

Lesson developed and shared by Ryan Markel, Cusick School District
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Notes to Educators from Ryan: This is another 11th Grade History assignment. It is short but goes well with my lecture on the WWII Homefront. The document is the first mention of using the Navajo language as a possible way to communicate in combat. This assignment comes from the National Archives.

15/11-jwa

Subject: Enlistment of Navaho Indians.

4. It is therefore recommended that an effort be made to enlist 200 Navaho Indians for this force. In addition to linguistic qualifications in English and their tribal dialect they should have the physical qualifications necessary for messengers.


CLAYTON B. VOGEL

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15/11-jwa

HEADQUARTERS,
AMPHIBIOUS FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET,
CAMP ELLIOTT, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

March 6, 1942

From: The Commanding General.
To: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps.
Subject: Enlistment of Navaho Indians.
Enclosures: (A) Brochure by Mr. Philip Johnston, with maps.
(B) Messages used in demonstration.

1. Mr. Philip Johnston of Los Angeles recently offered his services to this force to demonstrate the use of Indians for the transmission of messages by telephone and voice-radio. His offer was accepted and the demonstration was held for the Commanding General and his staff.

2. The demonstration was interesting and successful. Messages were transmitted and received almost verbatim. In conducting the demonstration messages were written by a member of the staff and handed to the Indian; he would transmit the messages in his tribal dialect and the Indian on the other end would write them down in English. The text of messages as written and received are enclosed. The Indians do not have many military terms in their dialect so it was necessary to give them a few minutes, before the demonstration, to improvise words for dive-bombing, anti-tank gun, etc.

3. Mr. Johnston stated that the Navaho is the only tribe in the United States that has not been infested with German students during the past twenty years. These Germans, studying the various tribal dialects under the guise of art students, anthropologists, etc., have undoubtedly attained a good working knowledge of all tribal dialects except Navaho. For this reason the Navaho is the only tribe available offering complete security for the type of work under consideration. It is noted in Mr. Johnston's article (enclosed) that the Navaho is the largest tribe but the lowest in literacy. He stated, however, that 1,000 — if that many were needed — could be found with the necessary qualifications. It should also be noted that the Navaho tribal dialect is completely unintelligible to all other tribes and all other people, with the possible exception of as many as 28 Americans who have made a study of the dialect. This dialect is thus equivalent to a secret code to the enemy, and admirably suited for rapid, secure communication.

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Written Document Analysis Worksheet

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1.	TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one): ☐ Newspaper ☐ Map ☐ Advertisement ☐ Letter ☐ Telegram ☐ Congressional Record ☐ Patent ☐ Press Release ☐ Census Report ☐ Memorandum ☐ Report ☐ Other
2.	UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more): ☐ Interesting Letterhead ☐ Notations ☐ Handwritten ☐ "RECEIVED" stamp ☐ Typed ☐ Other ☐ Seals
3.	DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:
4.	AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT: POSITION (TITLE):
5.	FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?
6.	DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.) Limit response for each question to 3 lines of text A. List three things the author said that you think are important: B. Why do you think this document was written? C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document. D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written. E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

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