



SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Rogue River Wars

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Sovereignty**
- **Treaties with the United States**
- **History**
- **Lifeways**
- **Genocide, federal policy, and laws**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will understand the causes of the Rogue River Wars and its impact on Native communities.
- Students will interpret multiple primary source documents to build an understanding of the Battle of Hungry Hill.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were the causes of the Rogue River Wars?
- What were the impacts of the Rogue River Wars on Native communities?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom
- How are the students organized?
 - Whole class
 - Teams: 2 – 4
 - Pairs
 - Individually

TIME REQUIRED

2 to 3 hours of classroom time

Overview

This lesson builds on the “Siletz History: Table Rock Treaty” lesson and provides a broad overview of the events leading up to the Rogue River Wars through the end of the fighting in 1856. This lesson includes three activities. First, students learn about the causes of the Rogue River Wars and the impact the fighting had on Indigenous communities, by means of an instructor presentation. Next, students have the opportunity to co-construct a timeline of important events. Third, students examine firsthand accounts and contemporary newspaper articles about the Battle of Hungry Hill—an important Native victory during the war.

These activities cover complex issues that have rarely been taught from a Native perspective and that some students may find challenging. To support student learning, teachers should be well-versed in the lesson plan and the historical documents and should have read chapter 6 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (Wilkinson, 2010), which provides the necessary background for this lesson.



Background for teachers

The Rogue River Wars is the name given to a series of conflicts between volunteer settler militias, backed by federal troops, and Indigenous people that took place from spring 1851 until July 1856. Historians often use the term Rogue River War (singular) to refer to the final, most violent period of the fighting, which took place between October 1855 and July 1856. Together, the Rogue River Wars were one of the most violent and destructive of all the “Indian Wars” fought by the U.S. government. Starting in the Rogue River Valley and then emanating across Southwest Oregon, the Rogue River Wars represent the largest conflict between Native people and federal troops in the Pacific Northwest and resulted in the highest number of casualties.

The Rogue River Wars were caused by the encroachment of settlers and miners on the ancestral territory of several Tribes from Southwest Oregon and Northern California, including the Shasta, Takelma, and Athapaskan-speaking peoples. Driven by the discovery of gold in the early 1850s, miners and settlers grew increasingly hostile toward Native rights to land and came to advocate for the outright extermination of Indigenous people. While government officials and the regular U.S. Army sought to maintain order by enforcing agreements such as the Table Rock Treaty of 1853, volunteer militias organized

STANDARDS

Oregon social sciences standards¹

Civics and Government - 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 8.10

Multicultural Studies - 8.5, 8.9, 8.14, 8.24, 8.28

Geography - 8.19, 8.20

History - 8.22, 8.23, 8.24, 8.28

Historical Thinking - 8.29, 8.30, 8.31

Social Science Analysis - 8.32, 8.33

MATERIALS

- Slides (PowerPoint slide deck)
- Classroom audiovisual technology and internet access to display PowerPoint slides, video, and websites (see following items)
- Map of Rogue River Battles Timeline
- Battle of Hungry Hill: Primary Source Packet (Student)
- Battle of Hungry Hill: Primary Source Packet (Teacher Copy)
- Dialogue Activity Rubric

¹ Oregon is in the process of revising its social sciences standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for high school.

by miners and settlers repeatedly violated the terms of these agreements and instead provoked hostilities through a series of massacres against Native villages as well as numerous attacks on individual Native men, women, and children. Between fall 1855 and spring 1856, scattered confrontations escalated into a series of pitched battles between Tribes from across Southwest Oregon and a combined force of the U.S. Army and volunteer militia.

