for everyone. They underestimated the scope of American expansion (or maybe just the extent of Americans' greed), and paid a heavy price for doing so. Third, Brown shows that in many cases, government negotiators lavishly bribed chiefs into selling their people's rights. Fourth, and most importantly, Brown shows that in many cases, Native American chiefs were bullied and intimidated into giving up land rights. In most of the chapters in the book, the chief of a tribe agrees to an unfair treaty with the U.S., rather than risking prolonged war with the U.S. military, which even Native Americans recognized as the deadliest force in the country.

In this way, Brown brings *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* to a depressing conclusion about the relationship between law, property, and power. Judging by the Native Americans' experience, law is not an impartial arbiter. On the contrary, the law can be manipulated and reinterpreted to favor one side over the other. When the U.S. broke its own laws (for example,

when it backed out terms of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act), there were no legal repercussions, but when the U.S. became aware of even a whisper of impropriety from the Native American side, the U.S. howled in indignation and enforced the law to its fullest extent. For example, when a renegade group of Utes attacked American soldiers, the U.S. military used the incident as an excuse to punish the entire Ute tribe for breaking its peace agreement with the U.S., and they relocated all Utes (not just the renegades) to a reservation. Quite simply, Native Americans lacked the power to enforce U.S. laws, while the U.S., with its superior military force, enforced its own laws when it had an economic incentive to do so, and didn't enforce them, or barely enforced them, when it had an incentive not to.

In legal property disputes, Brown suggests, the side with more power—in this case, the U.S.—often wins in the end by twisting the laws to advance its own economic interests, even if doing so means effectively robbing others of their homes. And in this way, the more powerful side can win a corrupt, illegal victory against its opponent, while using the law as empty "proof" of its decency and civilization.

RESISTANCE AND VIOLENCE

During the period of time covered in *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, the United States government colonized much of North America using a mixture of political hypocrisy, racism disguised as patriotism, and outright violence. Native American tribes resisted this aggression in a variety of different ways. Some of them tried to use legal, political means to negotiate with government representatives, while others turned to forms of religious mysticism, such as the Ghost Dance movement. Experiencing the failure of peaceful resistance, however, many Native Americans turned to violence in retaliation for the injustices perpetrated against them. Though Brown does not suggest that all Native American violence was morally justified, he does make a nuanced distinction between white violence against Native Americans and Native American retaliation that aimed to protect their sovereignty. Because of this, Brown presents Native American violence as understandable, at the least, and perhaps often righteous.

The Native Americans' peaceful means of resistance to the United States either failed or, even if they succeeded, failed to achieve more than a local, short-term victory. The Ghost Dance Movement of the late 19th century, for example, may have scored moral points against the expansion of the United States, but—as the atrocity of the Wounded Knee Massacre proves—it certainly didn't halt this expansion. In addition, the Poncas' legal victory of 1877 was one of the few times in 19th century when Native Americans triumphed in a U.S. court, despite that white Americans frequently broke their own laws and treaties in their treatment of Native Americans. The Poncas, who hadn't yet been relocated to a reservation in Nebraska, won the freedom to live in a place of their choosing, but this victory only applied to one specific group of Poncas—not those who'd already been relocated (let alone Native Americans from other tribes). Thus, even somewhat effective peaceful means of resistance failed to disrupt the military tyranny at the core of the United States' relationship with Native Americans in the 19th century.

In most of the cases Brown discusses in his book, the Native Americans resisted the U.S. with violence. In analyzing the various ways that Native Americans used violence against white soldiers and settlers, Brown makes a nuanced point about the ethics of violence, portraying the Native Americans neither as perfect nor barbaric, but instead as flawed human beings reacting out of rational self-interest to a dire, existential threat.

Although he studies many specific examples of Native American violence against the U.S. military, Brown never loses sight of the fact that this violence was fundamentally defensive and retaliatory. Native Americans were fighting a foreign civilization that was trying to destroy them and claim their lands. By the 1860s, white settlers regularly violated the United States' own treaties with Native American tribes, hunting and building fortresses on lands that the U.S. government had promised to leave aside for Native Americans. In the second half of the 19th century, furthermore, the U.S. military became increasingly bloodthirsty in its interactions with Native Americans (in part, some historians have argued, because of the "precedent of violence" established during the Civil War). American soldiers murdered Native American children, sometimes for nonsensical, trumped up "crimes" and sometimes for no reason whatsoever. Confronted by a hostile, heavily armed power that refused to play by its own rules, many Native American leaders chose to respond in kind. They burned white settlements and in some cases murdered white children.

While Brown makes it clear that Native Americans' violent resistance to the United States was retaliatory, he never argues that this violence was entirely justified. The murder of children, whether by Native Americans or U.S. soldiers, can never be justified—either way, it's a brutal act of terrorism. Brown also makes it clear that some of the Native American chiefs who fought back against the U.S. were sadistic and volatile by nature. Indeed, Brown strongly implies that one of the effects of the U.S. military's violent expansion was to empower the more violent, headstrong Native American chiefs and silence the calmer, more reasonable chiefs—in desperate times, Native Americans sometimes turned to frightening, dangerous men to protect them. Even so, Brown seems to believe that much of the violence in the Native American resistance *was* justified. Derailing a supply train that passed through exclusively Native American territory, which many different tribes did in order to assuage their own hunger and discourage further white settlers from moving west, would seem to be a justifiable act of

violence. Though they destroyed American property, it sent a clear message to the government without hurting anyone. Brown doesn't offer much explicit discussion of the ethics of violence, but he makes a point of distinguishing between different kinds of violence against the United States. Furthermore, he emphasizes that—contrary to U.S. propaganda of the time—not all Native Americans were equally supportive of violence. In this way, he allows readers to make up their own minds about the history of Native American resistance.

At the core of Brown's book is one fact about the United States government: following the Civil War, its mission was to kill or remove the Native American population. Brown discusses some peaceful means by which Native Americans attempted to resist, but these were almost always failures, or successful only in the short term. Native Americans were severely weakened by their lack of legal rights and political representation under U.S. law. They also had virtually no control over U.S. media, and therefore couldn't fight back against the government in print (unlike Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most successful nonviolent resistors in history). Perhaps the Native Americans' use of violence, while not always commendable, and sometimes utterly despicable, was in many cases understandable. The Native Americans tried using politics, law, civil disobedience, and religion to protect themselves from the United States—nothing worked. Tragically, violence was the only means left to them.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

WOUNDED KNEE MASSACRE

There aren't many overt symbols in *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*. However, one exception is the Wounded Knee Massacre alluded to in the title. In December 1890, the U.S. military marched hundreds of defeated Sioux men, women, and children down to Wounded Knee Creek, supposedly with the intention of transferring them to a new reservation in Omaha. According to eyewitnesses, American soldiers shot a man named Black Coyote who, it seemed to them, refused to surrender his rifle. In reality, Black Coyote was old and deaf, and didn't understand what he was being asked to do. In the scuffle, Black Coyote's rifle went off and the U.S. soldiers—many of whom were openly eager to hurt the Native Americans—used this as a pretext to shoot hundreds of unarmed Native American men, women, and children. The Wounded Knee Massacre has gone down in history as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the United States' relationship with the Native Americans. It symbolizes the cruelty and sadism of the U.S. in the era of westward expansion, and could even be interpreted as a microcosm of the government's genocidal Native American policies in general.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Picador edition of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* published in 2007.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Samoset knew that land came from the Great Spirit, was as endless as the sky, and belonged to no man. To humor these strangers in their strange ways, however, he went through a ceremony of transferring the land and made his mark on a paper for them.

Related Characters: Samoset

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter of his book, Brown offers a general history of Native American relations with European settlers in the centuries leading up to the Civil War. During this time, white settlers waged frequent wars on the Native Americans, but they also collaborated with Native American tribes. Settlers lacked the technology and numbers to exterminate the Native American population, as future generations would later try to do. Nevertheless, they managed to pave the way for genocide by purchasing much of the Native Americans' land from them. Brown argues (and many historians have supported his conclusion) that the Native Americans "gave" their land to the white settlers because they didn't have the same conception of land ownership that white settlers did. As they saw it, land wasn't a resource that could be purchased or owned (sort of the way one would think of sunlight or air). But over the next couple centuries, white settlers used the Native Americans' "agreements" as justification for driving them off their own lands.

Before these laws could be put into effect, a new wave of white settlers swept westward and formed the territories of Wisconsin and Iowa. This made it necessary for the policy makers in Washington to shift the "permanent Indian frontier" from the Mississippi River to the 95th meridian.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

In the first half of the 19th century, the United States boxed itself into a corner. Congress passed a law, the Indian Removal Act, which moved tens of thousands of tribes off their lands to lands west of the Mississippi so that they wouldn't interfere with white settlers. However, after the U.S. acquired western lands in the Mexican-American War, Congress faced a dilemma. By signing the Indian Removal Act, it had formally acknowledged Native Americans' right to live in the Great Plains—now, Congress wanted to rewrite its own agreements and force Native Americans to migrate even further west to tiny, barren reservations. This is a particularly important passage because it outlines the overarching "problem" that the federal government tried to solve for the latter half of the 19th century: how to get Native Americans off of land that the U.S. government itself had promised to them. To circumvent the problem, government representatives tried to con, bribe, or intimidate tribes into signing treaties that would strip them of the land that they had been told was theirs.

To justify these breaches of the "permanent Indian frontier," the policy makers in Washington invented Manifest Destiny, a term which lifted land hunger to a lofty plane. The Europeans and their descendants were ordained by destiny to rule all of America. They were the dominant race and therefore responsible for the Indians—along with their lands, their forests, and their mineral wealth.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Brown discusses the relationship between the economic realities of the late 19th century and the ideology of the time. At its most basic level, the motive for western colonization in the late 19th century was economic: the western U.S. was full of valuable resources like gold and copper. But in order to justify the violence and hypocrisy that accessing these resources would require, the U.S. government "dressed up" its economic rationale with lofty ideas about why westward expansion was, in fact, a moral necessity. Manifest Destiny—the solemn, near-religious duty to "go west"—was a moral alibi, then, for genocide and exploitation, since the unwritten implication of Manifest Destiny was that American citizens had the right to steal land from Native Americans by any means necessary. In effect, *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* is a look "beneath the veil" of Manifest Destiny; an examination of the brutality and horror of the oft-mythologized western expansion.

Chapter 2 Quotes

Late in July Carson moved up to Fort Defiance, renamed it for the Indians' old adversary Canby, and began sending out reconnaissance detachments. He probably was not surprised that few Navahos could be found. He knew that the only way to conquer them was to destroy their crops and livestock—scorch their earth.

Related Characters: Colonel Edward R. S. Canby, Kit Carson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Two, Brown discusses the history of the U.S. army's relationship with Navahos in the American Southwest. During the 1860s and '70s, American troops were tasked with clearing the land of Navahos. In order to hasten this process, soldiers and commanders, such as the famous explorer Kit Carson, were ordered to burn fields and slaughter livestock, thereby forcing Navahos to move to reservations, or else starve to death.

This passage alludes to the brutal—and at times genocidal—nature of the U.S. military's relationship with the Native American population. The scorched earth tactics that Brown discusses here were all pioneered during the Civil War by generals such as William Sherman (who later became one of the key generals supervising Western expansion). In this way, the brutality of the Civil War set a dangerous precedent for violence, which (some historians have argued) encouraged the U.S. army's brutal treatment of Native Americans.

The superintendent examined the soil on the reservation and pronounced it unfit for cultivation of grain because of the presence of alkali. "The water is black and brackish, scarcely bearable to the taste, and said by the Indians to be unhealthy, because one-fourth of their population have been swept off by disease." The reservation, Norton added, had cost the government millions of dollars.

Related Characters: A. B. Norton (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Brown discusses A. B. Norton, the superintendent of the Navaho reservation at Bosque Redondo in the 1860s. As superintendent, Norton was tasked with "taking care" of the Navahos. However, as Norton understood his job, he was supposed to ensure that the U.S. government allocated as little money as possible to the Navahos. Therefore, even as Norton expresses something akin to sympathy for the Navahos' condition (pointing out that the Navahos had been forced to live in a desolate place with dry soil and brackish water), Norton's concern is not primarily humanitarian. The U.S. government was spending millions on keeping the Navahos alive because the reservation land was so hostile to agriculture. Therefore, Norton advocated for the improvement of conditions on the reservation less because he wanted to help the Navahos than because he wanted them to become self-sufficient.

Chapter 3 Quotes

Little Crow rejected their arguments. The white men were too powerful, he said. Yet he admitted the settlers would exact bitter vengeance because women had been killed. Little Crow's son, who was present, said later that his father's face grew haggard and great beads of sweat stood out on his forehead.

Related Characters: Little Crow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Three, Brown discusses Little Crow, the chief of the Santee tribe. Little Crow found his people becoming increasingly unruly as white settlers encroached on their territory. Furthermore, the U.S. government sent representatives to force the Santee tribe to ratify deceptive treaties that forced them to leave their lands forever. In short, Little Crow—like so many other Native American leaders of the era—found himself between a rock and a hard place. He wanted to appease his people and take care of them, but he also wanted to maintain peace with the United States.

Unlike other chiefs of the era, Little Crow chose to resolve his dilemma by declaring war on the U.S. He thought that in doing so, he could keep his people happy (and maintain his power over them, as he would likely be overthrown for cooperating with the U.S.). As the passage makes clear, Little Crow's decision was far from easy: it was a classic lose-lose situation, since Little Crow knew he was guaranteed to lose whether he fought against the U.S. or cooperated with them.

Truly, he thought, that nation of white men is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. Soon they would take the buffalo country unless the hearts of the Indians were strong enough to hold it. He resolved that he would fight to hold it. His name was Tatanka Yotanka, the Sitting Bull.

Related Characters: Sitting Bull

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

In the 1860s, a young chief named Sitting Bull witnessed some of the devastation that the U.S. military had caused for the Santee tribe. Sitting Bull, who later became one of the key leaders of the Native American resistance to Manifest Destiny, was characteristic of a new generation of indigenous leadership. A violent, unpredictable man, Sitting Bull wouldn't necessarily have been a great chief a hundred years ago, when relations between whites and Native Americans were considerably more peaceful. But in the second half of the 19th century, surrounded by white violence and cruelty, Sitting Bull found an audience for his radical, violent ideas.

One of the central questions of Brown's book is whether the Native American population could have resisted U.S. expansion peacefully, rather than by resorting to violence. Brown gives the impression that, in the late 19th century, the U.S. had made up its mind to exterminate the Native

American population. Therefore, fighting back against the U.S. government, as Sitting Bull did with the support of many followers, was the most rational response.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ As soon as his wound healed, George made his way back to his father's ranch. There from his brother Charlie he heard more details of the soldiers' atrocities at sand creek—the horrible scalpings and mutilations, the butchery of children and infants. After a few days the brothers agreed that as half-breeds they wanted no part of the white man's civilization.

Related Characters: Charlie Bent, George Bent

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter Four, Brown discusses the horrific Sand Creek Massacre of the 1860s. During this atrocity, soldiers in the U.S. army marched unarmed Cheyenne men, women, and children to Sand Creek and the shot them, breaking a treaty between the U.S. and the Cheyennes and, by any contemporary standard, committing a serious humanitarian crime.

This passage discusses the aftermath of the massacre. Two of the survivors, Charlie and George Bent, the half-white, half-native sons of William Bent, vowed to reject white civilization forever. In this way, the passage is indicative of how escalating white violence in the late 19th century polarized Native Americans. Prior to the massacre, the Bent brothers had embraced aspects of both white and native culture, but after the massacre, they were so disgusted with white culture that they felt morally compelled to unequivocally side with Native Americans.

❝ Thus did the Cheyennes and Arapahos abandon all claims to the Territory of Colorado. And that of course was the real meaning of the massacre at Sand Creek.

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 102

Explanation and Analysis

At the tail-end of this horrific chapter, the Cheyennes respond to the Sand Creek massacre by fleeing their lands in Colorado, in effect giving those lands to the U.S. government. Brown argues that the U.S. government intended for this to happen all along; it ordered the Sand Creek Massacre in order to terrify the Native Americans and chase them away, guaranteeing that the land would be deserted and safe for white settlers. Contemporary historians have verified Brown's argument.

The U.S. government policies in Colorado are representative of the strategy it used throughout the 19th century. The military used violent means to intimidate and extort Native Americans into giving up their lands, or in some cases, to exterminate Native American tribes altogether. Naomi Klein called this military strategy the "shock doctrine." One could also call it terrorism.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ Before that winter ended, half the luckless Galvanized Yankees were dead or dying of scurvy, malnutrition, and pneumonia. From the boredom of confinement, many slipped away and deserted, taking their chances with the Indians outside.
As for the Indians, all except the small bands of warriors needed to watch the fort moved over to the Black Hills, where plentiful herds of antelope and buffalo kept them fat in their warm lodges.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

Looking back at the history of Native Americans in the late 19th century, it seems almost inevitable that they would have been defeated by the forces of the U.S. government. U.S. forces were better armed and in most cases better trained, and they outnumbered the Native American warriors. In this passage, however, Brown shows that the two sides were more equal than one might think. Immediately following the Civil War, the Union troops were hungry and tired from years of fighting and meager rations. The Native American warriors of the Great Plains, on the other hand, were well-fed, thanks to their supplies of buffalo meat, and they were more than willing to fight and die for their tribe. In this way, Brown explains how many of the early battles and skirmishes of the post-Civil War period ended with Native American victories. It was only a little later that the U.S. was able to muster the technology and manpower to wipe out the Native Americans.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ The Indians who ambushed Fetterman were only imitating their enemies, a practice which in warfare, as in civilian life, is said to be the sincerest form of flattery.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 138

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Brown addresses some of the violence and brutality perpetrated by Native Americans. In the case of the "Fetterman Massacre," Sioux and Arapaho warriors ambushed a group of white soldiers and killed them. Brown argues that the Native American resistance was responding to the escalating violence of whites. Following the brutality of the Sand Creek Massacre, the Native Americans "responded in kind."

Brown never explicitly says that the Native Americans' use of violence was justified. However, he suggests that the Native Americans were, at the most basic level, retaliating against the violence that they'd experienced at the hands of American troops. Justified or not, violence was the Arapaho and Sioux tribes' rational response to the looming threat of American expansion.

