# LESSON #7: CHIEF JOSEPH & THE NEZ PERCE

### (Grade 11/United States History) Written by Kris McIntosh

**Summary of Lesson**: In this lesson, students will review and analyze the movement of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce tribe of the Northwest. The activity is intended to be used in the context of other Social Studies lessons and activities to provide students with a comprehensive study of U.S. Government Indian policy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Objective: Students will

- Analyze paintings, photos, maps, and census reports detailing the flight of the Nez Perce in 1877, and
- Produce a narrative newspaper article based on their analysis.

## TEKS:

- (US 10A) Geography. The student understands the effects of migration and immigration on American society, and is expected to analyze the effects of changing demographic patterns resulting from migration within the United States.
- (US 2A) History. The student understands the political, economic, and social changes in the United States from 1877 to 1898. The student is expected to analyze political issues such as Indian policies.

#### Time Required: Two class periods

#### Materials:

Copies (or a projector to share items with entire class) of: Sid Richardson Museum painting *The Snow Trail* by Charles M. Russell Photographs of Chief Joseph NARA Photo Analysis Sheet Chief Joseph history Bureau of Indian Affairs maps Census data for Chief Joseph Magnifying glasses

**Procedure:** After students have studied the movement to put and keep Native Americans on reservations, and the Battle of Little Big Horn, introduce the lesson.

 Show students *The Snow Trail*, a painting by Charles M. Russell. Have students use the Photo Analysis Sheet and answer questions about the painting. Have students share their responses to the analysis questions.

- Show the photos of Chief Joseph. Have the students compare the photograph of Chief Joseph in his native dress with the photograph of him with General Howard and Colonel Pratt. Ask the students to speculate on Chief Joseph's change of clothing. "Why is Chief Joseph in this photograph with General Howard and Colonel Pratt? What may have occurred?"
- Pass out the history of the Nez Perce, and the two maps. As the students read the account, the maps can help them follow the flight of the Nez Perce towards Canada. Ask students, "What was the relationship between the U.S. Government and the Nez Perce? Why did it change? Why would some of the Nez Perce refuse to follow the new treaty of 1867? What would have been a possible solution to prevent the violence?"
- Distribute census data for 1878 and 1885. Use of magnifying glasses may be helpful.
  What can students learn about the Nez Perce and Chief Joseph by reading the data? Ask students to draw conclusions by answering these questions, "Why are there so few Nez Perce in 1878 versus 1885? What will happen in 1885 that might cause the census to rise in 1886?"
- After reading and analyzing the data, ask students to imagine it is 1885 and write an article on the plight of the Nez Perce for the local newspaper.



*The Snow Trail*, by Charles M. Russell, 1897, Oil on Canvas Sid Richardson Museum, Fort Worth, Texas



"Chief Joseph, Nez Perce, when young," ca. 1871 - ca. 1907, J Joseph (Hinmaton-Yalatkit), Nez Perce' chief; full-length, standing, by William H. Jackson, before 1877. Records of the Smithsonian Institution, 1871 – 1952, Record Group 106. Still Picture Records LICON, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives at College Park, MD. Online version on November 2, 2006, available at:

http://arcweb.archives.gov ARC Identifier: 523607.



"Nez Perce Chief Joseph in studio portrait", Milton Loryea. Repository: Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. Online version on November 2, 2006, available at: http://content.lib.washington.edu/cgi-bin/htmlview.exe?CISOROOT=/loc&CISOPTR=694



"Nez Perce Chief Joseph with General O.O. Howard & Colonel Pratt", ca. March, 1904. Repository: University of Washington Libraries. Online version on November 2, 2006, available at: http://content.lib.washington.edu/cgi-bin/htmlview.exe?CISOROOT=/loc&CISOPTR=2046

tep 1. Observation		
		ression of the photograph and then examine individual ch section to see what new details become visible.
Use the chart below to	list people, objects, and activities ir	the photograph.
People	Objects	Activities
		; you might infer from this photograph.
tep 3. Questions		
What questions does t	his photograph raise in your mind?	
1	answers to them?	
. Where could you find a		

Photo Analysis Worksheet, Online version on November 2, 2006, at: http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\_analysis\_worksheet.pdf

## "Chief Joseph"

#### Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt. (1840-1904)

The man who became a national celebrity with the name "Chief Joseph" was born in the Wallowa Valley in what is now northeastern Oregon in 1840. He was given the name Hin-mah-too-yahlat-kekt, or Thunder Rolling Down the Mountain, but was widely known as Joseph, or Joseph the Younger, because his father had taken the Christian name Joseph when he was baptized at the Lapwai mission by Henry Spalding in 1838.