One of the most significant battles of the Rogue River Wars was the Battle of Hungry Hill, also known as the Battle of Grave Creek Hills. This major battle took place between October 31 and November 1, 1855, in the mountains between Cow Creek and Grave Creek, about three weeks into the final, most violent phase of the Rogue River Wars. Coming just after the Lupton Massacre of peaceful Native people by a settler militia and the retaliatory raids on settler homes and camps that followed, the Battle of Hungry Hill represents one of the biggest victories by Native people fighting against the U.S. military in the Pacific Northwest. A recent paper by a researcher from Southern Oregon University summarized the battle this way:

The Battle of Grave Creek Hills of October 31 and November 1, 1855, also remembered as the Battle of Hungry Hill, was a humiliating defeat for a fragile coalition of U.S. Army dragoons and several companies of citizen volunteers (the

VOCABULARY

Appropriations – Funds (or money) budgeted for a specific purpose.

Extermination or genocide – According to the United Nations, “acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.”²

Forced removal – A government policy that calls for the deliberate removal of Indigenous people from a specific territory.

Harum scarum – Reckless, rash, irresponsible, disorganized, or uncontrolled behavior.

Howitzer – A cannon having a comparatively short barrel; used especially for firing shells at a high angle of elevation to reach targets behind cover or in a trench.

Massacre – The slaughter of a group of people, often including non-combatants. To kill many people deliberately and violently.

Musketoons – A short-barreled version of the musket.

Regular(s) – A member of the U.S. military.

Volunteer(s) – A member of a militia—or fighting group—that is organized at the state or local level and is not part of regular army command.

² United Nations, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. (n.d.) Genocide. [webpage]. <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>



“exterminators” led by southern Oregon volunteer officer John E. Ross) ... What was planned as a coordinated and concerted strike against an outnumbered and technologically inferior opponent ended as a rout: the American forces suffered some fourteen dead and twenty-seven wounded and left the Takelma, in the words of Lt. George Crook of the U.S. Army, as “monarchs of the woods.” The battle helped mark the opening of the Rogue River War of 1855–1856. The U.S. Army and citizen volunteers intended that it would quickly end a rebellion by leaders of the Takelma, Shasta, and Athapaskan people against Euro-American colonialism. Instead, the war would continue over the winter, until the confederated Native American forces were finally defeated on the lower Rogue River the following May.³

Although the battle was an important event in one of the largest wars fought between the United States and Indigenous peoples, the event has largely disappeared from popular memory. Siletz people today continue to remember the bravery of their ancestors, but for many Native people the victory is colored by the loss, pain, and suffering of what was yet to come. The ensuing months of total war and the final surrender of Native combatants would lead to the most difficult chapter in Tribal history, removal from ancestral homelands, a topic covered in subsequent lessons.

³ Tveskov, M. (2017). A ‘most disastrous’ affair: The Battle of Hungry Hill, historical memory, and the Rogue River War. *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 118(1), 43–44.

ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



This lesson is structure around independent and group analysis as well as small group and whole class discussions. Much of the lesson can be adapted for distance or independent learning purposes. A suggested sequence follows. Be sure all students have either print or electronic access to the materials described.

Activity 1: Background building

1. Using a web conferencing or online meeting platform, PowerPoint slides 2–11, and the “Map of Rogue River Battles Timeline,” provide a virtual lecture on the Rogue River Wars.
2. Read out loud all key talking points and ask students to write down questions as they follow along with the presentation.
3. At the end of the presentation, ask students to share their clarifying questions and be prepared to review slide deck content.

Activity 2: Timeline activity

1. Using a web conferencing or online meeting platform, PowerPoint slides 12–14, and talking points in “Activity 2: Timeline activity,” have students update the timeline they have been developing (independently) throughout the lessons in this unit and facilitate students’ discussion and reflection to think deeply about the following key questions: *What do you think were the main causes of the Rogue River Wars? Could we group those causes into general themes? Why do you think settlers behaved the way they did? What ways of thinking about Native people and Native cultures enabled settlers to behave the way they did?*

(Continued on next page)