❝ Incidents such as this, combined with Red Cloud's continuing war, which had brought civilian travel to an end through the Powder River country, had a strong effect upon the United States government and its high military command. The government was determined to protect the route of the Union pacific Railroad, but even old war dogs such as General Sherman were beginning to wonder if it might not be advisable to leave the Powder River country to the Indians in exchange for peace along the Platte Valley.

Related Characters: Red Cloud, General William Sherman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 139-140

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Brown discusses some of the other violent forms of resistance that the Oglala and Cheyenne warriors used against the United States of America. On many occasions, they derailed trains, disrupting American supply lines and discouraging white settlers from traveling out west. While Brown doesn't say that the warriors killed white American citizens in doing so, he gives readers reason to believe that the Native Americans' actions should be considered acts of terrorism: they destroyed U.S. property in order to frighten people who might be thinking about settling on Native American territory out west. Brown doesn't say whether he believes the Native Americans were justified in these acts, but since they had no other options left to them—no courts, no police officers, no senators, no newspapers to complain to—using nonviolent tactics to disrupt expansion seems, at the very least, reasonable.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ The only good Indians I ever saw were dead.

Related Characters: General Philip Sheridan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 170

Explanation and Analysis

This infamous quote from General Philip Sheridan of the U.S. army can be taken as the most succinct expression of the U.S. government's policy toward Native Americans at the end of the 19th century. As Brown discusses, Sheridan was acting with the full support of the U.S. government: he wasn't a radical or an outlier by any means. The federal government showed every sign of agreeing with Sheridan's point of view, even if it wouldn't have expressed it in the same blunt way. On an economic level, the government had a strong incentive to remove Native Americans from America: either by exterminating them with violence, or else by moving them into tiny, barren reservations where they were all but guaranteed to die out slowly over time.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ For several months he debated what his next course of action should be. Above all he wanted to help the advancement of his race, but if he remained in office with political enemies constantly sniping at him because he was an Indian himself, he feared that he might do his people more harm than good. He also wondered if his continuance in office might not be a political embarrassment to his old friend President Grant.

Related Characters: Donehogawa / Ely Samuel Parker, President Ulysses S. Grant

Related Themes:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

This short chapter is about a Native American named Donehogawa, who attended English-speaking schools and eventually rose to become a talented lawyer and civil engineer. When Ulysses S. Grant became president, he appointed Donehogawa to be the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Donehogawa tried to use his influential position to lobby on behalf of other Native Americans, rather than to better himself and his cronies (as former Commissioners had done). However, Donehogawa's career came to a tragic ending: his rivals, many of whom resented him for being a successful Native American, humiliated him and conspired to make him look incompetent. Donehogawa decided to resign, rather than embarrass himself and his friend, President Grant, any further.

The passage is a tragic example of why Native Americans *couldn't* use legal, political means to advance their own causes. Some Native Americans, like Donehogawa, did try to work "within the system" and protect their fellow Native Americans. However, most were discriminated against and drummed out of office. In short, the passage is compelling evidence for why peaceful protests and attempts at political reform were insufficient for the Native American population in the latter half of the 19th century. Violence, regrettably, was the only answer left to them.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ No lawyer represented the Modocs, and although they were given the right to cross-examine witnesses, most of them understood very little English, and all spoke it poorly. While the trial was in progress soldiers were constructing a gallows outside the prisoners' stockade, so there was no doubt as to what the verdict would be.

Related Characters: Kintpuash

Related Themes:

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Brown gives yet another reason why the Native American resistance of the late 19th century gravitated toward violence and terrorism: there was no court system through which Native Americans could push back against the injustices of the U.S. military and government. Or rather, there *was* a court system, but it didn't treat Native Americans fairly. In this case, the Modoc chief Kintpuash was tried and executed without having a defense attorney appointed to him. The verdict was preordained—so much so that the soldiers built the scaffold before the verdict was even read aloud. The point here isn't that Kintpuash was guilty or innocent of his crimes (he was guilty of some of them, actually). The point is that Kintpuash was sentenced to death without a fair trial—another painful reminder of why violence was the only option left to the Modocs, and to hundreds of other tribes of the era.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ Of the 3,700,000 buffalo destroyed from 1872 through 1874, only 150,000 were killed by Indians. When a group of concerned Texans asked General Sheridan if something should not be done to stop the white hunters' wholesale slaughter, he replied: Let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffalo is exterminated, as it is the only way to bring lasting peace and allow civilization to advance.

Related Characters: General Philip Sheridan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 265

Explanation and Analysis

In this short but horrifying parenthetical comment, Brown notes that white settlers slaughtered millions of buffalo in the Great Plains during the late 19th century. The result was that many Native American tribes went hungry or starved because they'd lost an important food source. The question, of course, is why the settlers killed the buffalo. While it's true that buffalo were something of a nuisance to the settlers, and while it's also true that some of the settlers were hunting the buffalo for food, the fundamental truth is far darker. At least in part, white settlers killed buffalo, and were encouraged to do so by esteemed generals like Sheridan, because eliminating a major food source would contribute to the weakening and extermination of the Native American population. The slaughter of the buffalo is arguably the most destructive form of genocide ever perpetrated by the United States.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ The offer was four hundred thousand dollars a year for the mineral rights; or if the Sioux wished to sell the hills outright the price would be six million dollars payable in fifteen annual installments. (This was a markdown price indeed, considering that one Black Hills mine alone yielded more than five hundred million dollars in gold.)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 284

Explanation and Analysis

In this short passage, Brown discusses the treaty that the U.S. government offered to the Sioux tribe based near the Black Hills in order to get them off of their land. When it became clear that the Black Hills contained valuable gold, the government made it a priority to convince the Sioux to leave their lands behind, thereby allowing white settlers to colonize the land and harvest the gold for their own profit. The government offered the Sioux chiefs a small fraction of the mines' real value, arrogantly thinking that the Sioux would be too foolish to understand the real value of their property. In all, the passage is yet another example of how the U.S. tried to pressure Native Americans to leave their lands by offering them an insultingly unfair treaty. It also juxtaposes the two sides' opposing motivations: the Sioux didn't care that the Black Hills contained gold—they simply wanted to live their lives as they were accustomed to living them—whereas white settlers wanted to strip the land of its resources and move on.

❝ At a place known only to them they buried Crazy Horse somewhere near Chankpe Opi Wakpala, the creek called Wounded Knee.

Related Characters: Crazy Horse

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 313

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of this chapter, Crazy Horse is killed in a mysterious accident: supposedly, he was killed after lunging at one of the guards who had arrested him, and in the chaos, he was shot in the head. While Brown doesn't say for sure, it seems reasonable to believe that Crazy Horse was killed through some kind of foul play: a disgruntled soldier who wanted the "privilege" of killing Crazy Horse himself.

The more important part of the passage, however, concerns Crazy Horse's burial near Wounded Knee Creek, which would later become the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre. In this way, the passage uses one tragedy of Native American history, the death of Crazy Horse, to foreshadow an even greater tragedy of Native American history.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ There was not enough to eat in this empty land—no wild game, no clear water to drink, and the agent did not have enough rations to feed them all. To make matters worse, the summer heat was unbearable and the air was filled with mosquitoes and flying dust.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 334

Explanation and Analysis

Brown paints a bleak picture of life on a Native American reservation. In the late 1870s, the U.S. army forcibly moved thousands of Cheyennes onto a small reservation, many miles away from their home in the Black Hills. On this reservation, there were no livestock, and the soil was dry and virtually useless. It was clear to anyone who visited the reservation that survival would be difficult, especially with the frequent shortages of food that afflicted the Cheyennes in their early years on the reservation. However, government commissioners not only refused to allocate more food for the Cheyennes: they refused even to acknowledge that there was a problem. In this sense, the passage conveys the sadism, irrational obliviousness, and at times murderous intent of the government's treatment of the Cheyennes.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ The Poncas of Indian Territory had learned a bitter lesson. The white man's law was an illusion; it did not apply to them.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 365

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter 15, Brown discusses the history of the Ponca tribe, which tried and partly succeeded in using the U.S. court system to fight for its rights. In court, a group of Poncas successfully convinced a judge that they had the right, as U.S. citizens, to live wherever they wanted, rather than staying on the reservation the U.S. government had allocated for them. This was a major victory for several reasons. It showed that the court system could stand up to the federal government, and it also established an important legal precedent regarding Native Americans who, as U.S. citizens, enjoyed the full protection of the law.

But in other ways, the victory just reiterated how far from victory the Ponca tribe really was. While the specific Poncas who'd already left their reservation were allowed to move across the country, the other Poncas who'd remained on the reservation were forced to stay on their reservation (General William Sherman claimed that he'd kill any Poncas who left the reservation). In this way, the Poncas arrived at the maddening conclusion that "the white man's law" could grant them some relief from exploitation, but not enough.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Ouray was to receive a salary of one thousand dollars a year for ten years, "or so long as he shall remain head chief of the Utes and at peace with the United States." Thus did Ouray become a part of the establishment, motivated to preserve the status quo.

Related Characters: Ouray

Related Themes:

Page Number: 371

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Brown studies the behavior of a man named Ouray, a leader of the Ute tribe. Ouray's behavior during negotiations with the U.S. government is in many ways typical of such land negotiations in the late 19th century. Ouray came to the negotiation process representing his tribe, but by the end of the negotiations, Ouray had in effect sold his tribe's land rights in exchange for a salary and lavish gifts from the U.S. government. In other words, Ouray traded personal wealth for the best interests of his tribe. For its part, the U.S. didn't make the mistake of antagonizing Ouray: it won him over with gifts (or really, bribes) and then used him to win control over the Ute territory. The U.S. mastered this technique not only during its dealings with Native Americans, but also during its negotiations with foreign powers, such as Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Chapter 17 Quotes

❝ As the constant fighting continued, Victorio's hatred deepened. He became a ruthless killer, torturing and mutilating his victims. Some of his followers considered him a madman

Related Characters: Victorio

Related Themes:

Page Number: 399

Explanation and Analysis

In Chapter 17, Brown discusses the history of the Apache and Chiricahua tribes in the late 19th century. One important resistor, a man named Victorio, became increasingly volatile and unstable during his long war with the U.S. military. Victorio became "ruthless," as Brown notes, to the point where even his own followers began to drift away from him.

Victorio, one could argue, is exactly the kind of Native American who tended to come to power in the late 19th century. A violent man by nature, he "rose to the occasion," fighting the American army's brutal policies with brutality of his own. In this sense, one could argue that Victorio's violence was retaliatory, even if wasn't morally justified (Victorio was known to murder white settlers' infant children, for example—a morally despicable act). Furthermore, Victorio became *more* violent in response to the U.S. army's tactics—imitation, as Brown has already noted sardonically, is the sincerest form of flattery.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ "Indians!" Sitting Bull shouted. "There are no Indians left but me!"

Related Characters: Sitting Bull

Related Themes:

Page Number: 431

Explanation and Analysis

Toward the end of his life Sitting Bull and his followers returned from Canada, where they'd been living following

the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Sitting Bull was an elderly man, and his followers were on the verge of starvation. Knowing that Sitting Bull still carried a lot of weight in his community, the U.S. government tried to persuade him to sign a new treaty, granting the U.S. the right to own Sioux and Hunkpapa land in the Midwest. While other Sioux and Hunkpapa tribal leaders signed the treaty, Sitting Bull refused to do so. After the treaty was ratified (without Sitting Bull's support), Sitting Bull was said to have cried out, "There are no Indians left but me!"

Sitting Bull's utterance can be taken to mean that he viewed himself as the last living Native American to oppose the power of the United States. All other Sioux and Hunkpapas, he believed, had caved in, surrendering to the might of the United States of America, the most powerful military force on the planet. The utterance could also be interpreted as alluding to the genocidal policies of the United States—soon enough, there were "no Indians left" in the American Midwest. Two further things to note. First, Sitting Bull's outburst, while understandable, could also be interpreted as unfair; the chiefs who signed the treaty with the U.S. weren't giving up their Native American identity—rather, they were trying to protect their people from further war (and extermination). Second, the passage brings up the idea of symbolic resistance to the United States. Sitting Bull knew that his outburst, and his refusal to sign the treaty, accomplished nothing concrete. Nevertheless, he refused to sacrifice his dignity, and instead remained a model of pride and composure, symbolically resisting the U.S. This notion will become particularly important in the final chapter of the book, as Brown discusses the Ghost Dance movement.

❝ "You must not hurt anybody or do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always," the Messiah commanded. Preaching nonviolence and brotherly love, the doctrine called for no action by the Indians except to dance and sing. The Messiah would bring the resurrection. But because the Indians were dancing, the agents became alarmed and notified the soldiers, and the soldiers began to march.

Related Characters: The Paiute Messiah (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 435

Explanation and Analysis

Brown briefly discusses the history of the Ghost Dance movement, a religious awakening that began in the final years of the 19th century. The Paiute Messiah, a mysterious Native American religious leader, founded a religious sect—essentially a branch of Christianity—that emphasized love and mercy while also incorporating many Native American rituals. The movement became hugely popular among Native Americans of many different tribes.

Although the Ghost Dance movement was peaceful and it resembled Christianity, the U.S. considered it to be a major threat. In some ways, it's not hard to see why: the U.S. was frightened by the possibility that the Ghost Dance could be used to organize the Native American population against the government. Even though the U.S. had already won a victory over the Native Americans, having gained virtually all the land west of the Mississippi, this victory wasn't enough. The U.S. didn't just want Native Americans' land: it wanted to destroy Native Americans' dignity, pride, and culture. Therefore, the U.S. wanted to wipe out the Ghost Dance movement, which offered the defeated Native Americans dignity and collective identity.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ It was the fourth day after Christmas in the year of Our Lord 1890. When the first torn and bleeding bodies were carried into the candlelit church, those who were conscious could see Christmas greenery hanging from the open rafters. Across the chancel front above the pulpit was strung a crudely lettered banner: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 445

Explanation and Analysis

In the final chapter of the book, Brown discusses the darkest hour in Native American history: the Wounded Knee Massacre, during which U.S. troops murdered three hundred unarmed men, women, and children, supposedly because one elderly, deaf man was waving a rifle. In a dark irony, the corpses of the Native Americans slaughtered at Wounded Knee were transported to a nearby church which bore a banner saying "Peace on Earth."

Here, Brown concludes, was the white man's "peace." For half a century, white Americans had gone west in search of freedom and prosperity. But freedom and prosperity didn't fall down from the sky: they were built on the backs of Native Americans—the Native Americans who were forced off of their lands or murdered by American soldiers. At the

time when *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* was written, Brown's revisionist look at American history was groundbreaking: it undercut the faux-idealism and corny patriotism that generations of Americans had learned in high school history classes, exposing the barbarism and genocide at the heart of western expansion.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: "THEIR MANNERS ARE DECOROUS AND PRAISEWORTHY"

The explorer Christopher Columbus first gave the Native Americans the name "Indians." In 1492, on what would later be known as the island of San Salvador, the Tainos greeted Columbus with lavish gifts. Columbus later sent a letter to his sponsors in Spain, explaining that these natives were weak and savage.

In this short chapter, Brown outlines the early history of relations between Native Americans and Europeans. It's notable that he begins this book with the arrival of Columbus—many indigenous peoples would take issue with this choice, since it ignores their long history before Columbus came and brought destruction on their way of life.

Columbus kidnapped Tainos and took them back to Europe, where he baptized them. The Tainos later began to war with the Spanish settlers after the settlers began looting and burning Taino villages. In 1607, English settlers arrived in what would later become Virginia. They used subtler methods than the Spanish had: they forged an alliance with the Powhatan chief, and the chief cooperated with them to enslave his own people.

The different explorers in the New World treated the Native Americans in vastly different ways. However, Brown implies that, at a fundamental level, almost all European colonizers believed themselves to be superior to the Native Americans, and used their superior technology to assert power. (Notice, also, that the English allied with Native American leaders, foreshadowing the way U.S. representatives would later forge alliances with chiefs.)

Around the same time in Massachusetts, English settlers forged alliances with the nearby Pemaquid tribe, and probably would have starved without the tribe's help. But the settlers had different notions of property than the Pemaquid did. The Pemaquid chief, Samoset, humored the settlers by "giving" them land in New England, but the settlers later used the chief's action as a justification for driving Native Americans off their own land. By 1675, war had broken out between English settlers and the Native Americans. By the end of the war, the English had cemented their dominance in Massachusetts.

Brown doesn't say much about the Native Americans' philosophy of land and ownership, but he suggests that the English settlers' greed and ambition led them to try to take the land for themselves instead of sharing it with Native Americans. Furthermore, by not delving into the causes of the war of 1675, Brown (rightly) gives the impression that the war itself was a byproduct of the English settlers' overarching desire for more territory.

In the mid-17th century, the Dutch settled in what would eventually be known as Manhattan. They "bought" the island for beads and fishhooks. In 1641, the Dutch sent troops to punish Native Americans for "offenses which had been committed not by them but by white settlers." In the ensuing fight, the Dutch massacred entire villages of Native Americans. Similar events took place across America for the next two centuries. The Iroquois, the Miamis, the Pontiac, and many other strong Native American tribes fought against European settlers without success.

Slowly, Brown establishes a pattern by which European settlers "bought" land from Native Americans and then enforced their "agreement" with guns and swords. In other words, European settlers established a flimsy legal rationale for their acts of theft, one that the Native Americans couldn't really dispute because they lacked a comparably strong military.

In 1829, President Andrew Jackson recommended to Congress that all Native Americans be relocated west of the Mississippi. In 1834, Congress passed an act to relocate all Native Americans. The act forbade white Americans from trading or communicating with Native Americans. But before the act could be enforced, American settlers migrated westward. This forced Congress to alter its own policy and push Native Americans farther west.

Ironically, the Indian Removal Act of 1834 proved to be a thorn in the U.S. government's side, since it formally recognized Native Americans' right to live in a certain part of the country (west of the Mississippi). This made plain the government's duplicity, as the government reneged on its own agreement and pushed tribes further west.

It's been centuries since Columbus landed in San Salvador. In that time, hundreds of Native American tribes have been wiped out by disease and warfare. The names of the tribes survive across the country, but "their bones were forgotten in a thousand burned villages." Much of the natural world that Native Americans worshipped has been obliterated, too.

The history of European-descended Americans' relationship with Native Americans is dark and disturbing, all the more so because it's rarely taught in American high schools. (However, Native American history has become a bigger part of high school history curricula since the 1970s, in part because of this book!)

