

SARAH WINNEMUCCA



BIOGRAPHY

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Sarah Winnemucca was born around 1844 in what is now Nevada. She was descended from a line of Paiute Native Americans, and she spent some of her childhood in California. There she mixed with people who spoke English and Spanish. This helped Winnemucca develop language skills she would use later in life.

As a teenager, Winnemucca went back to Nevada. It was a difficult time for Native Americans there. They often fought with settlers who wanted to use their land, and with the American soldiers who came in to enforce land divisions. In the 1860s, Winnemucca lost many close family members.

In the early 1870s, President Ulysses S. Grant set up the Malheur Reservation in Oregon for the Paiute and other tribes to live on. Winnemucca and her remaining family went there in 1875. Winnemucca then used her language skills as an interpreter between Native Americans and agents working for the government.

But the agents did not treat the Paiute people with respect, by not paying them for farm labor. Eventually most of the Paiute people left the reservation. But the Northern Paiute were moved onto the Yakama Indian Reservation in Washington Territory in the late 1870s. Winnemucca went with them as an interpreter. She did not live on the reservation herself, but she saw the cramped conditions of those who did, and she was appalled.

Winnemucca began campaigning to have her people moved back to the Malheur Reservation. She toured the east of America giving lectures about her people's situation. She also wrote a book about what was happening to the Paiute people, and what she thought needed to change. Throughout the 1880s, Winnemucca gained public support, and the government promised to help her people. But such promises were never kept. Winnemucca remained active, and taught Native American children in Nevada. She died in Montana in 1891.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'enforce'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'enforce' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'enforce'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'enforce'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'enforce' means.

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: family members	relatives

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

So Winnemucca wrote a book about her people, and campaigned for them to be moved again.

Later on, Winnemucca and her people moved to the Malheur Reservation in Oregon.

In the 1860s, Winnemucca's people struggled against settlers and the American government.

Sarah Winnemucca was a Paiute Native American born in what is now Nevada.

In the late 1870s, the Paiute were moved to a different reservation, where conditions were bad.

As a child, Winnemucca developed good language skills.

Winnemucca then acted as an interpreter between government agents and Native Americans.

Get to the facts

1 Where was Sarah Winnemucca born?

2 Which Native American people did she belong to?

3 Who set up the Malheur Reservation?

4 When did Winnemucca go to the Malheur Reservation?

5 What did Winnemucca write a book about?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Letter to the government

Imagine you have seen one of Sarah Winnemucca's lectures in the 1880s. You have heard all about the plight of the Paiute Native American people. Write a letter to the government describing the situation and asking them to help the Paiute... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

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- b From that sentence, suggest what 'enforce' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'enforce'.
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Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – family members

Synonym – relatives

Sequencing:

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