Additional background materials

- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians website: www.ctsi.nsn.us/
- Schwartz, E. A. (1997). *The Rogue River Indian War and its aftermath, 1850–1980*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Tveskov, M. (2017). A ‘most disastrous’ affair: The Battle of Hungry Hill, historical memory, and the Rogue River War. *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 118(1), 43–44.
- Tveskov, M. (2017, February 12). *Unearthing the past: Archaeology of the Rogue River Indian Wars, 1853–1856* [YouTube video]. Jackson County Library Services and Southern Oregon Historical Society (Windows in Time Series). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayHZUDmFowg> [Note: the end of the video talks specifically about Hungry Hill.]
- Whaley, G. (2010). *Oregon and the collapse of Illahee: U.S. empire and the transformation of an Indigenous world, 1792–1859*. University of North Carolina Press.

Key ideas

- The Rogue River Wars were caused by the greed of settlers and miners driven by the gold rush of the 1840s and 1850s.
- While Native people negotiated the Table Rock Treaty of 1853 in good faith and attempted to abide by its provisions, many settlers and

ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



(Continued)

2. Share slide 15 and facilitate a whole class discussion about a possible different ending to the historical events on the timeline. *What actions or events would need to be different for this alternative ending to be possible? For example, what political or economic ideas would have to change for settlers to accept the rights of Native people to their land?*

Activity 3: The Battle of Hungry Hill

1. Using a web conferencing or online meeting platform, PowerPoint slides 16–18, key talking points in “Activity 3: The Battle of Hungry Hill,” and the student handout “Battle of Hungry Hill: Source Packet,” provide students with a summary of the Battle of Hungry Hill. Explain to students the difference between primary and secondary sources, then walk students through the structure of the source packet.
2. Next, model for students how to complete the “Battle of Hungry Hill: Source Packet.” Follow steps 8–11.
3. Ask students to independently read sources and complete the source packet as an out-of-class assignment (homework).
4. Using a web conferencing or online meeting platform, facilitate a debrief discussion and allow students to share their responses and ask questions.
5. Optional: Ask students to write a short dialogue between two of the sources. Provide students with a copy of the “Dialogue Activity Rubric” and review expectations for this task.

miners had no intention of honoring the terms of the agreement and almost immediately violated it.

- The Tribes in Southwest Oregon and Northern California were forced into the conflict by the threat of total extermination from militias that the U.S. government and military were unwilling to control.
- Settlers—and many newspapers of the day—conducted a purposeful campaign of misinformation about Native peoples to sway public opinion toward genocide.
- The Battle of Hungry Hill represents one of the biggest victories by Native people fighting against the U.S. military in the Pacific Northwest.

What teachers should do or review prior to delivering the lesson

- Read chapter 6 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (appendix)
- Review all previous lessons and materials in this module
- Review the teacher copy of “Battle of Hungry Hill: Primary Source Packet”
- Ensure students have access to all materials (printed and/or electronic) needed to participate in this lesson
- Prepare classroom audiovisual technology to display PowerPoint slides and any other audiovisual materials to be reviewed with students in class
- Write the lesson objectives and key vocabulary on a classroom writing surface

References

- Schwartz, E. A. (1997). *The Rogue River Indian War and its aftermath, 1850-1980*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively. The *formative assessment* will involve teacher observation of student participation in both small group and whole class discussions. The teacher should actively monitor the student discussion for correct understanding and should intervene if students express misconceptions or bias.

Summative assessment will include teacher review of “Battle of Hungry Hill: Primary Source Packet” in which students must summarize key ideas from a primary source text, in their own words. The teacher should also assess a student’s ability to use textual evidence to support their response.

Optional summative assessment: Student will write a short dialogue between two of the sources. Teachers should use the “Dialogue Activity Rubric” to complete a summative assessment of student understanding.

Practices

Timeline activity

The teacher must be prepared to lead a timeline activity that engages students in analysis of historical events and deepens their thinking. Use this protocol to help students go beyond simple labeling of dates and events:

1. Compare the timeline with another from history.
2. Identify problems and causes of conflict.
3. Imagine a new ending.
4. Categorize events.