In the ten years following the establishment of Andrew Jackson's Native American relocation policy, many of the largest tribes went through a crisis. In 1838, the U.S. army raided Cherokee settlements in Appalachia. They rounded up Cherokee men, women, and children and marched them out west. On the march, one in four Cherokees died. This march was eventually called the "trail of tears."

The Trail of Tears is one of the darkest hours in modern Native American history, reinforcing the point that the Cherokee Nation had no power to defend itself from the might of the U.S. military.

In the 1840s, the Mexican American War took place. When it ended, in 1847, the U.S. had gained a huge amount of territory, all of it west of the "permanent Indian frontier." In 1848, furthermore, miners found gold in California. This meant that the U.S. government once again had an incentive to clear Native Americans from the land that the government itself had reserved for them. To justify their breach of contract, the government invented the myth of "Manifest Destiny," whereby white Americans had the right to claim all of America for themselves.

At the most basic level, Brown suggests, the United States had an economic incentive to expand westward. However, the U.S. covered up its economic motives by inventing a lofty-sounding ideology to justify colonization: Manifest Destiny. In reality, Manifest Destiny was a euphemism for a greedy (and at times genocidal) policy of expansion.

During the Civil War of the 1860s, the Sioux tribe of the Great Plains underwent major changes. Sitting Bull, the leader of the Teton Sioux, joined forces with Crazy Horse, the chief of the Oglala tribe. Sitting Bull also strengthened his tribe's ties with the Cheyenne tribe, which lived in the Minnesota territory. In 1876, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse would make history.

Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse were guerilla fighters who led Native American warriors in successful, albeit short-lived, victories against the U.S. military in the Midwest. Here, we see that different tribes—who ordinarily wouldn't be allied—are banding together to fight their oppression by the U.S. government.

Meanwhile, in the Southwest, the Apache tribe continued waging guerilla warfare on European settlers, just as they'd been doing for the past 250 years. Though Mangas Colorado, chief of the Apaches, had signed a treaty with the U.S., he began to resent the miners in his territory. The neighboring Navaho tribe, by contrast, had long ago embraced a European style of civilization: they raised sheep and grew fruit and grains. But during the 1860s, the Navahos killed a group of U. S. citizens encroaching on their territory and began a war with the U.S.

Brown briefly lists a few of the early outbreaks of violence between Native Americans and white settlers following the end of the Civil War. In the coming chapters, he'll discuss these episodes in much more depth. Notably, even the Navaho (who accepted parts of Euro-American life) found themselves resorting to violence to protect their territory, which shows that neither cooperation nor hostility was keeping the settlers at bay.

In the far western United States, there were few tribes as big and powerful as the Apache or the Sioux, meaning that there were few major cases of resistance to white settlers. In the Northwest, the Nez Percé tribe lived on its own reservation; historically the chiefs had accepted that there would always be enough land for both white settlers and Native Americans. In 1877, the chief of the Nez Percé made "a fateful decision … between peace and war."

Like many Native American tribes, the Nez Percé believed that they wouldn't have to fight white settlers for land because there was so much land to be had. Only a relatively small number of tribal leaders, such as Sitting Bull, grasped the root of the problem: white settlers wanted all the land *for themselves, even if it meant expelling Native Americans.*

Between 1860 and 1890, then, the Native Americans led a number of heroic and tragic uprisings against the forces of the United States. While these uprisings were often unconnected, they would come to a symbolic end in December of 1890 at **Wounded Knee**.

In a sense (and like a lot of classical tragedies), we know how this story is going to end before we've even finished the first chapter. Brown will proceed to tell the tragic story of the "last gasp" of Native American resistance to U.S. expansion.

CHAPTER 2: THE LONG WALK OF THE NAVAHOS

In the late 1850s, Manuelito, a Navaho leader, made a treaty with representatives of the U.S. government. The treaty arranged for the Navaho to live peacefully with white settlers in the Southwest. But soon, whites raided Manuelito's farms and killed his livestock to avenge the actions of "a few wild young Navahos."

The pattern that Brown is establishing almost always begins with a treaty between Native Americans and white representatives of the U.S. government. Then, white settlers violate the treaty, leading to conflict of some kind.

Tensions escalated in Navaho territory in the 1860s because of raids Navahos conducted on Mexican villages. Navaho warriors had been raiding Mexican villages for centuries: they believed that doing so was the proper retaliation for the Mexicans' policy of kidnapping and enslaving Navaho children. But after the Mexican American War, the U.S. began protecting residents of the New Mexico territory.

As the U.S. gained more territory, it increased its military presence in the Southwest. Notice, also, that Brown portrays the Native Americans' own acts of violence as retaliatory, if not wholly justifiable.

In early 1860, Manuelito led a raid on U.S. soldiers' supply trains. In retaliation, U.S. soldiers began to attack Navaho villages. On April 30, Manuelito led a raid on the U.S. Fort Defiance. While the raid failed, the U.S. considered the attack an act of war and deployed additional troops, led by Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, to the Southwest. In 1861, a coalition of Navaho chiefs met with Canby and signed a treaty. The tribe began trading with U.S. soldiers.

Conflict kept bubbling up between the Navahos and the U.S. military; however, for the time being, both sides were able to use political means to preserve the peace.

Unfortunately, the treaty didn't last more than a couple months. On September 22 1861, Navaho chiefs made a series of bets with U.S. soldiers concerning a horse race. After the Navaho rider lost the race, it was discovered that his bridle rein had been cut with a knife. The Navahos were furious, but they still lost the bet. This spelled the end of the treaty.

This seemingly trivial incident actually mirrors the injustice that all Native Americans had to endure: white settlers claimed to be "playing by the rules," even though they'd actually manipulated the rules to be in their favor. Upset with the state of things, many Native Americans, including the Navahos, abandoned legal and political means altogether and turned to violence.

In the spring of 1862, the Confederate and Northern armies arrived in New Mexico and crossed the Rio Grande. Union General James Carleton believed that there was gold on native land. He ordered his soldiers to massacre any Apaches found near the river, with the goal of clearing the land for white settlers. A delegation of Apache chiefs met with Carleton and begged him to stop. Carleton replied that the chiefs' only option was to leave. Outnumbered, the chiefs relocated to the reservation of Bosque Redondo.

Brown makes clear the link between genocide (massacring Apaches) and economic expansion: the U.S. wanted the resources on Apache land, and so the military was involved in slaughtering any Apaches who might interfere with this plan. Furthermore, the military was involved in relocating Apaches to ensure that they wouldn't be able to fight back when white settlers stole their crops, livestock, gold, and other resources.

On June 23, Carleton ordered that all Navahos be relocated by force to Bosque Redondo. He ordered one of his lieutenants, Kit Carson, to march through the territory and prepare for war with resisting Navahos. Carson had married a Native American woman, but he chose to obey Carleton's arrogant orders. Over the next few months, Carson and his soldiers systematically burned Navaho fields and slaughtered Navaho livestock in order to force Navahos off their lands. He even offered his soldiers twelve dollars for every horse they stole from the Navaho.

Some U.S. soldiers bore the Navahos no personal animosity. Nevertheless, many of these soldiers, including Kit Carson, agreed to follow their orders and carry out what was, in effect, a genocidal policy—they destroyed Navaho food to ensure that Navahos wouldn't be able to survive in their old home.

By September, Carleton ordered that all Navahos be slaughtered or arrested on sight. By the end of the fall, Carson had enacted Carleton's orders: he'd killed many Navahos and virtually cleared the territory of all crops and livestock. Most of the remaining Navahos surrendered and relocated to Bosque Redondo.

The military accomplished its horrific mission: it murdered the vast majority of the Navaho population, leaving the survivors so weak and frightened that they could easily be moved to Bosque Redondo.

Carleton next ordered Carson to move into the Canyon de Chelly region and wage a similar campaign: burning fields, slaughtering livestock, and killing or capturing any Navahos he met. Navahos resisted by throwing stones at the American soldiers. However, Carson's forces killed many Navahos. Shortly after the campaign began, Navaho leaders in the area surrendered to Carson. Carson accepted, but still ordered the destruction of all Navaho property.

Throughout the Southwest, the U.S. military followed a "scorched earth" policy, destroying any crops or livestock that could nourish the Navahos. Such policies had been commonplace in American military strategy during the Civil War.

Over the next several months, the U.S. military organized a "Long Walk" out to Bosque Redondo, during which thousands of Navajo men, women, and children were forced to walk hundreds of miles. Nearly two hundred Navahos died during the walk.

In passages like this, Brown shows how even the government's Native American relocation programs had a genocidal component: in practice, they resulted in the extermination of a significant chunk of the Native American population.

In April, Manuelito, one of the last Navaho chiefs to hold out against the U.S. military, met with U.S. military representatives, including Carleton. He asked why the military was forcing the Navaho to relocate: the Navaho, he claimed, had kept the peace they promised to Colonel Canby. Manuelito also raised the possibility that the Navahos were being relocated so that they could be shot. He refused to surrender to Carleton. In the autumn, Manuelito led his people away from the U.S. army.

Manuelito wasn't entirely wrong when he guessed that his tribe was being relocated so that it could be executed. Government officials of the era wrote extensively about how Native American reservations were designed to "die out" within a couple generations due to the arid land and horrible quality of life. In many ways, Manuelito did the most rational thing: he ran away from the reservation.

To General Carleton, the Navahos were "mouths to feed" and nothing more. He claimed that it was the Navahos' destiny to leave their ancestral lands, just as it was American citizens' destiny to inherit the land.

Carleton, it would seem, sincerely believed in the dogma of Manifest Destiny, as well as its ideological twin—the belief that Native Americans are destined to die out.

By February 1865, Manuelito still refused to surrender to Carleton's troops. The U.S. army arranged for Manuelito to speak to some of the chiefs who were already living in Bosque Redondo. The chiefs warned Manuelito that he was risking his people's lives by refusing to surrender. But they also confirmed some of the rumors Manuelito had heard about the horrible quality of life on the reservation. Manuelito again refused to surrender. When Carleton heard the news, he ordered his troops to capture Manuelito.

From Carleton's perspective, Manuelito was an unreasonable nuisance who refused to play along with the military's rules. But of course, Manuelito wasn't wrong to think that his people stood a better chance of survival off the reservation—even if his resistance to Carleton endangered his people's lives in a different sense.

Manuelito managed to avoid capture for half a year. During this time, his resistance inspired Navahos living on the reservation to escape and join him in other parts of the Southwest. In response, the U.S. army was instructed to kill every Navaho found off the reservation. But in September 1865, Manuelito entered Bosque Redondo with his weary, starving people and surrendered.

The military used Manuelito's resistance as an excuse to murder Navahos found off the reservation for any reason whatsoever. In the end, Manuelito proved to be no match for the military—in no small part because the military had been instructed to slaughter livestock and burn fields, which might otherwise have fed Manuelito and his followers.

Shortly after Manuelito's surrender, Carleton was relieved of his command and replaced with a new reservation superintendent, A. B. Norton. Norton recommended to his superiors that the Navahos be relocated to a place with clean water and fertile soil, so that the U.S. government could save money and help the Navahos become self-sufficient. For the next two years, many of the government employees who supervised the reservation adopted a similar tone.

Although Brown paints a scathing portrait of the U.S. government's treatment of Native Americans, he also writes about many figures like Norton—mid-level bureaucrats who seemed to want to help the Native Americans they'd been tasked with overseeing. However, notice that Norton's stated motive for helping the Navahos was to make them self-sufficient (therefore saving the U.S. some money), calling into question how altruistic Norton really was.

In 1868, Navaho chiefs signed a new treaty with the government, the terms of which arranged for the Navahos to return to some of their original lands in exchange for promising peace. At the meeting, the chiefs met the famous General William Sherman. Sherman already had a reputation for killing Native Americans, but the Navahos noticed that he had "the eyes of a man who had suffered and knew the pain of it in others." The Navaho had suffered greatly, and their lives would be difficult moving forward. Little did they know that they'd suffered less than almost any tribe in the country.

The chapter ends with the Navahos retaining some of their land, which is far more fortunate than most tribes. General Sherman is an agent of genocide who spent his career killing Native Americans, but as Brown points out, he knows "the pain of [suffering] in others," and on some level he seems to grasp the barbarism of his own actions. For the Navahos, this mitigated Sherman's depravity, but it's also arguable that his knowledge of suffering made his cruelty worse.

CHAPTER 3: LITTLE CROW'S WAR

A thousand miles north of the Navaho territory, the Santee Sioux were losing their own lands. These Native Americans lived mostly in woodland areas, at the outskirts of the greater Sioux territory. In the 1850s, the Santee signed two "deceptive treaties" with the U.S., and as a result they were deprived of most of their land and sent to a small territory.

Brown doesn't go into any detail about what made these two treaties deceptive, but based on what he's already written in the first two chapters, it's easy enough to guess. The chapter follows the same pattern as its predecessors: the Native Americans sign treaties that send them into tiny, miserable reservations.

In 1862, a Santee chief named Little Crow began to organize his people. Little Crow, an elderly man, had signed both of the "deceptive treaties" that deprived the Santee of land. Afterwards, he witnessed the poverty and starvation that the treaties caused. He tried to appeal to Thomas Galbraith, the government representative in charge of the Santee. But Galbraith refused to allocate more resources. One of Galbraith's colleagues was rumored to have said, "If they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung."

Galbraith's colleague's words are yet another confirmation that the Native American reservation policies of the 19th century were, in practice, genocidal: the government sent hundreds of thousands of people to arid places that were never seriously intended to support a thriving community—they were meant to cause further starvation and suffering.

Little Crow blamed himself for his people's suffering. One night, Santee tribesmen came to Little Crow, informing him that other tribesmen had killed four white men. The Santee knew perfectly well what this would mean: the U.S. would use the incident as an excuse to punish the entire Santee tribe. Little Crow decided that it was time to go to war with the United States. He knew his chances of victory were slim, but his people mocked him for being a coward. Eventually, he gave in to their encouragement and decided to lead raids on white settlements.

Time and time again, the American military has waged war in the same way: by responding to a small, isolated act of aggression, attributing the act to an entire group of people, and then declaring war against that entire group. The war with the Santee was no exception. Notice, also, that Little Crow wasn't motivated simply by revenge or aggression—rather, the war represented a chance to assert his own power over both the government and his own people.

Little Crow organized a raid on a U.S. government agency. The raid resulted in the deaths of several government officials, as well as the capture of a few women and children. Invigorated, the Santee planned to raid nearby forts and encampments. But too many of Little Crow's troops got cold feet and began to desert his army. The next day, Little Crow led his remaining men in an attack on Fort Ridgely. There, Union soldiers fired on the Santee, killing many. The Santee were forced to retreat when they failed to set fire to the base of the fort.

From the beginning, the Santee war was lopsided: the U.S. military had vastly superior firepower and manpower, while the Santee had inferior technology and relatively few loyal warriors. Notice, also, that the Santee weren't exactly the "good guys," even if they fought for their freedom—they kidnapped their enemies' children, which is no more forgivable than it was when white soldiers did it to Native Americans.

That evening, hundreds of warriors from neighboring branches of the Sioux tribe, including the Wahpeton and the Sisseton, arrived to join Little Crow. The next day, he led a second raid on Fort Ridgley. This time, Little Crow was wounded, and his men again failed to take the fort. On August 23, Santees raided the nearby town of New Ulm, where they burned buildings and killed over a hundred white men. Little Crow tried to use this success to convince other chiefs to join him against the U.S. army. But the chiefs refused, pointing to Little Crow's failure to take Fort Ridgely.

Little Crow continued to fight even after it became clear that he lacked the military might to defeat his enemies. Little Crow wasn't a particularly powerful leader, and he failed to build a strong coalition against the U.S. military (perhaps suggesting that many Native American tribes still couldn't see the direction in which history was going—they still thought they could get along with the United States).

On September 1, Little Crow proposed a raid on the private army of Colonel Henry H. Sibley, a fur trader. But Little Crow was again unable to organize his people in the raid, and many of his soldiers deserted rather than risk another losing battle. On September 5, Little Crow's remaining men surrounded Sibley's men at the Birch Coulee encampment. Sibley's forces were able to drive away Little Crow's troops, but they wasted a lot of firepower and didn't kill any Santees.

Again and again, Little Crow's men struck out against white settlers and failed to do any real damage—indeed, they did more damage to their own side than to their opponents. However, Little Crow's actions sent a message to white settlers—colonize Native American land and they'd be in a lot of danger.

Shortly afterwards, Sibley sent Little Crow an offer to negotiate, provided that Little Crow return all prisoners of war. Little Crow refused, thinking that he could use the prisoners for bargaining. However, some of his followers wanted to release the prisoners. One, a warrior named Wabasha, sent Sibley a secret message, blaming Little Crow for the fighting and hinting that he, Wabasha, would be a better ally.

It's a mark of Little Crow's feeble leadership than one of his own men betrayed him to the U.S.

On September 22, Little Crow began planning a raid on Sibley's army at Wood Lake. In the morning, his men attacked Sibley's army, but sustained heavy casualties. Afterwards, the Santee chiefs concluded that they could never defeat the U.S. A number of the Santees who'd played no role in battle, along with Wabasha, decided to stay and surrender, thinking that if they gave Sibley the white prisoners, they'd be treated as friends. Little Crow led a small group of followers out of the Minnesota area.

After a series of failed assaults on the U.S. military, Little Crow's men finally drew the inevitable conclusion—they couldn't win, and should probably just give up, in the hopes that they'd be treated mercifully.

Wabasha and the other Santees surrendered to Sibley and returned their prisoners. Sibley responded by arresting all Santees and trying them in court, without giving them a defense counsel. Three hundred Santees were sentenced to death. However, President Abraham Lincoln refused to authorize the sentence. He insisted on reviewing legal records to distinguish between those who'd fought in battle and those who hadn't. Meanwhile, Sibley moved the Santees to a prison camp. After more than a month, Lincoln gave the order that the majority of the prisoners should be imprisoned but not executed. Of the forty-one Santees executed, two were killed in error.

Instead of treating the Santee prisoners fairly (i.e., giving them a trial and legal representation), the U.S. military sentenced the prisoners to death without any fair legal procedure. It's a mark of the military's disregard for Native American lives that two Santees were "accidentally" killed—perhaps these killings weren't accidents at all, but even if they were, it suggests that the troops weren't interested in saving any Santee lives.

