

# How to Use this Lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to create a history-themed topics for reading and also for research, creative writing, and discussion. You can choose whether you want students to do a lot of outside research and stick to the facts. Or if you prefer, students can be more creative and create fictional stories based on the project prompts.

Furthermore, you can play up or play down the Historical Secret Agent aspect, having students actually imagine they are going back into time or ignore that bit and play it more straight.

This lesson contains the following features:

1. **Recruitment Letter:** You can use this aspect of the unit, that they belong to a crack team of secret agents with a time machine, to engage students. From a creative-writing point of view, it's fun to have them imagine that they really are back in the 1920s on the Osage reservation investigating the murders. But you can also leave this side out if you prefer and treat the lesson in a more traditional way.
2. **Image:** The hero image and title introduce the theme of the Osage Indian murders, as they are known. Students may have heard about this from the Martin Scorsese movie, *Killers of the Flower Moon*. You can ask students what they know about reservations, the way native Americans were treated in the 1920s and before, ask if they know which tribe's land the class is located on. You can also introduce the idea that this is a story about how a native American tribe became the richest people in the world, and why they think this story isn't more widely known. You can also talk about why a Native American tribe might visit the President.
3. **Before you read:** These questions follow some of the questions raised above asking what students know about native tribes and their treatment by the US government as well as the situation in their own country. This can help shape the context for the story.
4. **Vocabulary:** A preview of key vocab for the reading or interesting words along with 3 comprehension or discussion questions. The goal of the questions is to get students retaining words by thinking about them or using them, not necessarily to answer the questions correctly or start a long discussion.
5. **Your Briefing:** A clear and fact-based description of how oil was discovered on the Osage reservation, how the US government passed laws to control the flow of wealth including the appointment of white guardians for the tribe, and the subsequent Reign of Terror where over 100 people were killed, many of them unsolved. At the same time, tribe members were unable to hold on to all of their wealth!

6. **Your Mission:** What does the student need to do as a time-traveler, or learn more about as a researcher? In this case, they need to decide how to prevent the murders of the Osage people. Can they find the guilty parties and the underlying circumstances that allowed these terrible crimes to occur?
7. **Comprehension Quiz:** 5 basic comprehension questions to check students did the reading and to ensure comprehension.
8. **Discussion Questions:** These four questions tackle the situation surrounding the Osage's oil discoveries including the appointment of guardians how stereotypes about Natives could have influenced that program. Other questions point to the role of the then-new, untested FBI and also the long-term impact of the Reign of Terror on the Osage.
9. **Projects:** This reading has 5 choices of extension activity:
  - a. **Be a Part of History to Complete the Mission:** The reader should imagine themselves back in Oklahoma in 1920 when the oil is flowing and no one has been murdered. Will they start by interviewing the Osage, the guardians, or investigating the legal system around the oil money?
  - b. Continue the story: What happened after the laws were changed and a few suspects were indeed imprisoned? Students can write about the long-term effects of the oil money and the Reign of Terror. They may want to research recent court cases and settlements. It wasn't until 2011 that the Osage settled with the government and got something of their rightful due.
  - c. A prompt to learn more about the Osage besides their involvement with oil.
  - d. A prompt to learn about indigenous people from another part of the world. International students can choose a people from their country or region, or their own culture. Americans may want to look at the tribes that live or lived on the land they occupy now.
  - e. Write a letter to the US Government asking them to change the law on the Osage and their rights to inherit the oil money without a guardian. This is great practice for a persuasive essay!

GENERAL T. J. BURNS  
HSA HEADQUARTERS  
LOGAN BUILDING  
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003



Dear Agent,

Congratulations, If you're reading this you have been chosen for the most prestigious of assignments, to work for the Historical Secret Agents! (HSA)

As an HSA member, you will have access to highly secretive information covering thousands of years of human history. Each mission will task you with studying the past carefully to find new solutions to old problems! This is not an easy job and each mission will place you into difficult situations.

For each mission you will have to be resourceful and come up with an effective plan to change - or protect - history for the better!

To say this is an important job is a severe understatement. As the quote says below, understanding our past is essential for the preservation and improvement of our history.