Tagging events on a timeline can help students make sense of them. A deeper explanation of why they are categorized in each way encourages strategic thinking. One way to categorize items on a timeline is to ask students to identify anticipated and unanticipated events.

*What would they say activity*⁴

Teachers should become familiar with this community inquiry teaching strategy from Learning for Justice (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/community-inquiry/what-would-they-say>), a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (<https://www.splcenter.org/>). This teaching strategy supports the discussion of multiple perspectives by having students infer how a particular author of a text would respond to questions.

Students will analyze multiple firsthand accounts and newspaper articles about the Battle of Hungry Hill and use the “What Would They Say” strategy to compare ideas and engage in higher order thinking skills. Students must use evidence from text to defend their response.

Learning targets

- I can identify key events leading to the Rogue River Wars.
- I can identify ways in which settlers violated the Table Rock Treaty of 1853 to further their own interests in acquiring land and gold.
- I can identify differing perspectives on the Battle of Hungry Hill using primary sources.

Reflection/closure

Students will participate in a whip-around answering the following question: How does learning about the Rogue River Wars and the Battle of Hungry Hill change the way you think about the history of Oregon?

⁴ This activity is a modified version of a community inquiry teaching strategy from Learning for Justice, a project of the [Southern Poverty Law Center](https://www.splcenter.org/) ©1991-2021.

Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Chapter 6 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*
- Slides_RogueRiverWarLesson
- Materials_Map Rogue River Battles Timeline
- Materials_Battle of Hungry Hill Source Packet_Student
- Materials_Battle of Hungry Hill Source Packet_Teacher
- Materials_Dialogue Activity Rubric

Activity 1

Background building

Time: 25 – 45 minutes

Overview

The teacher will lead students through a slide presentation based on chapter 6 of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*, which provides an historical overview of the Rogue River Wars and their impact on the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Step 1

Before beginning the slide deck presentation, pass out one copy per student of the “Map of Rogue River Battles Timeline.”

Step 2

In addition, distribute copies of the slide deck in “notes form” to help with notetaking. Instruct students to write down questions or comments next to each slide as they follow along with the presentation.

Step 3

Share slides 2–11 and read out loud all key talking points provided below. Take breaks throughout the slide presentation and allow students to ask questions. Repeat talking points as needed.

Slide 2 | Say:

Today, we’re going to talk about the Rogue River Wars. We talked a little bit last time about the violence that led up to the Table Rock Treaty in 1853. Today, we’ll pick up the story and learn about the attacks and fighting that occurred after the treaty, especially between 1855 and 1856. Taken all together, the Rogue River Wars are one of the most violent and destructive Indian wars in U.S. history and the largest in the Pacific Northwest. More than 600 people died in the wars, including 182 members of the estimated 2,000-person settler population living in Southern

Activity 1 (Continued)

Oregon at the start of the conflict (nearly 10 percent). Native people suffered more than double the number of casualties—not to mention many that were never officially counted.

Slide 3 | Say:

Remember from the last lesson that the Table Rock Treaty of 1853 was supposed to end the violence against Native people in Southern Oregon by creating the Table Rock Reservation, where Tribal people would be protected from miners and settlers. But settlers and miners refused to honor the treaty. Miners, especially, flouted the treaty almost immediately, refusing to honor its provisions and attacking, killing, or stealing from Native people with only the slightest excuse, confident that the frontier justice system would afford no protection to Native people. As the author of a history of the Siletz Tribe, Charles Wilkinson, writes, “The promises of peace in the Table Rock Treaty seemed to make little difference. If anything, the treaty stirred up many of the non-Indians because, to them, it set aside too much land that [in their view] should be available for mining and homesteading” (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 115).