Little Crow led his remaining followers into Canada. By June, however, he'd decided to return to Minnesota in search of horses. He led a small group of soldiers in a raid on a white settlement in Minnesota. During the raid, settlers fired on the Santees and killed many of them, including Little Crow. The settlers also captured Little Crow's teenaged son, Wowinapa. He was imprisoned, but later went free and became a Christian deacon.

Many Native American rebels fled to Canada rather than face punishment from the United States. However, Little Crow died much as he lived—leading a heroic but failed raid on a U.S. military base.

In December 1863, U.S. troops crossed the Canadian border in search of Little Crow's remaining men. There, they found the men under the command of two of Little Crow's followers, Medicine Bottle and Shakopee. The U.S. troops arranged a "friendly" meeting with them, but then drugged them with laudanum and imprisoned them. They were tried and sentenced to death.

For not the last time, the U.S. military used deceptive means to capture Native American enemies. Based on Brown's earlier comments, it's implied that Medicine Bottle and Shakopee weren't tried fairly; i.e., they weren't given the proper legal representation.

The Santee were finished. Their leaders were dead or imprisoned, and their ranks had been thinned by war. The remaining Santee were sent to a reservation where the soil was barren and the water was brackish. At the end of 1863, a young Teton Sioux chief visited the reservation. He realized the truth: white Americans were in the process of wiping out the Native American population, and would soon come for his own tribe. The chief's name was Sitting Bull.

As time went on, the truth became more obvious: the U.S. was trying to get rid of Native Americans, either by murdering them with guns or by sending them to miserable, tiny reservations where they were all but guaranteed to die out. These sobering facts led many Native Americans to rise up against the U.S.

CHAPTER 4: WAR COMES TO THE CHEYENNES

In 1851, a delegation of Native American tribes from the Great Plains met with representatives of the U.S. government and established a peace treaty. The treaty didn't require the tribes to give up their lands. Over the next decade, however, the Great Plains filled with miners searching for gold. Migration from the east coast of the United States brought more settlers to the Great Plains and to places further west like Colorado and California. The American government began "maneuvering for a land cession."

The United States government was, once again, put in an embarrassing position. It claimed to be a defender of law and order, but in order to ensure its expansion westward, it now had to go back on its word and violate its treaty with the Plains Indians.

Native Americans met with the U.S. government. This time, the government offered the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes a treaty whereby they'd retain land and hunting rights, but would agree to reside in a small territory near the Arkansas River. The Cheyenne and Arapaho representatives agreed. However, only a minority of Cheyenne chiefs were present to sign it, a fact that later called the agreement into question.

Technically speaking, the treaties the U.S. made here were never legally binding. But of course, this didn't really matter to the people would later enforce the treaty to relocate Native Americans.

In the early years of the Civil War, Cheyenne and Arapaho hunting parties tried to steer clear of Confederate and Union troops. In May 1864, however, a group of Cheyennes encountered a group of Union soldiers, and the Cheyenne leader Lean Bear greeted the soldiers while wearing a medal Abraham Lincoln had given him. The soldiers opened fire on Lean Bear, killing him. Lean Bear's second-in-command Black Kettle commanded his troops not to fire on the soldiers in order to avoid a war. However, some Cheyennes did fire on the soldiers.

As Brown depicts this horrific incident, Lean Bear was gunned down in cold blood. The scene is especially tragic, considering that Lean Bear was wearing a medal from Abraham Lincoln (the commander of the very troops who killed him) and the medal symbolized Lean Bear's cooperation with the U.S. government.

Confused by the American troops' actions, Black Kettle consulted with a man named William Bent. Bent was a white man, but he'd lived with the Cheyennes for years, and was married to a Cheyenne woman. Bent advised Black Kettle to prevent his young men from raiding white settlements in revenge.

Some white settlers chose to live among the Native Americans peacefully. Even though the late 19th century was marked by near-constant violence between white soldiers and Native Americans, there's a lengthy tradition of whites and Native Americans coexisting in peace.

In June 1864, the Colorado governor, John Evans, issued a statement explaining that "some Cheyennes" had gone to war with white people, but he failed to mention the murder of Lean Bear. Following the statement, Black Kettle and other chiefs tried to control their people and prevent retaliation. William Bent's son George Bent sent a letter to a government agent, offering to exchange white prisoners for Cheyennes. Black Kettle also sent a copy of this letter to the American forces at Fort Lyon, led by Edward Wynkoop.

Evans's official statement misrepresented the facts to make it seem that the Cheyennes had attacked the military without grounds, even though they had good reason to be furious. Notice, however, that the Cheyennes were trying their best to preserve order, both because they knew they'd lose whatever war they fought and because they had coexisted peacefully with white Americans for many years.

Wynkoop read Black Kettle's letter and learned about the white prisoners on Cheyenne land. He decided to ride to Cheyenne land and rescue the prisoners. With only 127 soldiers, Wynkoop marched out to the Cheyenne settlement in Smoky Hill. There, Wynkoop negotiated with Black Kettle. Black Kettle told Wynkoop, "The bad men on both sides brought about this trouble." He also promised to release four white prisoners, all children—the remaining prisoners were being kept farther north.

Following Lean Bear's murder, there was a short period of détente *between the Cheyennes and the white settlers, during which both sides seemed to be making an effort to preserve the peace.*

The next step was for Black Kettle and Edward Wynkoop to travel to Denver to make peace with Governor Evans. In Denver, Evans accused Black Kettle of allying with the Sioux tribe against the U.S.—an accusation Black Kettle vehemently denied. Evans also claimed that the American soldiers had killed Lean Bear to retaliate for the theft of some horses—again, Black Kettle denied this. The meeting ended with the chiefs "confused as to whether they had made peace or not."

In the end, the peace talks between the white settlers and the Cheyennes failed, because neither side wanted to take responsibility for the original violent incident. Both sides wanted to portray themselves as retaliating to the other side's immoral actions (even though, per Brown, it's pretty clear that the Cheyennes were in the right, and Lean Bear was murdered in cold blood).

In November, Major Scott J. Anthony was sent in to replace Edward Wynkoop, who'd angered Governor Evans by dealing with the Cheyenne tribe. Evans ordered Anthony to demand that the Arapahos abandon their land. While Anthony did so, he also told Black Kettle that the Cheyennes were welcome to reside at Sand Creek, under the protection of Fort Lyon. Some of the Arapaho tribe went to join the Cheyenne at Sand Creek, while others traveled south.

The government of the United States didn't appreciate Wynkoop, seemingly because he genuinely wanted to promote peace and equality between whites and Native Americans. Wynkoop's successor, Anthony, took a harder line against the Native Americans, and mandated that they relocate immediately.

On November 26, Major Anthony allowed white traders to do business with the Cheyennes stationed near Sand Creek. His reason was simple: he wanted to keep the Cheyennes "quiet until such time as I receive reinforcements." The next day, Anthony received his reinforcements and prepared for a massacre. Some of his lieutenants argued that an attack would violate the treaty. On November 28, however, an American army of many hundreds attacked the Cheyenne at Sand Creek. The soldiers murdered dozens of women and children, even after they'd surrendered. Soldiers scalped and mutilated the corpses of Cheyennes. However, some Cheyennes managed to flee.

As Brown shows, Anthony was biding his time until further troops arrived. This suggests that Anthony wanted the military to wipe out the Cheyenne population in the region, clearing the way for further white settlers. Sure enough, the military eventually killed hundreds of Cheyennes, many of them just a few years old. Brown is careful to note that some Cheyennes escaped the massacre, emphasizing that there were eyewitnesses to the U.S. military's savage violence.

Among the people fleeing the massacre was George Bent, the half Cheyenne, half white son of William Bent. George reunited with his brother Charlie Bent on William Bent's ranch. The brothers agreed to reject white civilization, and abandoned the ranch forever.

The massacre was so horrific that it convinced the Bent siblings to reject white culture altogether. The incident also foreshadows the way that the military's violence polarized Native American society and gave a voice to the chiefs who were least willing to negotiate with white America.

At Sand Creek, the U.S. army murdered every Cheyenne and Arapaho chief who'd been trying to hold out for peace with the United States. The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes now concluded that their best option was war.

This is an important passage because it suggests that much of the Native American violence that followed Sand Creek was, at its core, retaliatory. Whether or not it was ethically justified, it marked the Native Americans' response to the threat of annihilation—they felt they had to kill or be killed.

In January 1865, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux warriors raided supply routes, cutting off much of Denver's food supply. However, Black Kettle refused to participate in the raids. He led four hundred followers southward while the majority of Cheyennes went north to fight the U.S. army.

Notice that a majority of Cheyennes turned to violence to resist the U.S., showing how much of an impression the Sand Creek Massacre left.

The majority of Cheyennes reached the Powder River country, where the Northern Cheyennes lived. In the spring of 1865, the newly united Cheyenne tribe sent scouts to spy on U.S soldiers in preparation for more fighting. On July 24, the Cheyenne attacked the Platte Bridge Station, a military base and stockade, killing several white soldiers.

The Sand Creek Massacre also united the factions of the Cheyenne tribe—the tribal leaders correctly recognized that their only chance of prevailing was to work together against the common enemy, the U.S. military.

Meanwhile, Black Kettle and a small group of Southern Cheyennes marched south to rejoin the Arapaho tribe. In the summer of 1865, a delegation of U.S. government officials met with Black Kettle in order to create a new treaty. William Bent helped Black Kettle and representatives from the Arapaho tribe negotiate with the government. The government's representatives included Kit Carson. The government wanted the Native Americans to abandon their old treaty and surrender their rights to buffalo country in Colorado in order to make way for railroads and new settlers.

Throughout this entire chapter, the U.S. government's motives are financial: it's trying to clear the way for railroads and settlements on Cheyenne territory (even if it does so in barbaric ways, such as slaughtering hundreds of Cheyennes). One might think that the value of the land would incentivize the U.S. government to attempt to lavishly compensate the Native Americans to ensure their peaceful removal, but the government seemed to prefer force.

During negotiations, government representatives told Black Kettle that gold had been discovered on Cheyenne lands. White settlers would come to the land and treat the Cheyennes cruelly. Black Kettle was reluctant to leave his ancestral lands, but he agreed to live south of the Arkansas River in order to ensure peace. In this way, the Native Americans abandoned their claims to Colorado. "And that of course," Brown concludes, "was the real meaning of the massacre at Sand Creek."

Brown ends the chapter by connecting the atrocious violence of Sand Creek with the government's desire to clear the Cheyennes off their land. As Brown sees it, the government's only goal was to gain more territory, and therefore it authorized the military to remove the Cheyennes by any means necessary.

CHAPTER 5: POWDER RIVER INVASION

In 1865, Black Bear, the chief of the Northern Arapahos, led his people west to the Powder River, along with a smaller group of Southern Arapahos (who'd come north after the Sand Creek massacre). On the march, Black Bear heard rumors of approaching U.S. troops. These troops, under the command of General Patrick E. Connor, had orders to "hunt" Native American tribes "like wolves," and kill all adult males.

Black Bear was a uniter: in the aftermath of Sand Creek, he brought together Arapahos from many different parts of the Great Plains, recognizing that different branches of the tribe needed to work together to protect themselves against the threat of another massacre. Notice that Connor spoke of Native Americans as wild animals, suggesting that he saw them as nuisances that needed to be tamed or eliminated.

In mid-August, the U.S. troops met a big group of Sioux and Cheyennes camped along the Powder River. These soldiers were breaking treaties by trespassing on Native American lands. The Sioux and Cheyennes opened fire, and the soldiers fired back. The fight ended when the Native Americans waved a white flag. The two sides arranged a meeting. Among the Cheyenne representatives were George Bent and Charlie Bent, the sons of William Bent.

As with many of the armed conflicts between the Cheyennes and the U.S. military, this conflict broke out because American soldiers were trespassing. However—and again, like many other Cheyenne-U.S. conflicts—the fighting ended with the Native Americans' surrender.

During the meeting, the U.S. soldiers asked the Cheyenne chiefs why they'd attacked peaceful white men. Charlie Bent shot back that he and the Cheyenne would continue attacking white men until the U.S. government hanged the generals responsible for the Sand Creek massacre. During these negotiations, the U.S representatives mentioned a fort on Cheyenne land, led by General Patrick E. Connor: this was the first time the Cheyenne had heard of the fort.

The negotiations between the Cheyennes and the U.S. troops may have caused even more animosity, since the U.S. representatives accidentally mentioned the existence of a U.S. fort on Cheyenne territory.

On August 16, a small group of Cheyennes rode out to General Patrick E. Connor's fort. Among them was Yellow Woman, the wife of William Bent. They had come to see whether there was a fort or not. As the group approached, a group of Pawnee scouts—mercenaries hired by Connor—rode out and murdered the Cheyennes. A week later, Connor left the fort with his soldiers.

Notice that the U.S. military worked closely with Native Americans who acted as U.S. mercenaries. In other words, this wasn't simply a war between whites and Native Americans—there were some alliances between the two sides.

Connor's forces reached an Arapaho camp by the Powder River. In the early morning, Connor's soldiers attacked the camp, killing women and children. The Arapaho retreated, but the soldiers continued to fire.

Connor's forces killed women and children, echoing the atrocities of the Sand Creek Massacre.

During the Arapahos' long retreat, some Arapaho warriors fired arrows and old trade guns at the U.S. troops. They ran all the way back to their village, and took cover in the hills. The soldiers burned the village. The Arapahos were left with no food, and many had been killed. This was the Battle of Tongue River.

The Arapaho were unable to defeat their U.S. opponents: their guns and arrows were no match for the new, post-Civil War technology they faced.

General Connor continued across the plains, "searching hungrily for more Indian villages to destroy." Two columns of troops marched across the plains to join him. Their morale was low: many of the soldiers have fought in the Civil War, and supplies were limited. On August 28, the columns reached the Powder River, but were surprised to find that General Connor wasn't present—he was farther south.

Brown portrays Connor as an utter sadist, someone who enjoyed burning villages and killing children regardless of the overall utility of doing so.

Around the same time, a leader of the Hunkpapa Sioux, Sitting Bull, was leading his own warriors along the Powder River. He'd vowed to fight to save his land from whites. Sitting Bull led his men to the U.S. soldiers. He sent a truce party down to the camp, but soldiers simply fired on the party. In response, Sitting Bull led an attack on the Americans. At the time, these troops were weary and half-starved. Even though Sitting Bull was outnumbered, he was able to force the columns to retreat. He began planning an ambush on the remaining soldiers.

Sitting Bull is typical of the kind of leader that emerged among Native Americans in the second half of the 19th century. He saw, very clearly, that Native Americans couldn't last unless they fought back. And he used guerilla tactics to outmaneuver his bigger, less nimble U.S. opponents.

In September 1865, the Cheyenne chief Roman Nose felt he was ready to lead an attack on the U.S. He joined with Sitting Bull and other chiefs in organizing an ambush on the enemy columns. During the ambush, the American troops were able to defend themselves. Roman Nose realized that his men would never defeat their enemies unless they had modern Civil War guns. However, the American soldiers were still starving. The Native Americans, on the other hand, had plentiful supplies of buffalo meat.

The Cheyennes, at least for the time being, had enough food to feed themselves. This would change later on, when the U.S. settlers began slaughtering buffalo in order to deliberately weaken the Native Americans. Notice, also, that the U.S. troops were weakened by their experiences during the Civil War: they were tired and disillusioned by half a decade of warfare with the Confederacy, and didn't really want another fight.

CHAPTER 6: RED CLOUD'S WAR

In the autumn of 1865, a government treaty commission, headed by the governor of the Dakota territory, Newton Edwards, traveled across the Great Plains. Edwards' objective was simple: convince Sioux chiefs to sign treaties that would give the government control of Sioux land, which the government needed in order to build trains and allow citizens to migrate westward.

In chapter after chapter, Brown begins by returning to the U.S. government's core problem following the Civil War: it had agreed to allow Native Americans to live in the Midwest, but also wanted to expand westward, and therefore had to rewrite the treaties to which it had already agreed.

By the end of the season, the commission had obtained several treaties. However, Edwards knew that the treaties weren't legally binding, since the warrior chiefs hadn't signed them. His purpose was to present Congress with official-looking treaties that could be used to enact legislation.

Congress didn't need its agreements with Native Americans to be completely official, since, at the end of the day, no Native American of the era had the power to question the treaties in court.

Around the same time, Colonel Henry Maynadier was trying to contact a Sioux chief named Red Cloud and arrange negotiations. He sent out a group of "trader Indians"—Native Americans who arranged business deals between their tribes and the military—to offer Red Cloud a peace treaty. Months went by, and Red Cloud didn't show up.

Red Cloud was an important figure for the U.S. government, because he alone had the authority to authorize a new treaty with the government.

In March of 1866, Colonel Maynadier's messengers informed him that Spotted Tail, the chief of the Brulé tribe, wanted to discuss a treaty. He explained that his daughter was dying, and needed U.S. medical expertise. Maynadier agreed to meet with Spotted Tail. During their meeting, Spotted Tail argued that his tribe deserved compensation for the roads that white men had built through his territory.

Spotted Tail was a reformer, not a revolutionary. Put another way, he believed that he could use legal, peaceful means to negotiate with the U.S. and get what he wanted. Spotted Tail made a series of perfectly reasonable points—but the U.S. never honored its commitments by agreeing to respect the Brulé territory.

Within a week, Red Cloud arrived at Fort Laramie to negotiate with Colonel Maynadier. Red Cloud was angry when he realized that Maynadier had no guns or provisions for him, as was usually the case during a negotiation. He complained that treaties with the United States always hurt his tribe. Maynadier assured Red Cloud that he'd be compensated with provisions soon.

In contrast to Spotted Tail, Red Cloud was more wiling to antagonize the U.S., and often seemed to be on the verge of declaring an outright war.

On June 5, Red Cloud began negotiations with Colonel Maynadier; however, Red Cloud asked to adjourn until June 13 so that other chiefs from his tribe could be present. But on June 13, General Henry B. Carrington arrived at Fort Laramie. Carrington's arrival derailed peace talks by suggesting that the military was going to infringe on Sioux land rights. Furious, Red Cloud left the negotiations.

Red Cloud proved that he was willing to risk outright war with the United States, leaving negotiations after it became clear that the U.S. was going to violate the treaty whether Red Cloud agreed to it or not.