Joseph the Elder was one of the first Nez Percé converts to Christianity and an active supporter of the tribe's longstanding peace with whites. In 1855 he even helped Washington's territorial governor set up a Nez Percé reservation that stretched from Oregon into Idaho. But in 1863, following a gold rush into Nez Percé territory, the federal government took back almost six million acres of this land, restricting the Nez Percé to a reservation in Idaho that was only one tenth its prior size. Feeling himself betrayed, Joseph the Elder denounced the United States, destroyed his American flag and his Bible, and refused to move his band from the Wallowa Valley or sign the treaty that would make the new reservation boundaries official.

When his father died in 1871, Joseph was elected to succeed him. He inherited not only a name but a situation made increasingly volatile as white settlers continued to arrive in the Wallowa Valley. Joseph staunchly resisted all efforts to force his band onto the small Idaho reservation, and in 1873 a federal order to remove white settlers and let his people remain in the Wallowa Valley made it appear that he might be successful. But the federal government soon reversed itself, and in 1877 General Oliver Otis Howard threatened a cavalry attack to force Joseph's band and other hold-outs onto the reservation. Believing military resistance futile, Joseph reluctantly led his people toward Idaho.

Unfortunately, they never got there. About twenty young Nez Percé warriors, enraged at the loss of their homeland, staged a raid on nearby settlements and killed several whites. Immediately, the army began to pursue Joseph's band and the others who had not moved onto the reservation. Although he had opposed war, Joseph cast his lot with the war leaders.

What followed was one of the most brilliant military retreats in American history. Even the unsympathetic General William Tecumseh Sherman could not help but be impressed with the 1,400 mile march, stating that "the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise... [they] fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines, and field fortifications." In over three months, the band of about 700, fewer than 200 of whom were warriors, fought 2,000 U.S. soldiers and Indian auxiliaries in four major battles and numerous skirmishes.

By the time he formally surrendered on October 5, 1877, Joseph was widely referred to in the American press as "the Red Napoleon." It is unlikely, however, that he played as critical a role in

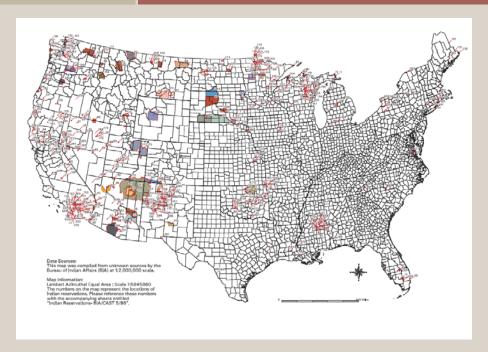
the Nez Percé's military feat as his legend suggests. He was never considered a war chief by his people, and even within the Wallowa band, it was Joseph's younger brother, Olikut, who led the warriors, while Joseph was responsible for guarding the camp. It appears, in fact, that Joseph opposed the decision to flee into Montana and seek aid from the Crows and that other chiefs -- Looking Glass and some who had been killed before the surrender -- were the true strategists of the campaign. Nevertheless, Joseph's widely reprinted surrender speech has immortalized him as a military leader in American popular culture:

I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohoolhoolzote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say, "Yes" or "No." He who led the young men [Olikut] is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are -- perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

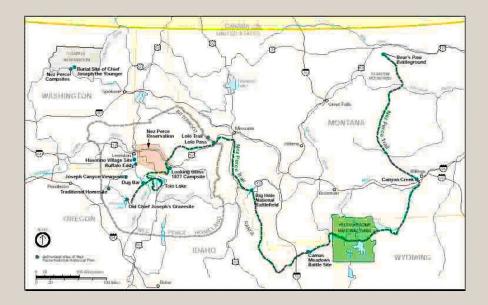
Joseph's fame did him little good. Although he had surrendered with the understanding that he would be allowed to return home, Joseph and his people were instead taken first to eastern Kansas and then to a reservation in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) where many of them died of epidemic diseases. Although he was allowed to visit Washington, D.C., in 1879 to plead his case to U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes, it was not until 1885 that Joseph and the other refugees were returned to the Pacific Northwest. Even then, half, including Joseph, were taken to a non-Nez Percé reservation in northern Washington, separated from the rest of their people in Idaho and their homeland in the Wallowa Valley.

In his last years, Joseph spoke eloquently against the injustice of United States policy toward his people and held out the hope that America's promise of freedom and equality might one day be fulfilled for Native Americans as well. An indomitable voice of conscience for the West, he died in 1904, still in exile from his homeland, according to his doctor "of a broken heart."

New Perspectives on the West, PBS online version on November 2, 2006, available at: http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a\_c/chiefjoseph.htm



Bureau of Indian Affairs Map of Indian Reservations in the Continental United States. Online version on November 2, 2006, available at: http://www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/RESERV.PDF http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bia-map-indian-reservations-usa.png



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1878 Census of Chief Joseph's Band, Miami Agency Census Rolls, 1871-1959; National Archives Microfilm Publication RA #78, Record of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75; National Archives - Southwest Region.

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