Slide 4 | Say:

As they watched the miners escalate small-scale confrontations into larger attacks and massacres, Native people grew increasingly desperate to counter the violence of armed vigilante militias and the loss of their ancestral land. They fought back against miners and settlers! But any resistance only brought more escalating violence. Even the rumor that Native people had resisted against one group of miners or settlers was enough justification for murder in the eyes of other miners and settlers. For example, near Brookings—on the Oregon Coast—Native people had adjusted to the arrival of settlers by operating a successful ferry business across the Chetco River. When, in 1854, they refused to surrender their village site or ferry business near the mouth of the river, settlers killed 15 people and burned the villages on both sides of the river to the ground. When individual Chetco people who had been made homeless by the violence resorted to taking food and supplies

Activity 1 (Continued)

from local settlers, retribution came back on the entire community again. Another attack in May killed 11 more women and men.

This pattern of violence spread across the entire region and often ended in the massacre of Native people. That same year at Nasomah, a village along the Coquille River near present day Bandon, vigilantes attacked a sleeping village at dawn. Relatives of the survivors remembered that entire families burned to death inside their homes or were shot as they tried to escape.

Slide 5 | Say:

The refusal of Native people to surrender their land increased resentment and entitlement among settlers and miners who were convinced that they deserved all the land in Southwest Oregon. This resentment exploded in October 1855, when a volunteer militia led by James Lupton massacred a peaceful band of Native people camped at a traditional summer gathering spot near Little Butte Creek, not far from the reservation at Table Rock. Lupton and his men slaughtered between 40 and 100 people of all ages and genders, including children and elders. Although U.S. Army soldiers arrived from Fort Lane to run off Lupton's mob and protect the survivors, the massacre marked a tipping point for Native people. While some Native leaders in the Rogue Valley remained against warfare, many others decided enough was enough. Tyee John along with Tyee George and Tyee Lympy retaliated by attacking and destroying settlements and homesteads throughout the Rogue Valley, sparking a period of pitched warfare with U.S. troops as well as the volunteer militia.

Slide 6 | Say:

Settlers used the fighting to amplify calls for the outright extermination of Native people—proudly waving the flag for genocide in local newspapers, such as the Table Rock Sentinel, as well as regional publications like the Oregon Statesman in Salem and the Oregonian in Portland. The embrace of extermination was nearly universal. This quote from the Oregonian-Extra is representative, "These Indians

Activity 1 (Continued)

must be whipped, aye, they must be exterminated, or there will be no peace or safety in any part or portion of the country.”⁵ When one local settler named John Beeson dared to write a series of critiques of white violence, vigilantes drove him from Southern Oregon.

Slide 7 | Say:

The fighting bred more brutality. Settlers from across Oregon and California rushed to form volunteer militias bent on massacring all Native people, not only those living in the Rogue Valley but also across Southwest Oregon and into Northern California, whether those individual Tribes and bands wanted to fight or not. Taking names like “Squaw Hunters” and “Exterminators,” these volunteer militias murdered women and children in cold blood, often creating tension with the regular military. Army commanders could see how settler militias were stoking the war by refusing to honor the boundaries of the reservation, harassing Native people, and killing both combatants and non-combatants. However, even as they described local militia volunteers as “barbarous and savage” (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 109) army officers and federal officials never seriously considered using the full force of the government to confront settlers. Instead, as the conflict escalated, they focused on using military force to crush the Native resistance so that they could remove Native people from Southwest Oregon and pacify the rage of settlers and miners.

Slide 8 | Say:

In the battles and skirmishes that followed, Native people, although vastly outnumbered and outsupplied, proved able to hold their own against the larger combined forces of the U.S. Army and volunteer militias. In the Battle of Hungry Hill on October 31, 1855, Native people dealt the U.S. military one of its worst defeats in a battle against Indigenous people, as a small group of Tribes managed to fend off a much larger force of hundreds of militia volunteers and U.S. regular troops, forcing them to retreat. Months later, Tribes on the Southern

⁵ Oregonian-Extra (March 28, 1856). Cited in Whaley, 2010, p. 231 [emphasis in original].

