

## **Moving to an Indian Reservation**

The year is 1877, and you are a Native American teenager. You are part of the Nez Perce tribe, living in modern-day Oregon on the west coast of North America. Your ancestors have been hunting and fishing in this area for thousands of years. The Nez Perce are master fishermen, and you help your father catch salmon in the Columbia River.

Yesterday, some soldiers from the U.S. Army arrived at your fishing camp and delivered a troubling message. They told your leader, Chief Joseph, that the Nez Perce tribe must move to an Indian reservation in Idaho. They are giving your community one day to prepare for the move, and they will be back tomorrow to take everyone to the reservation.

Chief Joseph called a tribal meeting after the soldiers left. He said that he is not going to surrender and move to the reservation. Instead, he has a plan to escape to Canada on horseback. Anyone who wants to join him can come. The journey will cover hundreds of miles in unknown territory, and there will be battles with U.S. Army soldiers along the way. Many Nez Perce and many U.S. soldiers have already died in such battles. In other words, by choosing to go with Chief Joseph, you are willing to risk your life to gain freedom.

If you decide to stay, you will be taken to the reservation to live with other members of your tribe. The reservation has a river for fishing, and many other natural resources, but it is far from your ancestral lands.

Also, you have heard that children and teenagers are being taken out of the reservations and sent to boarding schools. At the schools, Indian children are required to dress and act according to white American culture. They are punished if they speak their own language or practice their religious beliefs. The boys must even cut their long hair—something they would never do among their own people. What will you do?

### Moving to an Indian Reservation Response

Will you try to escape with Chief Joseph, knowing that you will probably have to fight for your life? Or will you go to the reservation, where you might live peacefully, or you might be forced to go to a boarding school?

Write your response to the dilemma in the space below.

What will you do? Why will you do it?

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