



English I: Reading: Module 5: Practice 1: Section 5

Analyze an Argument

Analyze the Evidence

Instructions: Read the following argument that appeared in the New York Times in April 2013, and then analyze the evidence by recording your responses in the provided text boxes. When you are finished, mouse over the “Sample Response” buttons to see sample answers.

Save Wounded Knee by Joseph Brings Plenty Wounded Knee, S.D.



Source: Lakota portraits, Pizi, Wikipedia

The Lakota Sioux word “takini” means “to die and come back” but is usually translated more simply as “survivor.” It is a sacred word long associated with the killing of scores of unarmed Lakota men, women and children by soldiers of the United States Army’s Seventh Cavalry in the winter of 1890.

Wounded Knee was the so-called final battle of America’s war on its Native peoples. But what happened was hardly a battle. It was a massacre.

A band of several hundred Lakota led by Big Foot, a chief of the Mnicoujou Sioux, was intercepted and detained by troops as they made their way from the Cheyenne River Reservation to Pine Ridge for supplies and safety. After a night of drinking, the bluecoats were disarming warriors the next morning when a shot went off. Soldiers opened fire with their Hotchkiss machine guns. At least 150 but perhaps as many as 300 or more Lakota died.

Our fight to survive as a people continues today, a struggle to preserve not just our culture and our language but also our history and our land. Though I now live on the western reaches of the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, I grew up in Pine Ridge, among my Oglala kin just a few miles from Wounded Knee. One member of my family survived the killing; others died.

The killing ground stirs great emotion in all of our people — memories of bodies frozen into twisted shapes, of those who were hunted down and murdered as they fled, and of those who escaped in bitter cold across wind-swept plains. These stories have been handed down to us and live within us.

One story I remember vividly was told to me when I was about 8 by a tribal elder, a very old woman whose mother had survived the bloodshed as a child. The old woman’s mother told her how her own mother had gathered her up when the bullets started flying. Just then, a young horse warrior galloped past and took the child up in his arms to help her escape. As she looked back, she saw her mother shot down, her chest torn open by bullets. She told her daughter that she remembered tasting the salt in her tears. The old woman told me all this after I had knocked over a saltshaker. Salt still reminded her of her mother.



There are many such stories. The spiritual power of the place explains why members of the American Indian Movement took it over in 1973 to call the nation's attention to the economic and cultural injustices against our Native brothers and sisters.

Now, our heritage is in danger of becoming a real-estate transaction, another parcel of what once was our land auctioned off to the highest bidder. The cries of our murdered people still echo off the barren hills — the cries we remember in our hearts every day of our lives. But they may finally be drowned out by bulldozers and the ka-ching of commerce.

The Wounded Knee site passed from the Oglala into private hands through the process known as allotment, begun in the late 1800s, by which the federal government divided land among the Indians and gave other parcels to non-Indians. The idea was to shift control of our land from the collective to the individual and to teach the Lakota and other Native Americans the foreign notion of ownership. But to us, the policy was just another form of theft.

The private owner of the Wounded Knee site, who has held title to the 40-acre plot since 1968, wants to sell it for \$3.9 million. If the Oglala of Pine Ridge don't buy it by May 1, it will be sold at auction.

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is one of the poorest places in the United States, and the Oglala, who are deeply in debt, would be hard-pressed to meet the price. Many elders properly ask why any price should be paid at all. The federal government should buy this land and President Obama should then preserve it as a national monument — just as he did last month at five federally owned sites around the country, including one in Maryland honoring Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.

The massacre site has great meaning not just for the Lakota but for all First Nations — and every American. Wounded Knee should remain a sacred site where the voices of the Ghost Dancers, who more than a century ago danced for the return of our old way of life, still echo among the pines, where the spirits of our elders still walk the hills, and where “takini” still has meaning: the survival of our collective memory.

Chief Joseph Brings Plenty, a former chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, teaches Lakota culture at the Takini School on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation.



Source: wk 001, Jeremiah M. Murphy, Flickr



After reading the article, write your summary statement of the claim Chief Joseph Brings Plenty is making. You might use both a quote and a restatement of the quote.

Sample Response

Now find evidence that fits the “evidence test frame”: “The United States should buy the Wounded Knee land for use as a national monument because _____.”

Sample Response



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Finally, write briefly analyzing the quality, relevance, and credibility of the evidence you have listed. You can write about the general quality, relevance, and credibility of all the evidence; you do not need to comment on each piece of evidence individually.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a sample response.

Sample Response