Activity 1 (Continued)

Oregon coast won another important victory, ambushing an infamous Indian killer turned government Indian agent, Ben Wright, who had terrorized the region for years, and completely overwhelming the mining camp set up near present day Gold Beach.

Despite these successes, time turned the war into a battle of attrition that favored the U.S. government and its overwhelming resources of soldiers, horses, and guns. On the run from militias and regular forces, Native people struggled to find the food and shelter they needed to survive. As the fighting moved down the Rogue River toward the sea, the Army continued to exacerbate these pressures by burning and destroying villages in an effort to get Native people to submit.

Slide 9 | Say:

The end of the Rogue River Wars was a slow process. On May 20, 1856, many Tribes surrendered near the convergence of the Rogue and Illinois rivers at a place called Oak Flat, but many others, like Tyee John, chose to continue to fight. Just one week later, Tyee John and his forces narrowly lost a ferocious battle at Big Bend, and with that defeat the tide of the war had turned firmly toward the Americans. Scattered fighting and resistance continued for the rest of the month of June, but it became increasingly clear to Native leaders that it would be impossible to prevail. Tyee John and his band were the last to give in—officially surrendering near Rinehart Creek, south of Port Orford, ending the Rogue River Wars on July 2, 1856.

Slide 10 | Say:

The impact of the Rogue River Wars spread far beyond the Rogue Valley. By the end of the war, Lower Rogue/Costal Athabaskan-speaking peoples, including Tututni, Chetco, Coquille, Tolowa, Sixes, Euchre, and Port Orford peoples, had been forced into the fighting or suffered unprovoked attacks on their villages along with Takelma, Shasta, and Athapaskan-speaking groups of the Upper Rogue Valley who had been engaged in the fighting from the start. Even Native people living far from

Activity 1 (Continued)

the most intense fighting in 1856 faced threats and intimidation from local settlers as news of the fighting spread. For example, Hanis and Miluk Coos people were kept under armed guard by settlers at Coos Bay while Rogue Valley people who had agreed not to fight and instead remove to the new permanent reservation on the coast were attacked by settlers as the U.S. Army escorted them northward. By the time the violence ended in 1856, what came to be known as the Rogue River Wars was the largest of all the Indian wars in the Pacific Northwest and one of the biggest wars between Native people and the U.S. government in American history in terms of casualties on both sides.

Slide 11 | Say:

In the aftermath of the Rogue River Wars, Native people were forced to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation and prevented from returning to their homeland by army patrols and armed vigilantes. Most Native people had lost loved ones in the war, in addition to their homes and possessions. Sent far from their homelands with only what they could carry, Native people arrived at a new reservation that lacked housing, adequate supplies, or the tools they needed to sustain themselves, such as their nets for fishing or their guns and bows for hunting.

In contrast, the settlers who formed volunteer militias were allowed to petition the U.S. government for reparations for the cost of fighting the war. Even though they had worked against the Army to stoke the violence, the government paid nearly \$2.5 million (the equivalent of more than \$75 million in 2021 dollars) in wages and compensation to volunteer militia men who fought in the war as well as local settlers who helped support the militias with foods, horses, feed, transportation, shelter, and other costs related to the conflict (Schwartz, 1997, p. 158).⁶

⁶ Inflation calculations: <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator/consumer-price-index-1800->

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

Step 4

At the end of the slide deck presentation, allow time for students to ask clarifying questions and restate important information that could be added to the classroom timeline.

Activity 2

Timeline activity

Time: 45 – 60 minutes

Overview

This is an ongoing activity, ideally started with the Table Rock Treaty lesson. The timeline is collectively constructed by students. It can be made of butcher paper or large poster paper and covered in student drawings, primary sources, and recipes, Post-Its, or index cards noting key events. Alternatively, it could be made of rope or string, with images, dates, and documents hung from paper clips or clothespins. The main classroom timeline can be supplemented by smaller posterboard-sized lines that include only a few elements, such as key battles or events in the Rogue River Wars. The timeline should be constructed by students during classroom time and should reflect students' own learning.

