

UNIT 4: MIDDLE SCHOOL – UNITED STATES HISTORY

US Development and Struggles in the West: Dawes Act

Level 3

Instructional Support Materials

[Excerpt from “With the Nez Perces” by E. Jane Gay](#)

[Excerpt from “With the Nez Perces” by E. Jane Gay \(Spanish Language Version\)](#)

[“What Were the Results of Allotment?” by E.A. Schwartz](#)

[“What Were the Results of Allotment?” by E.A. Schwartz \(Spanish Language Version\)](#)

[Why History? CBA](#)

[Causes of Conflict CBA](#)

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the implications of the Dawes Act for Native Americans
 - Analyze the pros and cons of the Dawes Act.
 - Evaluate the federal government’s Indian policy during the latter part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century.
 - Develop skills to analyze primary documents, maps, letters, etc.
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Time: 8-10 class periods

Teacher Preparation

- Complete Level 1 and Level 2 lessons with your students.
 - Prepare copies of reading selections from “With the Nez Perces” by E. Jane Gay and “What Were the Results of Allotment?” by Professor E.A. Schwartz for each student.
NOTE: This Level 3 lesson has been adapted from PBS: *New Perspectives on the West* (http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/lesson_plans/lesson03.htm)
 - Select *Why History?* Or *Causes of Conflict* CBA you wish to have your students complete.
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Learning Activities

1. Review Level 1 and Level 2 lessons with students.

2. Divide the class into two teams. Each team will present an argument which focuses on a different controversy about the Dawes Act.
3. Directions for the teams:
 - **TEAM I** – Team I will pretend that they are being brought before a Congressional Committee in 1900 to re-evaluate the Dawes Act, and to hear alternative plans. Class members on Team II will act as members of Congress at the hearing.

Team I should divide into three smaller groups composed of 2 to 5 students per group. One group will be assigned to defend the Dawes Act. The two other groups must brainstorm alternative legislation to the Dawes Act and present it before the Committee. When the three groups have presented their plans to the Congressional Committee, the Committee (i.e., the rest of the class) will discuss the plans and vote to adopt the one it deems best.

- **TEAM II** – This team will debate the issue of current historical interpretation. They will be divided into two opposing sides to debate the following resolution:

Resolved: That the Dawes Act was the result of well-intentioned reformers who had reasonable expectations that it would improve life for American Indians.

The **affirmative team** will support the proposition, the **negative team** will argue against the proposition.

Class members in Team I will act as judges for the debate presented by Team II.

Optional: Teams can be divided with each member assigned to debate one particular issue such as:

- a. Who were the most active sponsors of the Dawes Act?
- b. Were the sponsors aware of whether or not the kind of land allotted under the Dawes Act was actually suitable for farming?
- c. Was it unreasonable to believe that private property and farming were superior to communally held land devoted to hunting, gathering, and/or farming?
- d. What role, if any, did Native people themselves play in arguing for or against the Dawes Act?
- e. What happened to land not allotted to Native Americans? What does this show about possible motives of the plan?

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