



Teacher's Guide

True Whispers: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers **The World at War**

Grade Levels:

7-12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

Multicultural

U.S. Geography and Cultures

U.S. History

World History

Synopsis:

Beginning with a review of the injustices of "The Long Walk," government schools, and the Stock Reduction Program that left so many Navajos destitute, introduces the remarkable story of the Navajo Code Talkers and their contributions to American success in the War in the Pacific. The Navajo Code Talkers themselves recall why they answered their government's call to participate in this top-secret mission and how their language was used to create an unbreakable code. They also recall their fear upon landing at Guadalcanal, their first successes, and their essential role in the Battle of Iwo Jima. Although the Code Talkers are reticent to talk about their bravery, the narrator does. The Code Talkers do not complain about the lack of support they received as veterans, though that is obvious as well. The program ends with an excerpt from the 2001 ceremony when four surviving Code Talkers were awarded the Medal of Honor.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

Describe how the American government has treated the Navajo unfairly.

Explain why the Navajo sent young men to be Code Talkers for the American military.

Explain why the enemy could not break the Navajo Code.

Describe the Code Talkers' bravery and dedication during the War in the Pacific.

Express their opinion of government treatment of Navajo veterans.

Vocabulary:

Anasazi, harmonious, assimilated, levy, genocide, cultural genocide, annihilation, purify, unsung heroes, declassified

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

Where do the Navajo live? How do they make a living? Have the Navajo assimilated well into American society?

Has the United States' government treated the Navajo fairly? What injustices do you recall from stories of the opening of the West?

Do Navajo have a unique relationship to the land? How has their relationship with the land influenced their religious beliefs?

Are Navajo exempt from military service? Did they participate in World War II? Does anyone know about the unique contribution Navajo made to our success in World War II?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

Why were Navajo teenagers eager to go to war? What was their motivation to face the dangerous conditions they were sure to meet in the War in the Pacific?

Why was the Navajo language so suited for developing an unbreakable code? Can you describe how the code was devised and why the Code Talkers had to memorize the entire code?

How many lives did the Navajo Code Talkers save? In total, how many Navajo became Code Talkers? Where were they deployed?

Do you think the American government should have recognized the Navajo Code Talkers as heroes when they returned from war? Why did it take so long for their contributions to be recognized by the nation?

Further Activities:

Find out why Philip Johnson was so convinced that the Navajo could develop an unbreakable code. Determine if he developed a special relationship with Navajo children or adults that his elders did not have. Also discover what gave him the determination to press his case on behalf of the Navajo.

Find other firsthand accounts of life as a Navajo Code Talker. Determine if these accounts give you further understanding of the source of the Navajos' strength of character and their willingness to sacrifice for the good of their country.

Find firsthand accounts of soldiers who worked with Navajo Code Talkers. Determine the insights their stories provide into Navajo contributions in the War in the Pacific.

Find detailed information about codes and code breaking during World War I or World War II.

Related New Dimension Media Titles:

Japanese Americans and World War II: Going for Broke
America's Black Soldiers