Carlisle Indian Industrial School Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question
What was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?

Materials:
- Carlisle Indian Industrial School PowerPoint
- Copies of Documents A-D
- Copies of Guiding Questions

Note: Prior to this lesson, students should have studied nineteenth-century Native American history. In particular, students should be familiar with federal Native American removal policies, the reservation system, and the American Indian Wars. It is important that students are familiar with these policies because they will be asked to consider how the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was similar to and different from previous federal policies regarding Native Americans.

Plan of Instruction:
1) Carlisle Indian Industrial School PowerPoint Presentation.
   a. Slide 1: Title Slide. Explain to students: Today you will be studying the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Carlisle was one of the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ leading Native American schools and the first off-reservation boarding school operated by the federal government. The Bureau of Indian Affairs went on to open more than two dozen more off-reservation boarding schools, and churches operated over four hundred on-reservation schools with government funding. These schools were part of a long series of federal government policies, such as Removal and the Indian Wars, that attempted to remove Native Americans from their lands.

   b. Slide 2: Richard Pratt. Founded by Richard Henry Pratt, the Carlisle School operated from 1879 until 1918. Pratt, a Civil War veteran, had served as a captain in the cavalry in the Southern Plains and had supervised the imprisonment of Native Americans during the Indian Wars.

   c. Slides 3, 4, & 5: The Carlisle School. Over 10,000 Native Americans attended the Carlisle School between 1879 and 1918. To recruit students, school officials and students traveled to reservations, appealing to tribal leaders to send children from their tribes to Carlisle. Some tribal leaders saw the school as an alternative to the difficulties of life on reservations, while others were reluctant to send students.

   d. Slides 6 & 7: The Carlisle School. Only 158 people graduated from the school. Of these graduates, several went on to college and became educators, professional athletes, and community leaders. The Carlisle
football team became one of the best teams in the nation, and the acclaimed Carlisle Indian Band performed around the world.

e. Slides 8, 9, 10, & 11: The Carlisle School. Life at Carlisle was very hard. Students were subjected to strict military-style training and were disciplined severely for breaking the school’s strict rules. Living conditions were stark. Students stayed in barracks and were forced to discard their native languages, dress, foods, and religions. Hundreds of students ran away from the school to return to their tribes, and hundreds of other students died at Carlisle, many from infectious diseases.

f. Slide 12: Central Historical Question. Today we are going to further explore the Carlisle School. To do so, we are going to use historical thinking skills to analyze four primary source documents. In particular, we are going to explore this question: What was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?

Note: Several of the documents in this lesson use derogatory language to describe Native Americans and Native American societies. Similarly, there are upsetting descriptions of life at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. We recommend that you prepare students for this content before reading the documents.

2) Hand out Document A.
   a. In pairs, students read the document and answer the Guiding Questions.

   b. Share out responses.

   c. Ask students: According to the newspaper, what was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?

Students should note that the newspaper article identified several purposes for the school. First, it was intended to serve as a model for additional schools for Native Americans. It was also supposed to “save” Native Americans by breaking the “tribal relation.” Strong answers will reason that breaking Native American students’ connection to their tribes could have also served the purpose of removing them from their land, which was a central goal of federal policy towards Native Americans. According to this article, the school also sought to create Native American leaders who would lead Native American tribes towards new occupations.

3) Hand out Document B.

   a. In pairs, students read the document and answer the Guiding Questions.
b. Share out responses.

c. Ask students: **According to Pratt, what was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?**

If students do not bring it up, use the Pratt document to define assimilation: the process by which the culture of a minority group – including their language, religion, dress, and food – comes to resemble those of the dominant culture. Point out that Pratt’s notion of “citizenizing” Native Americans is an extreme form of cultural assimilation. According to Pratt, this was the purpose of the school. He indicated that such assimilation was the only way to save Native Americans from extermination at the hands of settlers and from what he considered Native Americans’ uncivilized ways of life. His calls to transfer Native American children from their tribes “to the surroundings of civilization” and to “move them out” of their communities would also have served the purpose of removing Native Americans from their land. He also suggested that graduates of Carlisle could serve as proof that Native Americans were deserving of similar rights as other Americans.

4) **Pass out Document C.**


   b. In pairs, students read the document and answer the remaining Guiding Questions.

   c. Share out responses.