Step 1

Share slide 12 and have students add information and events to the classroom timeline based on the presentation. Have students follow the timeline activity process to enhance their connections to the sequence of events and outcomes.

Step 2

Share slide 13 and instruct students to work in pairs to discuss the question on the slide in relation to the timeline.

What were the general/overall cause(s) of the Rogue River Wars?

Step 3

Share the questions on slide 14 and facilitate pair discussion:

What do you think were the main causes of the Rogue River Wars? Could we group those causes into general themes?

Activity 2 (Continued)

What ideologies or ways of thinking about Native people enabled settlers to behave the way they did?

Could a leader have changed their actions to produce a better outcome? Why or why not?

Step 4

Next, share slide 15 and ask students to imagine a different ending to the historical events on this timeline by considering the questions on the slide.

What actions or events would need to be different for this alternative ending to be possible?

What political or economic ideas would have to change for settlers to accept the rights of Native people to their land?

How would ideas about nature and land ownership have needed to change?

Example responses

- If settlers had accepted Indigenous title (the right to live on the land) they may not have attacked Native people who refused to leave their homes.
- If settlers had accepted shared access to the land, then maybe they would not have insisted on removing Native people from their homeland.
- If settlers had accepted the value of Native people, cultures, and ways of life, then they might not have been as willing to conduct wars of ethnic cleansing.
- The Army and the settler legal system could have used force against settlers to enforce Indigenous title and protect Native people.

Activity 3

The Battle at Hungry Hill: What would they say?

Time: 90 – 120 minutes

Step 1

Provide students with an overview of the topic for this next activity.

Say:

In the previous activity we learned about the Rogue River Wars in which Native people fought back against the U.S. Army and settler militias seeking to kill or remove all Native people living in Southwest Oregon.

In the next activity we're going to read like historians by taking a closer look at one of the significant battles from this war—the Battle of Hungry Hill—one of the major victories won by Native people.

We will examine primary documents with accounts of the battle from different people who were there, including a U.S. Army officer, a member of the settler militia, and the memories of an Indigenous elder who was a young teenager at the time of the fighting. We will also examine contemporary newspaper articles about the Rogue River Wars.

As historians reviewing documents from the past, we will need to ask certain important questions. Who wrote the document? What is the main message? Do sources agree or disagree? What would they say if asked a specific question? Historians use these answers to figure out what happened in the past and make a more complete narrative (or story) about events that each source only partially describes.

Let's begin with a review of the Battle of Hungry Hill.

Activity 3 (Continued)

Step 2

Share slide 16 and provide students with a summary of the Battle of Hungry Hill.

Say:

The Battle of Hungry Hill, also known as the Battle of Grave Creek Hills, was one of the most important battles in the Rogue River Wars. This major battle took place on October 31 and November 1, 1855. It happened in the mountains between Cow Creek and Grave Creek about three weeks into the outbreak of the most violent part of the Rogue River War of 1855-56. The Battle of Hungry Hill represents one of the biggest victories by Native people fighting against the U.S. military in the Pacific Northwest.

In the battle, a much larger combined force of more than 500 U.S. soldiers and militia volunteers bravely charged a smaller group of Native fighters who mounted a fierce defense from a sheltered ravine on a high ridgetop.

Despite two days of fighting, American forces proved unable to dislodge Native defenders and were forced to retreat in disarray —allowing Native people to escape with only minimal casualties. Although the battle was an important turning point in one of the largest wars fought between the United States and Indigenous peoples, it is not well known today.

Ask:

Why do you think the battle isn't very well known today?

Key idea: Settlers were quick to omit this humiliating defeat from their histories of the war.