On June 28, Carrington's men reached Fort Reno, secretly followed by hundreds of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. In the middle of July, a Cheyenne truce party approached Carrington's army. Carrington agreed to negotiate. He gave them "pieces of paper saying that they had agreed to 'a lasting peace with the whites.'" But the next day, Red Cloud attacked Carrington's fort. When soldiers rushed outside to fight, the Native Americans ambushed them. For the next few months, Red Cloud led a guerilla war against Carrington.

Red Cloud, confident that his people would have their rights violated by white settlers whether or not he agreed to a treaty, proceeded to lead a guerilla war against the U.S. In this sense, Red Cloud was representative of the kind of Native American leader common in the late 19th century: he was sober and realistic about the future of his people, and knew that violence was one of the only tools left to him.

In August, General Carrington made the bold decision to divide his army He sent 150 men north, and he sent scouts to negotiate with Red Cloud. Meanwhile, Red Cloud's army became stronger as other tribes joined the guerilla war.

Red Cloud's army grew, suggesting that other tribes recognized the direness of the situation with the U.S. military.

Red Cloud's troops disrupted white supply routes, shutting down much of the white migration across Native American territory in the mid-1860s. In December, Red Cloud prepared for a daring attack on Carrington's fort. His men staged a small battle with American troops outside the fort, and then ran away. Red Cloud's warriors drew the white soldiers into an ambush. The Sioux and Arapaho armies joined in the attack. They succeeded in killing many white soldiers, but they sustained heavy casualties themselves.

Red Cloud's troops' priority wasn't to take white settlers' lives; rather, it was to disrupt the white settlers supply routes, thereby sending a message that it was no longer safe for settlers to trespass on Native American lands. This certainly doesn't mean that Red Cloud was justified in killing white settlers and soldiers, but it also suggests that he was sincere in his desire to protect his people.

The devastation of the ambush—which white Americans later called the Fetterman Massacre—made General Carrington wonder why Native Americans were so violent. He concluded that there must be some pagan belief that led them to kill—though of course, anyone who'd witnessed the Sand Creek Massacre could have said the same thing about the people of the United States. Imitation—in war, as in all things—is the sincerest form of flattery.

Carrington was so blinded by the false ideology of Manifest Destiny that he couldn't understand why the Native Americans would resort to violence—although, by this point in the book, it's pretty clear that violence was an utterly rational, common-sense response to the realities of the Native Americans' situation.

Following the Fetterman Massacre, the American government sent a new commission in the hopes of obtaining new treaties with the Plains Indians. The new commissioner, John Sanborn, was able to persuade representatives of the Brulé tribe to agree to peace. However, Sanborn was unable to meet with Red Cloud.

Some Native Americans agreed to peace, confident that, now that they'd demonstrated their power, they'd be able to coexist with the U.S. However, Red Cloud remained skeptical of peace treaties and continued to resist the U.S.

That summer, two important Oglala chiefs Little Wound and Pawnee Killer, began to negotiate with a general named George Armstrong Custer. The chiefs told Custer they objected to the "Iron Horse" (i.e., the new railroad) that ran across their territory.

The railroads of the 19th century were a symbol of the new power of the federal government. The U.S. allocated the equivalent of billions of dollars to build tracks across the country, even though doing so challenged the independence of Native American tribes.

Later on, the Oglalas and Cheyennes tried to tamper with the Iron Horse. They succeeded in bending the railroad tracks and, when the train derailed, plundering it for food and alcohol. In the coming months, the federal government began to rethink its plan to join the country together with railroads.

The passage suggests that the real object of the Cheyennes' aggression wasn't "the white man" but rather the looming specter of U.S. expansion. This is an importance difference, because it suggests that the Native Americans weren't really motivated by racism, only by a rational concern that Manifest Destiny would wipe them out.

In August, a group of Cheyennes attacked a small group of U.S. soldiers. The soldiers were armed with machine guns, however, and easily overpowered their opponents. While these "victories" proved that the U.S. military could easily defend the railroads from Native American attack, the federal government continued to search for Red Cloud in the hopes of establishing peace.

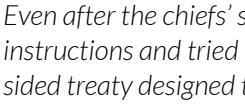
Again and again, the U.S. military prevailed against the Native Americans using its superior firepower. However, the government still wanted Red Cloud to sign the latest treaty, since Red Cloud's support would convince many other tribes to go along with the treaty, too.

In the summer of 1867, the new Native American commissioner, Nathaniel Taylor, reached out to a group of Native American chiefs, including Red Cloud. Red Cloud refused to negotiate with Taylor, but several important chiefs attended. Taylor opened negotiations by claiming that he'd come to understand "what has been the trouble." The chiefs explained the truth: white Americans had broken their promises by passing through Native Americans. They'd massacred Native American women and children, and built railroads that disrespected Native American property.

The chiefs made an eloquent and utterly straightforward argument for why they'd waged war with the U.S. They argued that the U.S. had broken its word and violated treaties and rules of warfare by murdering children.

In response, the government representatives claimed that they'd look into the damage caused by the railroad. If they found that there was damage, they promised to reimburse the Native Americans at a later time. They also claimed that they'd allow the Sioux nation to live by the Missouri River without any further interference from white men. The chiefs were offended by this "gift," since they knew the Missouri River area to be dry and barren.

Even after the chiefs' speech, the U.S. negotiators stuck to their instructions and tried to convince the chiefs to accept a bogus, one-sided treaty designed to confine the Cheyennes and the other tribes to a worthless patch of land.



In mid-November, Red Cloud sent word that he wouldn't negotiate with Taylor until the white men withdrew from the Powder River for good. Once again, peace negotiations between the U.S. and the Native Americans had failed. This was embarrassing for Taylor: he'd been tasked with getting agreements from the most powerful chiefs in the Great Plains, but he'd come back empty-handed. Finally, the government gave the order to withdraw troops from the Powder River. Red Cloud had won his war.

Red Cloud's refusal to negotiate marked one of the few long-term victories for Native Americans in the second half of the 19th century. By refusing to negotiate, Red Cloud effectively out-negotiated Taylor, and won for his people the right to continue living in their current territory.

Red Cloud signed a peace treaty with the U.S. government, promising to keep the peace forever However, the treaty he signed was very different from the treaty later ratified in Congress. For the next twenty years, this treaty of 1868 was disputed by the Native Americans and the U.S. government.

The tragic ending to Red Cloud's story is that, for all Red Cloud's ingenuity, he could do very little to prevent the United States from prevailing. The U.S. manipulated the law to justify its unjust and illegal expansion into the west.

CHAPTER 7: "THE ONLY GOOD INDIAN IS A DEAD INDIAN"

In the spring of 1866, a large group of Southern Cheyennes migrated south with Red Cloud. One of these was George Bent, the son of William Bent. George returned to the Kansas area, where he learned the Southern Cheyennes' old friend Edward Wynkoop had become a tribal agent. Emboldened by Wynkoop's support, and the stories of Red Cloud's victories against the U.S. army, Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos began to plan war with the U.S.

Red Cloud's success sent a clear, symbolic message that resonated across the country: the Native Americans wouldn't submit to U.S. aggression, and would fight to the death for the right to continue living in their current homes.

In the autumn of 1866, Roman Nose led a group of soldiers, including Charlie Bent, to Fort Wallace, while another chief, Black Kettle, led a second group of soldiers, including George Bent. At Fort Wallace, Roman Nose threatened to attack U.S. shipping companies' supply routes unless the U.S. stopped crossing through Cheyenne country. When they got no response, Roman Nose's soldiers began raiding military posts; however, the cold, stormy weather prevented them from mounting ambitious attacks.

Red Cloud's victories inspired the Native American population to lead other violent uprisings against symbols of US. Expansion, such as Fort Wallace. That both Bent siblings fought under Native American chiefs against the U.S. is a reminder that the Sand Creek Massacre left a lasting, horrific impression on both of them.

Later in the winter, Roman Nose agreed to send representatives to meet with General Winfield Scott Hancock, though Hancock was angry that Roman Nose hadn't agreed to meet personally. Hancock informed Black Kettle's men that he wanted to speak to all of Roman Nose's followers. Roman Nose's men found this request suspicious—perhaps he was trying to wipe them out.

The lengthy precedent of violence made it difficult for either the U.S. or the Native Americans to negotiate effectively—both sides thought that the other would act treacherously.

Following his aborted negotiations with the Native Americans, General Hancock marched his men out to the Cheyennes' settlement. Worried, Roman Nose led his soldiers to defend the village. He boasted that he would "ride out alone and kill this Hancock."

Roman Nose's plot to kill Hancock is a good example of how the legacy of violence polarized the Native American leadership. Chiefs like Roman Nose, who might have been considered too violent in the antebellum period, now rose to great power.

The U.S. soldiers (one of whom was General George Armstrong Custer) approached Roman Nose's men. Roman Nose waved a truce flag, and rode toward General Hancock. Arrogantly, Hancock told Roman Nose to ride away and summon his entire community. Roman Nose conferred with his men and said that he was going to kill Hancock. However, one of his followers convinced him otherwise—killing Hancock "would surely bring death to all the tribe." Instead, Roman Nose led his followers away.

In the end, cooler heads prevailed, and Roman Nose chose not to kill Hancock. This might suggest that, for the time being, Roman Nose and his followers believed that they had something to gain by cooperating and negotiating with the U.S.—they weren't yet at the point where they felt that they were truly fighting for their lives.

When General Hancock realized that Roman Nose had no intention of bringing his people to the U.S. army, he became angry. He sent George Armstrong Custer to track down the Native Americans. Meanwhile, the Nathaniel Taylor commission sent envoys to beg for peace (as discussed in the previous chapter). In the plains, Taylor understood, a peace agreement could only be arranged with Roman Nose's help.

George Custer is one of the most famous and infamous figures in Native American history, a symbol of the violence of U.S. expansion. However, there were other U.S. officials, such as Taylor, who adopted a gentler, more political approach to dealing with the Native Americans.

On September 27, Roman Nose arrived at Medicine Lodge Creek for peace arrangements. After October 16, Black Kettle, as well as representatives of the Arapahos, Comanches, Kiowas, and Prairie Apaches joined the peace talks. By October 21, the Kiowas and Comanches had accepted a treaty: they'd share a reservation with the Cheyennes and Arapahos. However, no Cheyenne chiefs signed.

The fact that some, but not all, chiefs signed the U.S. peace treaty suggests that Native American tribes were at a crossroads—some were still willing to use politics to interact with the U.S. government, while others had already concluded that the U.S. would only respond to force.

Several days later, the Cheyenne delegation arrived at Medicine Lodge Creek. To show their strength, Cheyenne warriors fired their weapons high into the air—when the white men cowered, the Cheyennes laughed. The rest of the Medicine Lodge council proceeded with the Cheyennes present. The chiefs decided that accepting the treaty was the only way to ensure their survival. After the chiefs signed, the U.S. commissioners offered the chiefs guns and other gifts. However, Roman Nose never signed the treaty.

Some of the Native American tribes that signed the treaty with the U.S. did so only reluctantly—they didn't want to work with the U.S., but also understood that doing so was the best way to protect their people from extermination (even though moving onto a tiny, barren reservation was, in many ways, a form of extermination).

In the winter of 1867-68, the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes had mostly relocated to below the Arkansas River. They received none of the arms or supplies the U.S. government promised them. Wynkoop was able to obtain some obsolete guns and ammunition for them, but nothing else. General Philip Sheridan, the man responsible for the approving the shipment of guns to the Cheyennes, was alleged to have said, "Give them arms, and if they go to war my soldiers will kill them like men."

Sheridan's comments may seem shocking, but they were hardly uncommon among U.S. generals at the time. Many of these generals and colonels believed that they were doing their country a great service by murdering Native Americans, and relished the chance to exterminate entire tribes, clearing the way for white settlers, the true inheritors of America's "Manifest Destiny."

In September 1868, a group of Sioux hunters spotted a group of white soldiers. This group had been organized by General Sheridan to find and destroy Native American camps. The hunters rushed to meet with Roman Nose. Roman Nose ordered for Cheyenne and Sioux warriors to prepare for battle. The next morning, Roman Nose's troops circled the soldiers' camp. Roman Nose led his men in a charge on the soldiers. The soldiers fired back, killing Roman Nose and many of his men.

Tragically, Roman Nose died like many other Native American chiefs—leading a charge against better armed and arguably better trained American soldiers.

The soldiers later called the fight the Battle of Beecher's Island. They boasted about killing "hundreds of redskins," and celebrated Roman Nose's death. The battle broke the Cheyennes' resistance, and many of them migrated south. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to the Cheyenne tribe, the U.S. military was preparing a column of soldiers, led by Custer, to wipe out all Native Americans in the territory, even those who'd kept their treaty obligations.

The U.S. soldiers clearly felt no compunction about killing Roman Nose—they saw him as an enemy of the state and nothing more. They had no sympathy for his point of view—that the U.S. was breaking its word by expanding westward, and that Roman Nose was morally justified in defending his territory from white settlers. Meanwhile, Custer prepared for outright genocide.

Black Kettle had become the de facto leader of the surviving Cheyennes. He rode out to Fort Cobb and begged for shelter, but the fort's commanders refused, knowing that the military was planning a massacre. Shortly afterwards, Custer's forces arrived at Black Kettle's village. Custer led a charge, while his military band played music. In only a few minutes, hundreds of Native Americans were dead, only a few of them warriors. Among the dead was Black Kettle.

The scene is especially sickening because there's music playing during the slaughter of the Native Americans. In a way, that's what Manifest Destiny was—the glitzy, patriotic music that played during the long genocide of the Native American population.

Following the massacre, the survivors of Black Kettle's band arrived at Fort Cobb, begging for food. Yellow Bear, an Arapaho chief, also brought his men to Fort Cobb. When he arrived, he told General Sheridan, who was stationed in the fort, that he was a "good Indian." Sheridan infamously replied, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

Sheridan's words epitomize the genocidal nature of the U.S. government's Native American policy. The U.S. was not, for the most part, interested in coexisting with the Native American population—the government wanted to clear the Native Americans permanently.

In 1869, the government mandated that Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos be concentrated in a reservation near Fort Sill. During this migration, some of the Southern Cheyennes broke off and rode north under the leadership of Tall Bull. For months, Tall Bull's forces attacked supply trains and ranches, often kidnapping women and children in retaliation for crimes against Native Americans. However, Tall Bull was killed by Pawnee mercenaries. With the Cheyennes' leaders dead, "the ranks of the proud Cheyennes were thinning to extinction."

Like most of its predecessors, the chapter ends with the twilight of a Native American tribe, in this case the Cheyennes.

CHAPTER 8: THE RISE AND FALL OF DONEHOGAWA

In the spring of 1869, Red Cloud and a thousand Oglala tribesmen traveled to Fort Laramie. There, the traders warned him that they'd be unable to trade with him at Fort Laramie in the future—Red Cloud would have to trade at Fort Randall, hundreds of miles away. Red Cloud was furious, since he'd earned the right to trade at Fort Laramie.

Even after signing agreements with the U.S. government, Red Cloud faced opposition when he tried to trade (as he'd been given the right to do). This only confirmed Red Cloud's initial reluctance to negotiate with the U.S.—clearly, the U.S. was unwilling to honor its own agreements.

Around the same time, President Ulysses S. Grant was taking office. He appointed a Native American to be the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. While many Native Americans were happy with this news, they were worried by rumors of a massacre—allegedly, troops had shot an entire village of Piegan Blackfeet. In the weeks following the massacre, Native Americans became more aggressive in negotiations. They burned two government agencies.

Even as positive changes seemed to be coming to the government (a Native American Commissioner of Indian Affairs), Native Americans remained rightfully suspicious of the government's intentions. With evidence of more massacres, Native Americans could not be pacified by simply having a Native American bureaucrat.


The new Commissioner of Indian Affairs was an Iroquois man named Donehogawa, also known as Ely Samuel Parker. After three months in office, an army officer submitted a report on the Blackfeet massacre. Donehogawa ordered an investigation. Donehogawa was familiar with racial prejudice. As a child, he'd attended missionary school, and later he went to law school. White people ridiculed him for his ambitions and refused to allow him to take the bar exam, but he refused to give up. By the age of thirty, he'd worked as a civil engineer on the Erie Canal, and during the Civil War he'd served under Ulysses S. Grant.

Donehogawa is an anomaly in Native American history—a man who managed to achieve great success among white Americans. He learned about U.S. culture and got a traditional American job as an engineer, helping to build one of the most important American infrastructural projects of the nineteenth century and fighting to protect the union during the Civil War. However, even after he'd done all of this, he continued to face prejudice from his white peers.


By 1870, Donehogawa was afraid of a widespread rebellion among the Native Americans, in retaliation for the massacre. He invited Red Cloud to visit the White House, and Red Cloud agreed. In Washington, D.C., Donehogawa bargained with Red Cloud. He tried to convince Red Cloud that his people would be given supplies as soon as they promised peace. In response, Red Cloud explained that the U.S. was hurting his people, depriving them of land and food.

Donehogawa was a Native American, but he was also loyal to the president, and this meant that his priority was preserving peace, not supplying Red Cloud with food (even though he tried to do both).


On June 9, Red Cloud met with President Grant. He explained that his people were being denied their trading rights—rights which had been given to them in the treaty of 1868. Grant knew that the treaty Congress had ratified was different from the one Red Cloud agreed to. The next day, Donehogawa read the terms of the new treaty to Red Cloud, who angrily insisted that he'd never agreed to anything of the kind. Donehogawa was able to persuade Grant to rewrite the treaty in Red Cloud's favor, giving his people the right to trade at Fort Laramie.

Grant is another anomaly in American history of the time—he was a powerful politician and veteran of the Civil War, but he also seems to have been at least somewhat concerned with the status of Native Americans. Grant went beyond what earlier American presidents had done by rewriting the treaty to reflect Red Cloud's terms and complaints.

Red Cloud returned to his home, where he began working closely with white administrators to set up additional trading posts and government agencies. Sitting Bull believed that the U.S. government had put "bad medicine over Red Cloud's eyes." But in fact, Red Cloud continued to be a shrewd leader who protected his people's interests.

In negotiating so closely with the U.S., Red Cloud faced a classic problem: his own people began to view him as a traitor. This was darkly ironic, since Red Cloud 1) had held out against negotiations for a long time, and 2) was working night and day to protect his people's interests.

Meanwhile, Donehogawa's power was waning. By 1871, he was out of Washington, meaning that he couldn't protect the Sioux territory from the onset of white settlers and miners. White settlers built new camps and forts near the Sioux, paving the way for "the troublesome years ahead."