   Students should identify that, in some ways, this document corroborates Pratt’s paper. However, students should question its reliability because Childers wrote the article for the *Carlisle School News*. It is likely that the article was subject to review from school leaders and that it was published with the purpose of promoting the school. Moreover, given the strict rules of the school and the potential consequences for breaking them, it is unlikely that Childers would have wanted to criticize the school in the newspaper. Childers may also have come to hold these beliefs as a result of the instruction he received at Carlisle.

   d. Ask students: **According to Childers’s article, what was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?**

   Childers’s article also suggests that cultural assimilation was a primary purpose of the school. According to the article, students would be “civilized” and thus better equipped to be part of American society.
5) Pass out Document D.

   b. In pairs, students read the document and answer the Guiding Questions.

   c. Share out responses.

   d. Ask students: According to the Standing Bear document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School? How does this document compare to the others?

   Students should note that Luther Standing Bear’s account corroborates the other documents’ description of the school’s objective of assimilating Native Americans. However, Standing Bear provides a very different perspective on the process than any of the other documents, highlighting the costs and brutality of this process.

6) Final discussion.
   a. After reading all of these documents, what do you think was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School?

   b. What does the Carlisle School tell us about the United States at the end of the nineteenth century?

   c. How were the school’s policies of assimilation and removal similar to other American policies towards Native Americans? How were they different?

   d. What might have been the impact of the Carlisle School on Native American cultures?

   e. What other types of documents and artifacts would you want to explore to continue learning about the Carlisle School?

7) Final writing assignment. Ask students to review the Guiding Question for each document that asked “Based to this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?” After students have reviewed their answers, have them write a paragraph explaining the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. They should compose a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph and cite specific evidence from at least three of the documents in their response.
Documents

Document A

Document B

Document C

Document D
Luther Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1933).
A NEW SCHOOL FOR INDIANS: CARLISLE BARRACKS CONVERTED INTO AN INDIAN SCHOOL

The Secretary of War today ordered that Carlisle Barracks, Pa., be turned over to the Interior Department to be used as a school for the education of Indian youth, to be modeled after the Hampton (Va.) Normal Institute, and has detailed Captain R. H. Pratt, of the army, to have charge of it. Captain Pratt has had much experience in the work of Indian education at St. Augustine and at Hampton, and is confident of good results at Carlisle. Secretaries McCrary [Secretary of War] and Schurz [Secretary of the Interior] are both much interested in the subject and very hopeful that the successful effort at Hampton will be followed by success at Carlisle, and lead eventually to such action by Congress as will enable the government to establish many such schools. About one hundred Indian youth of both sexes will be sent to Carlisle this fall. . . .

The Secretary of War thinks this is the only way to saving a remnant of the Indian tribes, for so long as the tribal relation is continued they must gradually become extinct. He says the efforts of the government are in the direction of bringing up a class of young men who will be leaders of their people in taking them away from the chase and war as the sole worthy occupation for the hands of men. The rapid extinction of the buffalo and small game and the filling up of the waste places by settlements render this step absolutely necessary to the future interests of the aboriginal population of the country, and it is confidently expected that in time the Indians will be brought from the precarious living of the chase into better ways. . . . Secretary McCrary said he thought it was an interesting fact that Carlisle Barracks, which had been the great school of instruction for so many years for our cavalry employed in fighting the Indians, should have been in this centennial transformed into an asylum for Indian youth, where in future years they may learn the arts of progress.

**Source:** New York Herald, August 22, 1879.

**Vocabulary**
- **remnant:** a small surviving group
- **waste places:** undeveloped land, often occupied by Native Americans
- **asylum:** a place of safety and security
Document B: Richard H. Pratt (Excerpt)

The following excerpt is from a paper written by Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Pratt delivered this paper as a speech at the Conference of Charities and Correction.

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. . . . In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man. . . .

The Indians under our care remained savage, because [they were] forced back upon themselves and away from association with English-speaking and civilized people, and because of our savage treatment of them. We have never made any attempt to civilize them with the idea of taking them into the nation, and all of our policies have been against citizenizing . . . them.

It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit. . . .

The school at Carlisle is an attempt on the part of the government to do this. Carlisle has always planted treason to the tribe and loyalty to the nation at large. It has preached against colonizing Indians [on reservations], and in favor of individualizing them. . . . Carlisle fills young Indians with the spirit of loyalty to the stars and stripes, and then moves them out into our communities to show by their conduct and ability that the Indian is no different from the white or the colored, that he has the inalienable right to liberty and opportunity that the white and the negro have.


Vocabulary

inevitable: certain to happen

 treason: the crime of betraying one’s country or people
Document C: Ellis B. Childers (Excerpt)

Ellis B. Childers was a Muscogee (Creek) teenager at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. This is an excerpt from an article Childers wrote for the Carlisle School News about the visit of a large delegation of Native Americans to the school.

Inspector Haworth [the government inspector of the Native American schools], with a large delegation of Indians, visited us on Easter week on their way back home from Washington. . . . Inspector Haworth asked some of the delegates to say something to the school. Kihega, the father of Charles Kihega [the Editor of the School News], made the first speech. He made a very nice speech.