Activity 3 (Continued)

Step 3

Hand out one copy per student of the “Battle of Hungry Hill: Source Packet.” Remind students they are going to read like a historian by asking critical questions of the text.

Step 4

Walk students through the structure of the “Battle of Hungry Hill: Source Packet” (e.g., key vocabulary, background section, graphic organizer, and critical thinking questions). Let students know that you will begin this activity by reading “Source 1” and completing the graphic organizer as a whole class.

Step 5

Review key vocabulary for the source documents and let students know that some terms are defined in brackets throughout.

Step 6

Next, conduct a teacher-led read-aloud of the background section of the Source 1 text, which talks about August V. Kautz. Ask students to underline information that describes the author/source as they listen and follow along (e.g., who, what, when, where, and why)?

Say (Example):

The opening text indicates that “Kautz wrote a letter describing The Battle of Hungry Hill,” which tells me that we will be reading a primary document written by Kautz about his firsthand experience at this battle. The text tells me that Kautz was an officer who “joined the U.S. Army.” This tells me that Kautz is a permanent member of the military and has experience fighting in multiple wars. Kautz fought in the Rogue River War, then lived the rest of his life in Washington where he married a Nisqually woman and had two sons.

Activity 3 (Continued)

Note: The ancestral homelands of the Nisqually Tribe are on the Puget Sound in Washington state. The Tribal headquarters today are located near the present day town of Olympia.

Kautz wrote this letter to Joseph Lane, who was a representative of the Oregon Territory in the U.S. government. Lane had once fought with the Native peoples of the Rouge Valley prior to the Table Rock Treaty and at the time played an important role in Oregon politics.

Step 7

Model for students how to complete the first row of the graphic organizer (e.g., questions, in your words, and textual evidence). Review the example response provided on the first row of the graphic organizer.

Step 8

Next, the teacher (or a student volunteer) reads out the letter by Kautz to the whole class. Pause the reading to define new terms.

Step 9

After the read-aloud, model for students how to complete the next three rows in the graphic organizer (e.g., main message, goals of the war, description of participants). Refer students to the examples provided on the graphic organizer.

Say (Example):

In the last paragraph, Kautz writes, "It is a war they have brought on themselves; the Indians are fighting in self-defense, and they fight well." Kautz believes that settlers are the aggressors of this war and are responsible for their own casualties and loss.

Kautz also says, "I have every reason to believe that it has been gotten up expressly to procure another appropriation." This quote shows that he believed the purpose

Activity 3 (Continued)

of the war was for settlers to stoke the violence in the hopes that Congress would “appropriate” or make funds available to volunteers who would fight against Native people. As we discussed earlier, the government did eventually pay large sums of money to the settlers who fought in the Rogue River Wars.

Throughout his letter, Kautz describes the disorganization of the settlers and Army leadership based on the assumption that the Native people fighting for their homeland were unprepared or unable to defend themselves. For example, Kautz states that, “The great secret of the failure is that the volunteers expected the regulars to do all the fighting, whilst the regulars were expecting the same thing from the volunteers. I do not think much of the conduct of the officers, nobody attempted to lead the men, and I don’t think that Colonel Ross or Captain Smith attempted to fire a gun.”

Step 10

Assign students to small groups and ask students to read aloud the remaining primary and secondary source documents. Teams work together to complete the graphic organizer for each source. Walk the room to check on student understanding and group participation.

Note: This task may take students multiple readings. Consider spreading out this task over two or three days.

Step 11 (Optional Discussion Questions)

Once all groups have completed the “Battle of Hungry Hill: Source Packet,” display the questions on slide 17 (What Would They Say?) and ask each group to develop responses for one of the three sources. Conduct the discussion in rounds, having each team work together and share their response to each question with the whole class. Have one representative from each team report out. Teams must highlight at least one piece of text to support their responses.

Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Step 12 (Optional)

Ask students to write a short dialogue between two of the sources. Provide students with a copy of the “Dialogue Activity Rubric” and review expectations for this task.