Donehogawa couldn't protect the Sioux after leaving office, suggesting that he didn't even have useful contacts and connections in government. This further suggests that, as a Native American, he was never truly allowed to be part of Washington.

During his time in office, Donehogawa was instrumental in protecting Native American land from railway and mining agencies, but he made many enemies in Washington. In 1870, his enemies embarrassed him by delaying food shipments to Native American reservations. Donehogawa was forced to break regulations in order to ensure the shipments arrived on time. Then, his enemies accused him of taking the law into his own hands. Humiliated, Donehogawa resigned from office in 1871. He moved to New York City and spent the rest of his long life as a wealthy financier.

Donehogawa was, in short, pressured out of office because he was a successful Native American man who "dared" to look out for Native American interests. Even so, his success in life is, in some ways, an achievement for all Native Americans.

CHAPTER 9: COCHISE AND THE APACHE GUERILLAS

In the spring of 1871, white men made contact with the Apache chief Cochise, and invited him to Washington, D.C. In 1861 Cochise had been ambushed by American soldiers and forced to order his warriors to return cattle they'd stolen from a white rancher. However, he escaped the soldiers, and then executed white prisoners in an act of revenge.

Cochise was another typical chief of the post-Civil War era in America—he responded in kind to the aggression and violence of the U.S. army.

For the next ten years, the Apaches—led by Chief Cochise, as well as his father-in-law, Mangas Colorado—waged violent war against white men in the Southwest. They attacked wagon trains and mining towns. But as the decade dragged on, Mangas came to realize that his people could never defeat the U.S. military. He came to a military base, waving a truce flag. However, the soldiers took him captive, tortured him, and then murdered him and mutilated his body. The military report falsely stated that Mangas was shot while trying to escape.

Mangas's murder marked another low-point in the history of Native Americans relations with the U.S. Furthermore, it represented another insulting cover-up by the U.S. military, which tried to frame the murder as retaliation for attempted escape (not that murdering someone who is fleeing is particularly honorable in itself) rather than a brutal and sadistic execution.

After the end of the Civil War, the government made peace overtures to Cochise and the Apaches. Cochise refused to cooperate with a peace delegation. Apache fights continued to attack white settlers. In 1871, the government was more eager than ever to get in contact with Cochise.

Even though the U.S. government had the power to wage war against the Apaches, it wanted to get in touch with Cochise—in part because it believed Cochise could pacify his own people and convince them to be obedient.

Also in the spring of 1871, an Apache leader named Eskiminzin came to see Lieutenant Royal E. Whitman. He explained to Whitman that his Apaches had no home, since American soldiers were always shooting at them. He proposed a peace treaty. While Whitman claimed he had no authority to accept a treaty, he offered Eskiminzin's men jobs harvesting and cooking mescal. Eskiminzin accepted, and within a few months, hundreds of Apaches had joined the mescal farm.

Whitman is another complex character in Brown's book. He seems to have believed that he had a personal duty to help the Apaches by giving them jobs and a home. But it's also unclear if he had any real respect for the Apaches, or if he was only trying to ensure lasting peace in the Southwest.

In April 1871, Apaches raided a town near Tucson and killed several white men. In retaliation, a group of white residents formed a small army of fighters and burned an Apache village to the ground, killing and mutilating women and children.

The Apaches were locked in a bloody guerilla war with white settlers on their territory—without a doubt, there was blame on both sides, even if the white settlers had encroached on Apache territory.

Whitman was concerned that the massacre would reflect badly on him, and he launched an investigation to bring the white killers to justice. In the ensuing trial, the killers were acquitted. Whitman's crusade to punish the killers ended his career: he was court-martialed on trumped-up charges, and later resigned.

Whitman again seems to have felt it was his duty to be fair and impartial to the Apaches, despite the strong racial prejudice in his society at the time. Indeed, it was this same racial prejudice that ended Whitman's career—Whitman was drummed out of office because he "dared" to be fair to Apaches.

In June 1871, Commissioner Vincent Colyer met with Eskiminzin in order to persuade him to remain peaceful. Colyer was accompanied by General George Crook. Colyer promised that he would express Eskiminzin's need for food to the president. Colyer met with other chiefs, but never spoke to Cochise. He arranged for a courier to find Cochise, but the courier failed to find him. Meanwhile, General Crook sent scouts to find Cochise.

Colyer and Crook's priority was preserving peace in the Southwest (although, it's crucial to remember that "peace" by their definition meant slowly and systematically eliminating the Apache population). It's notable that the Native Americans' concern is, at this point, food rather than sovereignty.

After months, General Crook's agents tracked down Cochise. By this time, Cochise was an old man. Crook's agents offered to move to Apaches to a new reservation. Cochise angrily replied that he would never leave his ancestral land. On a later visit, Cochise negotiated with government representatives, who offered to move the Apaches to the Rio Grande, but Cochise refused. In the end, the government representatives said they were "won over" by Cochise's "courtesy and direct simplicity." They agreed to give the Apaches a reservation in the Chiricahua Mountains.

This is one of a couple passages in the book where Brown says frustratingly little about an exceptionally odd event. Why, exactly, did the representatives find Cochise so persuasive, where hundreds of previous representatives had taken a hard line against Native American negotiators? Brown doesn't say, but it's hard not to wonder. Perhaps the broadest answer is that, in the long term, the government knew it could afford to give up some additional land to the Apaches, since it was secure in its plans to expand westward.

While Cochise's agreement gave the Apaches good land, some of the Apaches continued to defy the U.S. military and attack white settlers. In the summer of 1873, Apaches killed an American lieutenant and then fled. For the next few months, General Crook tracked the Apache aggressors. Later on, two separate mercenaries presented Crook with a severed head supposedly belonging to the leader of the Apache uprising. Crook decided that at least one head must be the real one, and declared the uprising defeated.

Even after Cochise's negotiations, some Apaches continued to rise up against the military. This confirms that, by the 1870s, there were many Native Americans who refused to trust white men at all: they would rather die than cave in to treaties or compromises with U.S. representatives.

In 1874, Cochise became ill. Without a strong leader, the Apaches were mostly confined to their reservations, or else fled into Mexico. "A forced peace" had been imposed in Apache country.

Without a strong leader, the Apaches had nobody to negotiate on their behalf, meaning that their future was precarious at best.

CHAPTER 10: THE ORDEAL OF CAPTAIN JACK

The Native Americans of California were "as gentle as the climate in which they lived." But after the Gold Rush of 1848, white settlers poured into California, first weakening and then exterminating entire tribes of Native Americans.

This opening arguably smacks of condescension and infantilization—it portrays the Californian Native Americans as golden-hearted children, in contrast to the pernicious, demonic white settlers (who, in all fairness, were responsible for some genocidal crimes).

One notable exception to the gentleness of the California Native Americans was the Modoc tribe of Oregon. After white settlers failed to exterminate the Modoc, the tribe ambushed settlers. In the 1850s, however, the Modocs were led by a young chief named Kintpuash. Kintpuash began to push for peace between his tribe and white settlers in California. He made treaties with government representatives, but the treaties forced his people into a territory that belonged to another native tribe, the Klamaths. As a result, Kintpuash's people began to go hungry.

Kintpuash began his career by lobbying for peace with the U.S. government. Like so many of his predecessors, Kintpuash believed that politics could solve his people's problems by ensuring that they could coexist with whites. However, as time went on, this hypothesis was proven wrong: white settlers thrived while the Modocs starved.

By the 1870s, the Modocs were starving. Kintpuash led his people south in search of land, but troops ordered him to return. When he refused, soldiers tried to transfer the Modocs back to their territory by force. The soldiers tried to disarm Kintpuash and his men. When Kintpuash hesitated to drop his weapons, the soldiers became furious, and in the ensuing fight, eight Modocs had been killed or wounded.

Kintpuash began to militarize his people in response to the growing hunger crisis. Then, when soldiers tried to prevent him from leaving his territory (another genocidal act, since in practice it would have caused the Modoc tribe to starve to death), the soldiers murdered eight Modocs. Clearly, they wanted the Modocs to die no matter what.

Kintpuash led his remaining warriors away from the army in search of the California Lava Beds, the sacred Modoc sanctuary. Around the same time, another group of Modocs got in a fight with American soldiers, and in the gunfire several American soldiers and settlers died. Now, Kintpuash knew he'd be punished for his men's misbehavior.

Kintpuash struggled to control his own people, perhaps reflecting the Modocs' desperation: they tried anything to ensure that they'd have enough food to survive. As a result of the hunger crisis, then, war broke out.

In early 1873, Modocs at the Lava Beds spotted U.S. forces approaching. The majority of the Modocs voted to fight the soldiers to the death. In the fight, the American soldiers were forced to retreat. Soon after, government representatives arrived, calling for peace talks. The representatives, defended by General Edward R. S. Canby, claimed that the Modocs who'd killed American troops would receive amnesty in exchange for a promise of permanent peace. But over the next few days, the representatives withdrew their offer and demanded that Kintpuash give up his men so that they could be transferred to a reservation.

Notice, first, that the Modocs were democratic and voted on whether to fight U.S. troops or not. Second, notice that Canby behaved dishonestly and changed his offers from day to day. The contrast between the moral, democratic Modocs and the devious, authoritarian U.S. generals is striking, and it upends the propaganda of the time, which claimed that Native Americans were "savages."

By the middle of March, Kintpuash and his followers sighted Colonel Canby approaching the Lava Beds. Kintpuash's warriors, who'd been responsible for killing American soldiers, surrendered to Canby. However, while at the military camp, a white soldier revealed that Canby intended to arrest and try the warriors. Before being arrested, the warriors were able to escape Canby and alert Kintpuash that Canby had tried to trick him.

Canby tried to trick the Modocs, who up to this point had been models of honesty and forthrightness. Clearly, Canby didn't consider the Modocs to be true human beings, and therefore didn't waste politeness or honesty on them.

The government now offered Kintpuash a new deal: he could surrender to the American government, with a guarantee of protection. Kintpuash was "caught in a classic dilemma"—he could save his followers by surrendering, but in doing so he'd be giving up the men who'd killed the troops. Meanwhile, more American troops joined Canby's army.

Kintpuash was forced to choose between two different groups of loyal followers because the U.S. military was unwilling to negotiate further with him: they wanted to punish the Modoc warriors, no questions asked.

A few days later, Kintpuash sent the military a message. He said he wanted to be able to move his people back to their old territory in Oregon. When the military pointed out that Oregon was now a settlers' community, and one where the Modocs had shed white blood, Kintpuash made a second request—to be allowed to live with his people in the Lava Beds. The military representatives refused, so long as Kintpuash protected the men who'd killed U.S. soldiers.

The military representatives cruelly denied Kintpuash's innocent requests to live with his people in the Lava Beds, a small, strategically useless piece of land. They did so because they wanted to pressure Kintpuash to give up his warriors.

Among his own people, Kintpuash was suspected of being in league with the U.S. military. Some of the Modocs wanted to kill the peace commissioners as soon as possible. They threatened to kill Kintpuash unless he killed the negotiators. Reluctantly, Kintpuash agreed to kill Colonel Canby, unless Canby accepted his peace terms.

It's a mark of the disintegration of Modoc community that Kintpuash's men, previously loyal and honest, now threatened to murder Kintpuash. And this is exactly what the U.S. military wanted: Canby was trying to destroy the Modoc leadership, not just punish a few Modoc warriors.

On Good Friday, 1873, Kintpuash went out to speak with the peace commissioners. Canby made a long speech to Kintpuash about the need for peace. Kintpuash responded by demanding the right to stay in the Lava Beds. When Canby refused, Kintpuash became aggressive. He and his men drew their weapons and killed Canby and his men.

Up to this point, Kintpuash had seemed to be aiming for peace at all costs. But pressured by Canby and also by his own men, he finally resorted to violence, convinced that there was no other way.

In the aftermath of the shooting, war broke out between the Modocs and the U.S. The U.S. soldiers' superior firepower forced the Modocs to flee. Before long, the military had arrested most of the fleeing Modocs. Some of the same Modocs who'd pressured Kintpuash to kill Canby now turned on their chief and promised to track him down in exchange for amnesty. Kintpuash was caught a few weeks later. He surrendered and said, "I am ready to die."

In the end, the Modoc tribe collapsed. Where before it had been united and democratic, it now splintered into a set of rival factions. Kintpuash seems to have remained calm and collected even at the very end of his life: he accepted responsibility, knowing that his execution would allow the rest of his tribe to survive unpunished.

Kintpuash was convicted of murder. No defender was assigned to him, and no witnesses for the defense were summoned. Kintpuash was allowed to make a closing statement. In broken English, he said, "You white people conquered me not; my own men did." He was hanged a few days later. Decades later, however, the few dozen Modocs who were still alive were allowed to return to their Oregon reservation.

As with many of the other Native American characters in this book, Kintpuash was convicted of murder without a proper trial. This reiterates the point that Native Americans were not considered true citizens of the United States (and in some ways weren't really considered human beings), underscoring the inherent contradiction of Native Americans attempting to use legal, political means to push back against the U.S.

CHAPTER 11: THE WAR TO SAVE THE BUFFALO

In early 1869, General Sheridan ordered all Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, and Comanches to come to Fort Cobb and surrender. The Kiowas refused because they had confidence in the treaty they'd signed in 1867, which granted them hunting rights south of Arkansas—there could be no point in "living on the white man's handouts."

Sheridan's mission was to "tame" the powerful tribes of the Great Plains by forcing them to live on a small reservation near Fort Cobb.

Rather than risk a fight, Kiowa chiefs, including Chief Satanta and Chief Lone Wolf, went to Fort Cobb to negotiate with General George Armstrong Custer. Custer refused to shake the chiefs' hands. He impressed upon the chiefs that they must surrender at Fort Cobb or face destruction. Then, Custer ordered that the chiefs be placed under arrest immediately. The remaining Kiowas were "forced to give up their freedom" by coming to Fort Cobb.

From the beginning, Brown establishes that Custer looks down on Native Americans (as almost all U.S. generals of the era would have done). He doesn't seem to think of them as human beings, let alone as worthy of his respect or honor.

General Sheridan ordered that Satanta and Lone Wolf be released from prison, and Satanta assured Sheridan that his people would never break the peace with the U.S government, so U.S. troops moved the Kiowas and Comanches to a reservation. There, the tribes had to survive by farming rather than by hunting buffalo, as they'd always done. As a result, many men ran away from the reservation and returned to a life of hunting.

Notice that on the reservation, tribes that traditionally survived by hunting were forced to switch to a new, more traditionally European form of subsistence: agriculture. This reflects the process of cultural genocide occurring in America at the time, whereby tribes were made to give up their ways of life.

In 1870, a group of Kiowas, including Lone Wolf and Chief Kicking Bird, left the reservation and rode off to Fort Richardson, Texas. Kicking Bird led his soldiers in a successful attack on the U.S. soldiers, killing many, and then rode back to the reservation.

Like other successful guerrilla warriors Brown discusses, Kicking Bird was able to outmaneuver the U.S. army, despite his inferior manpower and firepower.

The Kiowas continued to plan ways of undermining white settlers. They advocated attacking settlers and burning white settlements in buffalo country. In May 1871, an army of Kiowas rode across the Red River into Texas. The army raided a passing train.

The Kiowas were some of the most brutal Native American warriors of the period: they responded in kind to the white settlers who used horrific terrorist tactics against Native Americans.

Shortly after the train raid, Satanta and other Kiowa chiefs met with government agents to discuss rations. The government agents brought up the train raid, and Satanta—who hadn't been involved in the raid at all—took responsibility for it. He demanded that the U.S government give the Kiowas more guns, or else risk further raids. The agents told Satanta that he should meet with General Sherman. Soon afterwards, a group of Kiowa chiefs, including Satanta, met with General Sherman. Sherman immediately had the group arrested for murder. Satanta was tried for murder in July of 1871, and the jury, made up of white ranchers, convicted him. Satanta was sentenced to be hanged; his peers, meanwhile, were imprisoned. However, the Texas governor gave Satanta a life sentence, rather than risk war with the Kiowas. Nevertheless, the Kiowas had lost their most important leadership.

General Sherman's tricks are typical of his long career dealing with Native Americans—indeed, he used a similar trick to arrest a group of chiefs in an earlier chapter. Because of this "dirty trick," Sherman was able to "behead" the Kiowa resistance: without Satanta, the Kiowas were left weak and vulnerable to the U.S. army.

By 1872, there was a schism within the Kiowa tribe between the followers of Lone Wolf and the followers of Kicking Bird. Lone Wolf—whose ideas were more popular among the Kiowas—argued that the Kiowas should continue hunting buffalo, instead of embracing agriculture. He expressed his ideas to a special government commissioner during a visit to Washington, D.C. During the visit, Lone Wolf received an ultimatum: the Kiowas must resettle at Fort Sill or else risk being shot. Lone Wolf agreed, on the condition that the government release the Kiowa chiefs, including Satanta, from prison.

Notice that as the book goes on, the U.S. military becomes increasingly more confident and aggressive in its demands: here, the military is powerful enough to give the Kiowas a clear ultimatum, rather than negotiating to avoid outright war. Because the book proceeds chronologically, this could reflect the fact that, as the 19th century went on, the U.S. military became more powerful and the Native American resistance for the most part got weaker.

By the fall of 1872, the Kiowas had begun relocating to Fort Sill. However, there were still many Comanches who refused to relocate, despite the government's ultimatum. Many of these people were murdered by U.S. soldiers. Furthermore, the government still hadn't released Satanta and his peers from prison—the commissioners claimed that they'd only be released after all Kiowas had completed the relocation process. Kicking Bird complained that the government had "deceived us." Recognizing that the Kiowas would go to war unless their chiefs were freed immediately, the governor of Texas released Satanta and his peers.

In effect, the U.S. military held Satanta hostage—which certainly was not what the Kiowas had envisioned when they agreed to comply with the military. Once again, the U.S. military acted "dishonorably," in part because its commanders didn't believe that Native Americans were worthy of their honor or respect.

Shortly after the release of Satanta, Lone Wolf's nephew was killed in a fight with a group of soldiers. Lone Wolf swore revenge on the people of Texas. In the spring of 1874, he and an army of Kiowa warriors rode out to recover his nephew's body. During the journey, Lone Wolf encountered huge fields of slaughtered buffalo. In the 1870s, it's now known, white settlers killed millions of buffalo. General Philip Sheridan once said, "Let [the settlers] kill … until the buffalo is exterminated, as it is the only way to bring lasting peace and allow civilization to advance."