Among other things he said to the children: “Here are people trying to teach you. You must try to learn, and when you come back home, your people will be glad to see you, and what you learn will be a benefit to them.” When he said, “Here are people,” he meant our kind teachers who are trying their best to teach us to live a civilized life. . . .

There were four others [who] made little speeches to us. They all spoke so good that Capt. Pratt said at the close, “I could sit and listen all night to such good speeches as these.”

Henry Jones the interpreter said something before it was closed. He is an Indian but he has learned enough English so as to interpret for his people. Among other things he said, “If we Indians are willing to learn, we can learn. We can learn as well as our friends, the whites. We can do just as well as the white people. If we try. We have muscles, brains and eyes just the same as the whites. If we cultivate our brains and muscles and eyes we can do just the same as they.”

And then closed his speech by saying, “Don’t look back at all that is passed away. This country through here is all improved. You saw when you were coming: cities, railroads, houses, manufactories . . .”

Source: Article by Ellis B. Childers, Carlisle School News, April 1882.
Document D: Luther Standing Bear (Excerpt)

Luther Standing Bear was a member of the Lakota tribe and attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School beginning in 1879. After graduating, he became a Lakota chief and advocated for Native American rights and sovereignty. The following are excerpts from a book he wrote in 1933 about his experiences at the school.

At the age of eleven years, ancestral life for me and my people was most abruptly ended without regard for our wishes, comforts, or rights in the matter. At once I was thrust into an alien world, into an environment as different from the one into which I had been born as it is possible to imagine, to remake myself, if I could, into the likeness of the invader. . . .

At Carlisle . . . the “civilizing” process began. It began with clothes. Never, no matter what our philosophy or spiritual quality, could we be civilized while wearing the moccasin and blanket. The task before us was not only that of accepting new ideas and adopting new manners, but actual physical changes and discomfort had to be borne uncomplainingly until the body adjusted itself to new tastes and habits. . . . Of course, our hair was cut, and then there was much disapproval. But that was part of the transformation process, and in some mysterious way long hair stood in the path of our development. . . .

Almost immediately our names were changed to those in common use in the English language. . . . I was told to take a pointer and select a name for myself from the list written on the blackboard. . . . By that time we had been forbidden to speak our mother tongue, which is the rule in all boarding schools. . . .

Of all the changes we were forced to make, that of diet was doubtless the most injurious, for it was immediate and drastic. . . . Had we been allowed our own simple diet . . . we should have thrived. But the change in clothing, housing, food, and confinement combined with lonesomeness was too much, and in three years nearly one half of the children from the Plains were dead and through with all earthly schools. In the graveyard at Carlisle most of the graves are those of the little ones. . . .

Source: Luther Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle, 1933.

Vocabulary
ancestral: inherited from one’s ancestors
borne: endured a difficult situation
confinement: being restrained and forbidden from leaving a place
Guiding Questions

Document A: Newspaper

1. (Sourcing) Who seems to be providing the information included in this article?
   How might the sources for the article influence the content of the article?

2. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

Document B: Richard H. Pratt

1. (Sourcing) Who was Richard H. Pratt?

2. (Close Reading) What was Pratt’s attitude toward Native Americans? Provide evidence from the document to support your claim.

3. (Close Reading) What do you think Pratt meant when he said, “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man”? Find two examples from the document showing how the Carlisle Indian Industrial School tried to accomplish this.
4. (Contextualization) How were Pratt’s goals for the Carlisle School similar to previous federal policies of removing Native American tribes from their lands and waging war against them? How were they different?

5. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

Document C: Ellis B. Childers

1. (Sourcing) Who was Ellis B. Childers? What kind of document is this?

2. (Close Reading) What was Childers’s tone regarding the teachers at Carlisle? Provide evidence from the document to support your claim.

3. (Contextualization) This article was written in the official school newspaper. How might that have influenced what Childers wrote?

4. (Corroboration) How does the description of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in this document compare with the description in Document B? Provide two or three similarities or differences.
5. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?

**Document D: Luther Standing Bear**

1. (Sourcing) Who was Luther Standing Bear?

2. (Close Reading) What were some of the changes the Carlisle teachers forced Luther Standing Bear and his fellow students to make?

   According to Luther Standing Bear, what happened as a result of these changes?

3. (Corroboration) How does Luther Standing Bear’s description of the Carlisle School compare to Ellis Childers’s description?

4. Based on this document, what was the purpose of the Carlisle School?
## Final Writing Prompt

What was the purpose of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School? Begin your paragraph with a topic sentence and cite specific evidence from at least three of the documents in your response.