

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.

The military thought of using a code machine, but these would take too long. Then Philip Johnston solved the problem. He was a civil engineer. Johnston had grown up on a Navajo reservation. He could speak Navajo. That's how he came up with the idea of a Navajo code. The Navajo code talkers were able to pass on messages in minutes. It would have taken the code machine hours to do the same thing.

The Navajo language is very complicated. It is spoken orally and never written. The language does not have an alphabet or symbols. It was perfect for a secret code. The 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.

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

# Navajo Code Talkers

By Lydia Lukidis



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.

2. Who was Philip Johnston?

---

---

3. According to the article, what was the disadvantage to using radios and telephones during the war?

- 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.

---

---

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

# Navajo Code Talkers

By Lydia Lukidis



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**

hint: an American Indian people group of New Mexico and Arizona

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **d t c p m i**  
**e c o l a**

hint: difficult to understand

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **r M i n a s e**

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

\_\_\_\_\_



# ANSWER KEY

## Navajo Code Talkers

By Lydia Lukidis



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.
- c. They used their native language as a secret code to pass along information.**
- d. They used weapons to fight against the enemy.

2. Who was Philip Johnston?

**Philip Johnston was a civil engineer who grew up on a Navajo reservation and could speak Navajo. He came up with the idea of the Navajo code.**

3. According to the article, what was the disadvantage to using radios and telephones during the war? **d**

- 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? **b**

- 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.

**The names of different birds in the Navajo language were used to stand for different kinds of airplanes.**

# ANSWER KEY

## Navajo Code Talkers

By Lydia Lukidis



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

code

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

hint: land set aside by the government for Native Americans

reservation

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

hint: an American Indian people group of New Mexico and Arizona

Navajo

4. **d t c p m i  
e c o l a**

hint: difficult to understand

complicated

5. **r M i n a s e**

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

Marines

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

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

alphabet

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

hint: local, associated with a region or geographic area

native

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

hint: a person who builds and maintains machinery

engineer

LD