In this short passage, Brown discusses one of the darkest chapters in Native American history: the slaughter of buffalo. White settlers killed literally millions of buffalo, often for no practical reason whatsoever. Brown strongly implies that the settlers were trying to weaken the Native American population by cutting off one of their most important food sources. In this way, the killing of buffalo was probably one of the most horrific cases of genocide in American history.

Furious with white settlers for their cruelty and destructiveness, Lone Wolf's army of Kiowa warriors began a series of raids on white buffalo hunters. The warriors' medicine man had told them that his magic would protect them against white settlers' bullets. But in raid after raid, the Kiowa soldiers were defeated by the settlers' superior firepower.

As the 20th century approached, there were a handful of Native American religious movements that claimed to give their followers immunity to weapons used by white settlers. The most notable of these was the Ghost Dance Movement, which Brown will discuss in the final two chapters.

By 1875, there were only a few hundred Kiowa warriors left under Lone Wolf's command. Lone Wolf had no choice but to surrender at Fort Sill. He and his fellow chiefs were sentenced to jail, and within a year he was dead. In less than a decade, the Kiowas had gone from one of the mightiest Native American tribes to a "broken" people.

Like so many other tribes of the era, the Kiowas fought a brave resistance to the U.S. army and lost, and thereafter became a weak, traumatized group.

CHAPTER 12: THE WAR FOR THE BLACK HILLS

In 1874, there were rumors of gold in the Black Hills in South Dakota. Previously, the U.S. government had considered this region to be worthless, and gave it to the Native Americans. But now, the government sent thousands of white settlers to the Black Hills in search of gold, even though treaties prohibited white men from entering the region.

In one of the more blatant violations of a treaty, the U.S. government encouraged white settlers to travel to the Black Hills, contradicting treaties that specifically marked these lands as Native American territory.

In 1874, General George Armstrong Custer led more than a thousand soldiers out to the Black Hills. This angered the Sioux chief Red Cloud, who saw Custer as encroaching on Native American land. At the time, Red Cloud was growing older, and he was frustrated by disrespectful settlers and the meager rations he received from the government.

We return to Red Cloud, one of the book's key characters, by this point, Red Cloud was an old man, but no less willing to resist the U.S. government's tyranny. Red Cloud won a series of key victories for his people, but as Brown has just shown, these victories didn't last very long.

In August of 1874, a group of Sioux warriors arrived at a white settlement in the Black Hills, where settlers had put up tall flags. The Sioux began to cut down the flags with axes. In response the settlers called in U.S. troops to attack the Sioux. The soldiers succeeded in chasing away the Sioux, but the Sioux warriors were eager for conflict. They began to gravitate away from Red Cloud, a more moderate leader, and toward the more bellicose Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

Ironically, Red Cloud's followers came to regard him as weak and ineffective, even though he probably accomplished more for them than almost any other Native American chief of the era. That Red Cloud's supporters gravitated toward more violent men speaks volumes about the panic and desperation of the era.

Tensions built between Crazy Horse's followers and the white settlers in the Black Hills. Meanwhile, Crazy Horse refused to sell land to the U.S. In September 1875, Sioux representatives met with commissioners to discuss the sale of Native American land. The government spokesmen at first tried to purchase the Black Hills, but then tried to negotiate for "mineral rights." The Sioux chiefs refused to negotiate—they knew that the government was trying to gain control of the gold mines for a fraction of their true value.

Unlike many Native American tribes of the era, Crazy Horse's Sioux followers wouldn't allow themselves to be intimidated by the U.S. forces. While the Sioux themselves had little use for the gold underneath their lands, they recognized that the U.S. wanted it and they used this fact to push back.

The Sioux's refusal to give up control of the gold mines in the Black Hills led to a series of events that would "destroy forever the freedom of the northern Plains Indians." In December 1875, the government ordered the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes to report to a reservation by January 1876, or else be moved by force. By February 1876, the government had deployed generals to remove Sioux and Cheyenne warriors who'd refused to go to reservations. This ultimatum was nothing short of a declaration of war against the Plains Indians.

The Sioux bravely resisted the U.S. government's attempts to pressure the tribe into giving up its lands. But the fact that the Sioux refused to budge, while impressive, contributed to the tribe's downfall. Unsatisfied with legal, political means of persuasion, the government turned to outright violence against the Sioux—always with the goal of annexing the Black Hills.

Crazy Horse saw that the government was using force to deprive Cheyenne and Sioux of their freedom. He told his followers that they were now at war with white Americans. In the spring of 1876, Crazy Horse led a raid on a small group of soldiers. He was a master tactician, and although his men were badly outnumbered, he was able to defeat a column of U.S. soldiers.

Again, Brown portrays Crazy Horse's use of violence as retaliatory, first and foremost. Put another way, Crazy Horse was responding in kind to the white soldiers on his land, answering violent bullying with his own guerilla style of violence.

In retaliation for Crazy Horse's attack on the column of U.S troops—later known as the Battle of Rosebud—General Custer led a large army to Little Bighorn, a large settlement area for the Plains Indians. Cheyenne warriors spotted the approaching troops and ordered women and children to leave immediately. At the same time, the Hunkpapa tribe prepared for battle.

The Battle of Little Bighorn is one of the most famous episodes in 19th century American history, and marked a rare, outright victory for the Native Americans. Notice that the Cheyennes tried to protect their women and children, knowing that the U.S. wouldn't spare them in the fighting.


The U.S. troops' first attack killed many women and children who hadn't yet fled the scene. In response, the Plains Indians attacked the U.S. military's flank and forced them to flee. Then, a group of Cheyenne warriors attacked General Custer's column head-on while Crazy Horse and his lieutenants led additional soldiers to attack Custer's forces from the rear. Many of Custer's forces surrendered immediately, but the Native forces took no prisoners. Within a few minutes of the attack, the vast majority of Custer's troops—and Custer himself—were dead. Victorious, the Native American troops pulled back and rode into the Bighorn Mountains.

It's interesting that Brown doesn't write about the Battle of the Little Bighorn at greater length. Part of his point, however, is that the battle, while important in Sioux and Cheyenne history, wasn't really as big as the newspapers of the time portrayed it as being. The battle was a propaganda coup for the American press: yellow journalists of the era exaggerated the scope of the violence in order to sell more papers, and the U.S. government used the battle as an excuse to escalate violence against the Native Americans.

The news of the Bighorn "massacre" incensed white America. In July, General Sherman was ordered to treat all Sioux tribesmen as prisoners of war. The government passed further laws forcing the Sioux to surrender their rights to the Black Hills. Finally, the government passed laws moving all Sioux to a new reservation in Missouri. Fearing annihilation, but still painfully aware that the government was stealing the Black Hills from his people, Red Cloud agreed to the new laws.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn gave the U.S. government a convenient excuse to escalate violence against all Native Americans, even those who'd been uninvolved in the battle itself.

Meanwhile, the American military massacred Plains Indians in retaliation for the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Sitting Bull led his remaining followers across the country to escape the U.S. military. Sitting Bull "wanted only to be left alone to hunt buffalo." Indeed, he sent messengers waving white flags to negotiate with the military. By 1877, Sitting Bull had decided to move his people into Canada. Meanwhile, the U.S. army continued to search for Crazy Horse. In January 1877, Crazy Horse, whose followers were starving, sent a group of chiefs to the Crows, a tribe of mercenaries working for the U.S. Even though the chiefs waved a white flag, the Crows shot them. Crazy Horse fled with his remaining followers. In April 1877, Crazy Horse surrendered to the United States. The "last great Sioux chief" was now a "reservation Indian."

In the aftermath of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, it would seem, the military increased its aggression against Native Americans, driving them out of their homes. (This is a good example of the military strategy / foreign policy that Naomi Klein termed the "Shock Doctrine.") It appears that the military was holding back prior to the Little Bighorn: now, it had carte blanche to use its full capabilities to wipe out the Native Americans. Soon enough, Crazy Horse—a living symbol of Native American resistance—was arrested and in effect imprisoned.

In September 1877, Crazy Horse was being escorted to the new Sioux reservation by U.S. soldiers. Suddenly, he turned and lunged at an American soldier. A few seconds later, the soldier stabbed Crazy Horse in the abdomen. Crazy Horse died a few hours later. He was buried near a little creek known as **Wounded Knee**.

Brown leaves it unclear how, exactly, Crazy Horse died. It's possible that the soldier was acting in self-defense, but it's also possible that the story was invented to justify the painful, sadistic manner of Crazy Horse's death. As a symbol of Native American resistance, Crazy Horse's death symbolized (and literally was) a crushing defeat for the Native American population, suggesting that the U.S. military would inevitably win.

CHAPTER 13: THE FLIGHT OF THE NEZ PERCÉS

In the year 1805, Lewis and Clark, the famed explorers, reached the Clearwater River in present-day Nevada. They were half-starved and weak with dysentery. Right then and there, the Nez Percé tribe could have wiped out Lewis and Clarks' expedition. Instead, the tribe offered food and shelter to the white explorers, beginning a long friendship between the tribe and white settlers. But in the end, "white greed" ruined the friendship forever.

This passage echoes the first chapter of the book, in which Brown discussed how Native Americans treated white explorers with kindness and hospitality prior to the late 19th century. It was white greed, understood in the sense of Manifest Destiny and white expansion westward, that soured relations between whites and Native Americans.

In the year 1855, the U.S. government offered the Nez Percé a new treaty. The treaty would move the tribe away from its ancestral home and onto a reservation. The tribal chiefs refused to sign any such treaty. In 1863, the government tried again: this time, the treaty would have deprived the Nez Percé of their lands and moved them to a reservation in Idaho. This time, the chiefs agreed to the treaty. However, one important chief, Old Joseph, refused to sign. After Old Joseph's death in 1871, his son, Young Joseph, became an important chief. He refused to cooperate with the government agents, claiming that his people would never surrender their lands.

Old Joseph and his son clearly felt a duty to protect their people's land rights. In this sense, they were different from certain other chiefs of the era, who willingly sold away their people's land in return for lavish gifts from the U.S. government.

By the mid-1870s, white settlers had found gold on Nez Percé land. In negotiations with the U.S. government, however, Nez Percé chiefs refused to surrender their lands. They argued that their people had always lived on the land, and that their bodies themselves were a part of the land. However, Young Joseph lacked the manpower to defend his people from the U.S. military. Troops marched his peoples off their land and into Idaho.

The Nez Percé tribe's notions of property and ownership are slightly different from the conceptions Brown has discussed previously. They see themselves as part *of the land, which makes the notion of leaving the land utterly absurd. While this way of thinking about land might seem unusual, it's no less "mythological" than the doctrine of Manifest Destiny that brought white settlers out to California in the 1870s.*

Young Joseph was trapped: he could either refuse to comply with the U.S. and face extermination, or he could comply and appear weak to his people. In the end, he decided to fight for his people. He led an attack on the U.S. military and won his first skirmish. In July 1877, Young Joseph's people rode to a large U.S. military encampment in Montana. The U.S. military refused to allow the tribe to pass without a fight. In early August, the military led an attack on Young Joseph. In the battle, Nez Percé women and children were murdered. Young Joseph was able to lead his people to safety, but he lost many followers.

Young Joseph's commitment to his people's lands was so strong that he was willing to risk his own life, as well as the lives of his people, to protect the land. At the same time, Brown also suggests that Young Joseph was primarily motivated by a desire to live up to his people's expectations (and, it's loosely implied, to cement his control over his own people, much like Little Crow in the earlier chapter).

The Nez Percé crossed through Yellowstone National Park, which at the time was the only official national park in the United States. General Sherman chased the Nez Percé through the Park, and sent the Crows north to ambush Young Joseph's troops. In September 1877, the Crows battled the Nez Percé, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Joseph was captured, but his followers managed to free him three days later.

Young Joseph's resistance to the white settlers proved so powerful that the U.S. military had to deploy General Sherman, regarded as one of the most dangerous and effective killers of Native Americans, as well as the Crows, who were Native American mercenaries.

Young Joseph and his remaining followers fled to Canada and united with Sitting Bull. In Canada, Young Joseph's people died of dysentery and other diseases. Joseph visited the White House and made eloquent speeches begging white America for compassion and mercy. Nevertheless, the white settlement of the Western United States continued. Young Joseph later agreed to live on a reservation with his people, and he died in 1904. The physician listed the cause of death as "a broken heart."

This short chapter ends with particular poignancy: Young Joseph, whom Brown has portrayed as a bold, heroic leader, seems to die because of shame and sadness. He's fought for his people and their rights, and he's lost. The increasing hopelessness of these later chapters foreshadows the events of the final, gruesome chapter, concerning the Wounded Knee Massacre.

CHAPTER 14: CHEYENNE EXODUS

In 1877, thousands of Cheyenne soldiers surrendered to the U.S. military. They were relocated to a reservation far from the Black Hills. On the long walk to their new reservation, dozens of children and elderly Cheyennes died. And after the Cheyennes had settled in their new home, diseases killed many more people. Food was scarce, and the government claimed it couldn't supply any more. Commissioners either claimed that there was no scarcity of resources for the Cheyenne reservation, or that there was only a very slight, temporary scarcity.

A few things to notice. First, the government arranged for the Cheyennes to move far away from the Black Hills, which the government had been after all along due to its lucrative gold mines. Second, the relocation process—both the long walk and life on the reservation itself—was genocidal in the sense that it resulted in the starvation of numerous Native Americans. Cruelly, commissioners wouldn't even admit there was a problem, much less try to solve it.

In August 1877, a group of Cheyennes, led by chief Little Wolf, decided to leave the reservation in search of food. U.S. soldiers tried to prevent any Cheyennes from leaving the reservation. Nevertheless, Little Wolf succeeded in moving off the reservation with many followers. By October, the group had reached Fort Robinson, near their old lands. There, U.S. soldiers gave them food and medicine. The Cheyennes asked the soldiers to notify the President of the United States that the Cheyennes "ask only to end their days here in the north where they were born."

Just a year after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the Cheyennes seemed weary and forlorn. They'd lived through a tremendous amount of violence and adversity, and so their requests are humble. They didn't want to defeat the U.S. government—they just wanted enough food to live and enough land to die in peace.

In response to Little Wolf's plea, the government mandated that the Cheyennes must be sent back to their reservation. When the Cheyennes refused to move again, the U.S. military arrested Little Wolf and expelled the remaining Cheyennes from Fort Robinson, killing women and children in the process.

As it had done in the past, the U.S. government refused to allow the Cheyennes to leave the reservation in search of food and comfort. While the government's motive for doing so may have been to enforce order and avoid setting a precedent, in practice the government's policy was murderous.

By the end of the year, Little Wolf had surrendered to the military. He was placed on the new reservation, along with his followers. There, he and many other Cheyennes became alcoholics. Within a few years, "the force was gone out of the Cheyennes."

Brown barely discusses alcoholism in this book, but it was an important, and tragic, theme of reservation life. Without the ability to hunt, Cheyennes turned to other things to occupy their time. Alcohol took away much of what dignity they had left.

CHAPTER 15: STANDING BEAR BECOMES A PERSON

In 1804, Lewis and Clark met a small, friendly native tribe called the Poncas. In 1858, the Poncas surrendered their lands in exchange for a guarantee of U.S. government protection and a permanent home near the Niobrara River. But in 1868, the government forced the Poncas off their lands and moved them to Sioux territory. Then, after Custer's defeat, the government mandated that Poncas—who had no connection to Custer's defeat—be relocated again.

The passage is a good, if disturbing, example of how the U.S. government used Custer's defeat as an excuse to escalate authoritarianism over all Native American tribes—including peaceful, friendly tribes like the Poncas.

In January 1877, the Poncas, led by chief White Eagle, learned that they were to be removed from their lands. White Eagle visited his people's future reservation, in Kansas. He was horrified—the land in Kansas was barren and dry, meaning that his people would surely want for food and other resources. The Ponca leaders were furious that the government was moving their people once again. But by June 1877, soldiers had moved most of the Poncas out to Kansas, their new home. In Kansas, many Poncas died of disease or starvation.

Like almost all Native American reservations of the era, the Ponca reservation in Kansas was barren, miserable, and generally unfit for living—a fact confirmed when Poncas began dying shortly after arriving there.

General Crook learned of the Poncas' relocation. Even though he'd participated in the relocation or murder of many Native Americans, he was moved by the Poncas' suffering, and attempted to halt the transfer order by notifying the press. In 1879, the Poncas went to a U.S. court, arguing that they were Americans, and therefore entitled to live wherever they wanted However, the state argued that the Poncas were "not persons within the meaning of the law," and therefore had to relocate according to government decree. In the end, the judge ruled that the Poncas had the inalienable right to choose a place to live. The Poncas had worked within the U.S. court system to win their freedom to live by the Niobrara River in Nebraska.

Crook, like Sherman, is a complex character. He's both an agent of genocide and living proof of the personal toll that a life of violence can take on a human being. Crook's cooperation with the Poncas marked one of the few times in Brown's book that Native Americans enjoyed some success by working within the legal and political systems of the United States of America.

Although the Poncas had won the freedom to live in Nebraska, many of the Poncas already living in Kansas were forbidden to leave their reservation. General Sherman was sent in to arrest any Poncas who tried to escape from Kansas; publicly, he claimed that the Poncas' legal victory only applied to Poncas not already living in Kansas.

The problem with the Poncas' victory was that it couldn't really be enforced. Even though the court system had granted the Poncas—all Poncas—the right to live where they wanted, General Sherman enforced his own lopsided interpretation of the ruling, splitting the Poncas into two halves.

In October, General Sherman arrested Big Snake, the brother of a Ponca chief. According to eyewitnesses, Big Snake refused to allow soldiers to handcuff him. He struggled with the soldiers, and one of them shot him in the head, killing him instantly. The message to the Poncas was clear enough: "the white man's law was an illusion." From then on, the Poncas were split into two halves, one half in Nebraska, one in Kansas.

Big Snake's death echoes the death of Crazy Horse (and, as with Crazy Horse's death, Brown leaves it unclear if the killing was really provoked or if it was cold-blooded murder). The chapter arrives at the tragic conclusion that legal means of resistance could only accomplish so much for the Native Americans: while the law could provide the Poncas with some protection, the Poncas were still at the mercy of the military's superior might.

