

Name: _____

Class: _____

7th Grade SS Summer Assignment:

The following must be turned in to your Social Studies Teacher on Friday, September 13th.

Part 1:

You will read the attached article on the Navajo Code Talkers who fought in World War II.

Part 2:

After reading the article respond to the short response question using two piece of evidence.

Part 3:

Finally, you will write a letter to Chester Nez asking him about his experience in the war, his life as a Navajo and how he felt being honored by the President. This letter must be three paragraphs long and based on the attached article.

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Chester Nez and the Navajo Code Talkers

During World War II, a small group of Navajo men developed a secret code for sending messages among soldiers in combat. The code provided a way to communicate strategic and often life-saving information in a way that the Japanese military could not understand. The code, which was based on the Navajo language, was so successful that it was never cracked.

But the story of the code and of the code talkers (those who developed and used it) is complicated, as the life of one code talkers, Chester Nez, shows. Nez, one of the original 29 code talkers, died on June 4, 2014.

Chester Nez was born in 1921 and raised on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico. His family raised sheep. But when Chester was a child, the U.S. government decided that the land was overgrazed and slaughtered all the family's sheep (and many other Navajo sheep). After that, Chester's family struggled to survive farming.

Chester attended schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIA schools aimed to assimilate Navajo children into white society. Students were forbidden to use their native language. Students who spoke Navajo were beaten or had their mouths washed with what Chester remembered was "a bitter brown soap."

When Chester was in high school student, a Marine Corps recruiter visited his school, and Chester decided to join. Soon after, Chester Nez and a small group of other Navajo soldiers were asked to create a code based on the very language the U.S. government had punished them for speaking as children.

Chester Nez recognized the contradiction between how he and his people were treated and the fact that they were called on to serve their country in such an important role. When he joined the Marines, he said much later, "When joining the Marine Corps, I thought about how my people were mistreated. But then I thought this would be my chance to do something for my country."

Because the code talkers' efforts were so important, they sometimes worked for 35 hours straight without a break. But that didn't change their status when the war ended. Native Americans didn't have the right to vote in New Mexico until 1948.

Judy Schiess Avila who co-authored Nez's autobiography, believes that the difficulties Nez faced as a Native American helped him succeed as a code talker and a Marine. "His story reveals how a hard life—herding Grandma's sheep, attending boarding

