

THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIGHORN

On the 25th and 26th of June 1876, General Custer and over 600 US soldiers (also known as Bluecoats) attack a Sioux camp. The Sioux were joined by Arapaho and Cheyenne Warriors who helped the Sioux fight back.



Custer had been very confident that he would easily defeat the Sioux. He had been ordered to wait longer until he attacked so that reinforcements could arrive, however he decided to attack anyway. Custer divided his men into 3 sections and tried to surround the Native Americans. However, Custer's Battalion became isolated and were surrounded by Chief Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Custer's men were slaughtered by the Native Americans, in desperation Custer along with the 50 or so men who remained, shot their horses and piled the bodies of the horses high to protect themselves. This bought them a little extra time but within an hour Custer and every single member of his battalion had been killed.

The other sections of the US Army led by Reno and Benton managed to hold out for another day. However, despite being better equipped than the Native Americans they were unable to cope with the ferocity of the attacks from the Sioux Warriors. Both Reno and Benton fled from the battle along with the other Bluecoats who remained alive.

The Battle was an important victory for the Sioux and for Native Americans. Over 250 Bluecoats had been killed, whereas the Sioux suffered only around 100 casualties. Although the Indians won the battle spectacularly, they certainly had not won the war. The American government continued their policy of pushing the Native Americans onto reservations. The 7th Cavalry got their revenge at the massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890 when over 200 Sioux, including many women and children, were murdered by the US Army.

Despite the fact that the defeat was largely Custer's own fault, the American media viewed him as a hero, nicknaming the battle 'Custer's last stand', giving the impression that he heroically fought until the very end. This continued the theme of white Americans being viewed as noble and brave and Native Americans being viewed as wild savages.



A white American painting of the Battle, showing Custer as a hero



A Native American painting of the Battle, showing fallen 'bluecoats'