CHAPTER 16: "THE UTES MUST GO!"

The Utes lived in the Rocky Mountains. In 1865, they signed a treaty surrendering mineral rights to their lands in return for a large amount of land. But only five years later, the U.S. government reneged on its promise and began forcing the Utes off of their land. The Utes renegotiated their treaty with the U.S., and wound up with less land than they'd originally been promised—although still much more than the government wanted to give them.

Brown doesn't delve into the details of how, precisely, the government backed out of its treaty, or why it suddenly began forcing the Utes off their land. Perhaps this is because, by this point in the book, readers will understand the basic "pattern" of U.S.-Native American interactions.

Even after the signing of the new treaty, white settlers infringed on Utes' land rights. In 1873, the Utes negotiated a third treaty with the government, in which they gave up their rights to the mountains on their lands. The Utes' representative, Ouray, agreed to give up his people's land in part because the government offered to make him a rich man. In this way, Ouray became "a part of the establishment."

In short, Ouray accepted a hefty bribe in return for selling out his people. The government used similar bribe tactics throughout the 19th century. (And, for that matter, many colonial powers of the era used bribery to acquire land and resources in their colonies).

In 1878, the government appointed a new agent to attend to the Utes, Nathan C. Meeker. Meeker made it his mission "to destroy everything the Utes cherished." He instituted schools designed to teach Ute adults to do agricultural work, effectively remaking the Ute civilization "in the white man's image." Within a few years, the Utes' society was almost entirely agricultural, where before the Utes had been hunter-gatherers. Meeker believed that Utes lacked the mental capacity to appreciate material goods, and his ideas were cited in a long article arguing that the Utes were "actual, practical Communists."

Meeker's policies for the Utes are a particularly disturbing example of cultural genocide, the systematic extermination of an ethnic group's culture. Instead of wiping out the Utes with guns, Meeker created policies designed to force the Utes' children to lose touch with their heritage. Meeker's smear campaign alludes to the xenophobia and "Red Scare" of the 19th century: at the time, ideologies imported from Eastern Europe were gaining power in the U.S., and were often demonized in the press. By associating the Native Americans with Communism (an absurd comparison), Meeker tried to turn the public against the Utes.

Partly because of Meeker's writings, there was a widespread smear campaign in American newspapers against the Utes. They were blamed for crimes they had nothing to do with. On more than one occasion, Meeker ordered that the Utes' land be plowed and used as farmland. This angered the Utes, who used much of their land for pasturing (i.e., keeping horses).

Meeker's plowing policies further interfered with the structure of Ute society, and could be interpreted as a form of cultural genocide. His smear campaign ensured that few white Americans would try to help the Utes.

Recognizing that the Utes had grown to hate him, Meeker sent U.S. soldiers to the Utes' land to enforce order. The soldiers claimed they'd heard rumors that the Utes had burned down a white settler's cabin, but no evidence for this was ever found. When soldiers confronted them, the Utes insisted they didn't want to fight.

The Utes didn't want to fight with Meeker: their real goal was to live peacefully and happily (a goal which Meeker was attempting to make impossible).

Several days after the arrival of soldiers on the Utes' land, a group of Utes surrounded Nathan C. Meeker's property. They raided his house, and murdered him. Ouray sent a message urging the Utes to surrender, rather than risk an all-out war. The Utes did so, and they were tried and convicted of murder. However, since there were no eyewitnesses who could identify the specific people who'd killed Meeker, the group of Utes was punished fairly mildly, with jail time.

The Utes didn't want to fight Meeker, but they felt they had no other choice. Considering that Meeker had made statements and embraced policies specifically designed to wipe out the Utes and their culture, it could certainly be argued that killing Meeker was an act of justifiable self-defense.

In the aftermath of Meeker's murder, the Utes—not just the few who'd been involved in the crime—were deprived of their land. They were relocated to Utah, and soon after, the state of Colorado was all but "swept clean of Indians." All that remains of Native Americans in Colorado is their names "on the white man's land."

Frustratingly, Brown doesn't elaborate on why, exactly, the Utes were punished so mildly. (Note: readers interested in Brown's comments on American place-names are encouraged to read George Stewart's Names on the Land, *a fascinating history of the subject.)*

CHAPTER 17: THE LAST OF THE APACHE CHIEFS

In 1874, a man named Taza became the chief of the Chiricahua tribe. Taza wasn't a particularly good leader, and the Chiricahua split into many factions. Around this time, the U.S. government, recognizing the new weakness of the Chiricahuas, decided to move the tribe to a new reservation. Not all went peacefully. One man, a member of the Apache tribe who'd come to consider himself a Chiricahua, refused to submit to the U.S.'s authority. His name was Geronimo.

Brown returns to the Southwest, a region he'd discussed in the earlier chapters of the book. Geronimo is a famous American, often remembered as a violent, murderous man who killed innocent white settlers. As Brown will show, the truth is far more complicated.

In 1877, John Clum, the government agent for the Chiricahua tribe, received orders to capture Geronimo for refusing to move onto the new reservation. He summoned Geronimo to speak, and Geronimo, assuming he'd been summoned for a peaceful conference, came willingly, along with his ally, Victorio. The two men were captured and transferred to their new reservation on San Carlos.

Brown doesn't give much background information about Geronimo, partly because little is known about Geronimo's early life. Notice that Clum, like Sherman in the earlier chapter, betrayed the two Native Americans by capturing them after claiming to want to discuss peace.

Conditions on San Carlos were miserable—there were too many people packed into too little space. In September, Victorio led a group of followers off the reservation. They migrated into New Mexico, where they begged to be allowed to stay. The government granted Victorio's request, but in 1879, Victorio was arrested on charges of horse stealing and murder. This time, Victorio escaped. He vowed that he'd never submit to a white man again.

Victorio is a good example of a Native American leader who became more radical over the course of his interactions with white men. Victorio tried to use peaceful means to deal with the U.S., but decided that peaceful means simply weren't enough.

Victorio began recruiting an army to fight white settlers in the Southwest. He became increasingly ruthless, torturing anyone he captured. Even his own followers thought of him as a madman. In 1880, Mexican soldiers killed Victorio, and collected the three thousand-dollar bounty on his head.

Victorio's use of torture certainly isn't praiseworthy, but perhaps at the very least it's understandable: Victorio was reacting to the deviousness and violence of the U.S. presence on his territory.

In 1882, a small army of Chiricahuas, including Geronimo, attacked a column of U.S troops. The attack was a failure, but Geronimo and his followers escaped with their lives. They began to use guerilla tactics against the larger, better-equipped American army.

Like most of the successful Native American resistors in the 19th century, Geronimo and his peers used guerilla tactics to fight the U.S. military, rather than pursuing direct, all-out battles.

In order to ensure order in the Southwest, the government sent General Crook to control the Chiricahua and Apache reservations. Crook, a gentler man than he'd been when he hunted down Cochise ten years ago, took care of the Native Americans under his control, providing them with good rations. But Crook knew that Geronimo's forces would come back to fight him.

Brown suggests that years of violence and cruelty took a psychological toll on Crook himself. Indeed, Crook spent the final years of his life speaking out against unjust treatment of Native Americans by the U.S. military, which made him enormously unpopular among his former colleagues.

General Crook led his army into Mexico in search of Geronimo and his men. He and Geronimo met to negotiate peace. During the meeting, Geronimo claimed that he'd become a guerilla fighter because white Americans had treated him so badly. Crook acknowledged that this was probably true. He convinced Geronimo to round up the last of his people and bring them to the reservation. In 1884—much to Crook's surprise—Geronimo honored his agreement and brought his people back from Mexico and into the United States. For the next year, there were no reported crimes between whites and Native Americans. Nevertheless, rumors circulated that Geronimo was a bloody, sadistic killer.

Geronimo's statement about becoming a guerilla fighter sums up Brown's central point about the Native American resistance to U.S. expansion: the Native Americans didn't for the most part want a fight, but they resorted to violence when all other means of protecting themselves had run out. Geronimo's sadism and cruelty, while horrifying, weren't entirely irrational: rather, they reflected Native Americans' rational desire to defend themselves.

On the new Chiricahua reservation, life was dull, and many chiefs turned to alcohol for comfort. Suddenly, on May 17, Geronimo led a group out of the reservation and back into Mexico. Afterwards, American newspapers began to portray Geronimo as a terrifying killer. This caused such an uproar that many in the area insisted that General Crook personally hunt down Geronimo and arrest him. In April 1886, however, Crook resigned.

Geronimo (much like the Battle of the Little Bighorn) wasn't nearly as horrible as he's often remembered being. The "yellow journalism" of the era exaggerated many of his deeds in order to sell more newspapers—and in doing so further justified the violence of the U.S. army (violence of which Crook no longer approved).

The manhunt for Geronimo continued. The new general in the Southwest, General Nelson Miles, made it known that if Geronimo surrendered to him, he'd send Geronimo to a new reservation in Florida. Geronimo decided to surrender to Miles. He was shipped to Florida, where he found many of his people starving or dying on their new reservation. At the end of his life, Geronimo returned to the Southwest, still a prisoner of war. He died in 1900, "the last of the Apache chiefs."

Geronimo's capture marked the "last gasp" of violent resistance to the U.S. military in the Southwest. Again and again, Native Americans turned to violent, often cruel chiefs because they felt that they had no other means of protecting themselves from U.S. expansion, which was often explicitly racist and genocidal.

CHAPTER 18: DANCE OF THE GHOSTS

In 1877, the Teton Sioux tribes surrendered to the U.S. army and lost their rights to the Powder River territory and the Black Hills. The Sioux were moved to a large reservation "believed to be virtually worthless by the surveyors." Around the same time, a great wave of north European immigrants was moving across the country. This created a demand for more land in the Midwest, and gave the government an incentive to force the Sioux off their land.

White settlers' migration westward gave the U.S. government a further need to expel Native Americans from the American Midwest, very similar to the economic incentives Brown has discussed in earlier chapters.

In the late 1870s, Sitting Bull was still free in Canada. This was dangerous for the government, since Sitting Bull was a living, breathing symbol of Native resistance to the U.S. Sitting Bull met with American representatives in October 1877 at Fort Walsh and refused to comply with any American demands.

In this chapter, Brown discusses a new form of resistance to the U.S.—symbolic resistance. Sitting Bull's very existence could be considered an act of resistance to the U.S., because of all that he symbolized. While Sitting Bull's symbolic resistance couldn't stop white expansion westward, it was clearly a thorn in the U.S. government's side.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government refused to give aid of any kind to Sitting Bull's followers, many of whom were starving. Finally, in 1881, Sitting Bull and his followers crossed back into the U.S. and rode to Fort Buford, desperate for rations. Sitting Bull was arrested almost immediately.

Even Sitting Bull, perhaps the most famous and successful Native American resistors of U.S. expansion, was forced to give up. The U.S. military was just too powerful.

At the time that Sitting Bull returned to the U.S., the Sioux were in danger of losing much of their territory to the U.S. government. Agents and land speculators were able to use their access to food and other resources to pressure dozens of Sioux chiefs into signing contracts surrendering their territory to white settlers. Fortunately, the agents and speculators failed to pass a Senate bill depriving the Sioux of their lands—the Sioux had a fair number of supporters and allies in Washington.

Again, Brown doesn't offer a lot of information about how, precisely, government agents used their access to food and resources to pressure the Native Americans, but it's easy enough to imagine. The passage emphasizes that access to food was one of the most important negotiating tools the U.S. had during its interactions with the Sioux (explaining why white settlers slaughtered buffalo for no practical purpose: they were trying to weaken the Native Americans).

In 1882, Sitting Bull was released from jail and brought before government commissioners to testify on the state of life on the Sioux reservation. During the hearing, Sitting Bull accused the commissioners of being drunk and disrespectful. He'd long ago decided to distrust all white men. The following day, Sitting Bull spoke at length before the commission. He talked about the long history of white settlers dishonoring the Sioux.

Sitting Bull's speech marked a notorious act of symbolic resistance to the United States of America. His speech didn't accomplish anything concrete, but it stands as an important and moving expression of opposition: through Sitting Bull, Native Americans were given a voice before the government.

In the following months, Sitting Bull began a long speaking tour, during which he traveled across the country, denouncing the treachery of white America. The Indian Bureau was at first highly skeptical of such a tour. But the bureaucrats allowed Sitting Bull to travel, since it was better that he tour the country than remain among his own people and foment a rebellion. In 1885, Sitting Bull joined Buffalo Bill's famous Wild West Show.

The twilight of Sitting Bull's career was full of bizarre changes: for a time, he appeared in Buffalo Bill's show. While this may seem like an ignominious act for a respected chief, Sitting Bull tried to use his national platform to voice opposition to the U.S. government's policy of expansion. (Readers are encouraged to watch Robert Altman's brilliant satirical film from the 1970s, Buffalo Bill and the Indians, *about Bill and Sitting Bull's Wild West Show.)*

In 1888, Congress prepared to pass a bill that would deprive the Sioux of their territory in the Midwest. Politicians convinced General Crook to persuade the Sioux to comply with Washington, on the ground that complying was the only way to ensure peace. In the end, many Native American tribes agreed to the new treaty, following Crook's advice.

After decades of experiencing horrific violence, Native Americans gave in rather than risk another war. In effect, they were pressured and extorted into giving up their lands.

By the middle of July, the agreement had been signed by many tribes, but not the Sioux or the Hunkpapas. If the two tribes refused to sign the new treaty, then it would be void, and the Senate wouldn't be able to pass its bill. Sitting Bull was able to mobilize his people and convince them to turn down the new treaty. However, the government commissioners held a second meeting with the Sioux chiefs, and didn't invite Sitting Bull. During this meeting, the chiefs agreed to sign, even after Sitting Bull burst into the meeting. Furious, Sitting Bull shouted, "There are no Indians left but me!"

Sitting Bull's famous words are often interpreted to mean that he and he alone was still opposed to the U.S. government. By refusing to sign the treaty, Sitting Bull refused to play along with the government's charade of neutrality and fairness: Sitting Bull knew the treaty was unfair, and he wasn't afraid to say it. However, Sitting Bull's peers' decision to sign the treaty is at least understandable, since they were trying to avoid another war with the U.S. military.

In the early 1890s, news of the mysterious Paiute Messiah spread across the country. The Messiah practiced a new religion called Ghost Dance, and he wanted to spread his religion across the country. He claimed that he'd spoken directly to Jesus Christ, who appeared to him as a Native American. Sitting Bull was skeptical of the Ghost Dance movement, but he allowed his Sioux followers to practice the religion.

The Ghost Dance movement marked a sudden turn in the history of Native American resistance. Instead of fighting for concrete ends, such as land or food, many Native Americans of the period embraced Ghost Dance as a kind of moral and spiritual resistance to the U.S., seeking refuge within their own souls.

Followers of the Ghost Dance movement believed that their religion made them impervious to bullets. But for the most part, its tenets "were the same as those of any Christian church." The religion emphasized love, respect, and peace. By the end of 1890, Ghost Dance had become ubiquitous among the Sioux. In Washington, D.C., the religion was interpreted as a challenge to the U.S.'s authority, partly because Sitting Bull was known to support it. The government sent troops to arrest Sitting Bull. Ghost Dancers tried to protect Sitting Bull from arrest. In the fighting, Sitting Bull was shot in the head and killed.

It's a mark of the U.S. government's tyranny that it considered Ghost Dance—a nonviolent, effectively Christian movement—an affront to U.S. authority. The U.S. had won control over the vast majority of Native American land: it had gotten everything it wanted. But it couldn't stand Native Americans asserting their pride and dignity so publicly. Thus, they banned Ghost Dance and—supposedly in the confusion of the arrest—killed Sitting Bull. As in the earlier chapters of this book, it's possible that Sitting Bull's killing was premeditated, rather than provoked in the moment.

CHAPTER 19: WOUNDED KNEE

Immediately following the death of Sitting Bull, the Sioux people were tempted to rise up and attack the U.S. troops who'd been sent to arrest him. However, the Ghost Dance religion taught peace and mercy, and so the Sioux allowed the troops to leave unharmed.

The Ghost Dance movement's followers were remarkably peaceful and tolerant, which is why they allowed Sitting Bull's killers to leave in peace.

A Sioux leader named Big Foot began to lead Sitting Bull's remaining followers. The government issued a warrant for Big Foot's arrest. However, Big Foot contracted pneumonia, and came close to dying. He surrendered to U.S. soldiers, who took Big Foot and his men to **Wounded Knee Creek**.

The Sioux tribe was utterly beaten: even Sitting Bull's successor died before he could organize his people. The tribe was helpless and at the mercy of the U.S.

At **Wounded Knee**, Big Foot's men were carefully counted and guarded. Late at night, reinforcements arrived to transport Big Foot's band to a military prison in Omaha. The next morning, the troops examined the Native Americans for any concealed weapons. Then, they noticed a man named Black Coyote, who was deaf, waving a rifle. Black Coyote, according to eyewitnesses, was waving the rifle to complain about paying too much money for it. However, the troops interpreted his behavior as an act of aggression. They grabbed the rifle from him, and it went off. This triggered the other U.S. troops to fire their weapons, murdering hundreds of defenseless Native American men, women, and children.

Black Coyote's rifle waving supposedly set off the killing of hundreds of children. But this seems almost impossible—did the troops really panic and "accidentally" kill every last Native American at Wounded Knee Creek? It seems more likely that the U.S. troops, filled with hatred for Native Americans after years of fighting them and reading biased newspaper stories about them, were eager for a chance to spill Native American blood. The massacre is a microcosm for the history of Native American-U.S. relations in the 19th century: the military interpreted a vaguely "violent" act as an act of aggression against the U.S., and used the act as an excuse to brutalize the Native American population.


Days later, soldiers dragged away the bodies of the three hundred murdered Native Americans of **Wounded Knee**. The soldiers threw the bodies in open wagons and carted them across the state into a church. By the time they arrived, it was four days after Christmas, in the year 1890. On the pulpit of the church was written a message: "PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN."

Brown brings his book to a scathing, bitter ending. The bleakly ironic contrast between the pile of massacred bodies and the blandly optimistic message on the church pulpit perfectly encapsulates the contradictions of the era. At the time, the United States was under the spell of the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny—the belief that "true Americans" (i.e., whites) had a near-religious duty to colonize the wilderness. But this idealism was just a smokescreen for the horrific truth: the colonization of the west in the 19th was nothing short of genocide.

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