

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Navajo Code Talkers

By Lydia Lukidis

The Navajo code talkers were secret agents. They helped the U.S. Marines fight in World War II. They were not soldiers. They did not have weapons. Instead, they used their native tongue. The Navajo language became really important. It helped create an unbreakable code.

How can language help a war? American Marines used radios and telephones to communicate. However, the enemy could listen in. They could hear important information. So, the



Navajo Code Talkers in WWII

Marines needed a secret code. It had to be something the enemy could not understand.



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code talkers would send messages back and forth. Nobody else could understand these messages.

The secret code took Navajo words. Then it connected them to things in the war. For example, the names of different birds were used to stand for different kinds of planes. Over 400 vocabulary terms were created. An alphabet system was also used. The first letter of a Navajo word corresponded to one of the letters in the English alphabet. For example, the Navajo word "wol-la-chee" means ant. It stands for the letter A.

Code talking goes back to World War I when Choctaw soldiers helped the U.S. Army. However, the Navajo code talkers were more successful. By 1945, about 540 Navajos served as Marines. About 400 of those were code talkers. They made a big difference in the war and helped America.

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1. What contribution did the Navajo code talkers make to the American war effort?
- a. They used their civil engineering skills to operate machinery.
  - b. They enlisted the help of Choctaw people to serve as soldiers.
  - c. They used their native language as a secret code to pass along information.
  - d. They used weapons to fight against the enemy.



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- a. Radios and telephones were expensive.
  - b. Radios and telephones often lost their signal.
  - c. Radios and telephones were not able to be moved from place to place.
  - d. Radios and telephones gave the enemy an opportunity to listen to important information.
4. How many war-related vocabulary words did the Navajo code talkers develop?
- a. less than 100
  - b. between 250 and 500
  - c. between 750 and 1,000
  - d. more than 1,000
5. Give one example of how Navajo words were connected to things in the war.

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Unscramble the letters in the boxes in order to form vocabulary words from "Navajo Code Talkers." Write the complete word on the line.

1. **o d c e**

hint: system of words, letters, and symbols used for secret communication

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **v e i n r o  
t e r a s**

hint: land set aside by the government for Native Americans

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **j N v o a a**

\_\_\_\_\_



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hint: members of the military who serve on land or at sea

6. **l a h p e t b a**

hint: letters or symbols that make up the sounds of a language

\_\_\_\_\_

7. **v t n a i e**

hint: local, associated with a region or geographic area

\_\_\_\_\_

8. **n e i g n e r e**

hint: a person who builds and maintains machinery

\_\_\_\_\_

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In the article, "Navajo Code Talkers," you learned that more than 400 Navajo code talkers contributed to the American war effort and made a huge difference for the American side.



Based on the information in the article, describe **three reasons** you think the Navajo code talking system was so successful.

Write your answer on the lines below.

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## ANSWER KEY

# Navajo Code Talkers

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1. What contribution did the Navajo code talkers make to the American war effort? **c**
  - a. They used their civil engineering skills to operate machinery.
  - b. They enlisted the help of Choctaw people to serve as soldiers.

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## ANSWER KEY

# Navajo Code Talkers

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Unscramble the letters in the boxes in order to form vocabulary words from "Navajo Code Talkers." Write the complete word on the line.

1. 

o	d	c	e
---	---	---	---

code

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hint: local, associated with a region or geographic area

8. 

n	e	i	g	n	e	r	e
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

engineer

hint: a person who builds and maintains machinery

LD