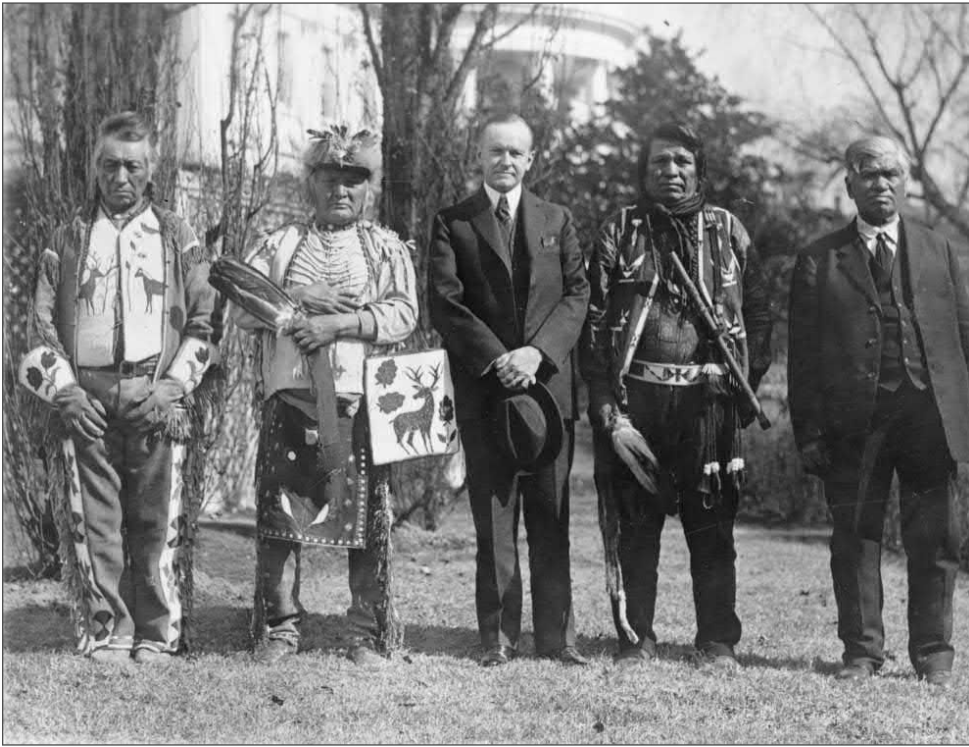
Sincerely,

*T. J. Burns*

General T.J. Burns, Director HSA

THOSE WHO FAIL TO LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE  
CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT

## The Osage Indian Murders



Delegation of the Osage tribe with President Coolidge, 1924

### Before You Read

1. What do you know about the Native American tribes? What do you know about indigenous people in your country?
2. What do you know about how European settlers and the US government treated Native Americans? Why do you think Native Americans were treated so poorly?
3. Do you think the US owes Natives reparations or other compensation for their treatment?
4. Wealth has many benefits but also can lead to problems. What sorts of problems arise when people have a great deal of money?

### Vocabulary Definitions

Write the letter of the definition next to the matching word.

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. tribe (n.) ____          | a. moved from one place to another   |
| 2. migrated (v.) ____       | b. asked for something in a serious way  |
| 3. reservation (n.) ____    | c. a close group of people linked by family, societal, religious, or economic ties |
| 4. uprooting (v.) ____      | d. to be made less important than something or someone else                        |
| 5. unscrupulous (adj.) ____ | e. having no or low moral values   |
| 6. passed down (v.) ____    | f. a person who takes responsibility for another                                   |
| 7. guardian (n.) ____       | g. given from one person to another, usually from an older generation to a younger |
| 8. deceased (adj.) ____     | h. no longer alive   |
| 9. remains (n.) ____        | i. land set aside for native people to live on                                     |
| 10. appealed (v.) ____      | j. moving from a comfortable place such as a home                                  |
| 11. overshadowed (v.) ____  | k. what is left of a dead body   |

## Vocabulary Questions

Discuss with a partner.

1. Are there any native **tribes** in your country or region? Were there in the past?
2. Have you ever done or witnessed something **unscrupulous**? How did you feel about it?
3. Give an example of something that was **passed down** in your family.

### Your Briefing

593 words -1010 -1200L

Place: Osage County, Oklahoma

Time: 1921-1925

1894 found the *tribe* of Osage Native American Indians living in the northeastern part of Oklahoma. As was the case with many Native American tribes, though the Osage had originated in the eastern part of the United States, wars, migration, and the government kept them moving west until they were forced to move onto a *reservation* in Kansas. Later, they agreed to sell this land to the government and resettle on a reservation in Oklahoma. This could not have been an easy or pleasant experience for them as they had to keep *uprooting* their homes and moving to new areas, most often on foot. Moreover, the new area in Oklahoma was poor land for farming.

Fortunately, in 1894, oil was discovered on the Osage land. As a result, by the 1920s, the Osage were taking in hundreds of millions of dollars a year (by today's standards) and were known to be the richest people on Earth. Unfortunately, all this wealth attracted the attention of the government and many *unscrupulous* people.

Even though the Osage owned their land and the money made from its oil belonged to them, this was done through a system called "headrights". Headrights, or the ability to collect money from oil on the land, could be *passed down* to children or other relatives even if they were not Osage. In 1921, the US government passed a law that required every person with these headrights who was more than 50% Osage to have a *guardian*. These guardians would manage the money for the Osage and prevent them from spending all of it. However, the guardians, who were always white men, were able to keep some of the money for themselves and often prevented the

Osage from spending their money as they liked. The guardians also had a lot of influence over who would inherit the headrights of *deceased* Osage. Around this time, some suspicious things started to happen with the Osage landowners.

The early 1920's was referred to as the "Reign of Terror" for the Osage people. During that time, over 20 people were murdered in Osage county—18 of them were Native American and several were all from one family. In May of 1921, hunters found the *remains* of an Osage woman named Anna Brown. After an investigation, her death was ruled to be accidental and her headrights passed to her mother, Lizzie Q. Kyle, who died a few months later. Over the next few months, two of Anna's cousins were shot dead and her sister died when a bomb exploded in her house. Clues pointed to a business associate, a white man named William Hale. Interestingly, Hale's nephew was married to an Osage woman, Mollie Kyle. In addition to her own headrights, she had inherited those of her murdered sisters, mother, and cousin. During the trial of William Hale and his nephews, it was revealed that Mollie was slowly being poisoned.

As the deaths piled up, local officials and the Office of Indian Affairs seemed incapable of, or uninterested in, solving the crimes. Out of desperation, the Osage *appealed* to the newly formed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). It was their first murder case. Hale and his accomplices were convicted of murder and conspiracy. In 1925, Congress changed the law allowing only Osage people to inherit headrights. However, by then over 100 suspected murders had occurred and very few were ever solved. It was a devastating time for the Osage people and the notoriety of the "Reign of Terror" *overshadowed* their general reputation as a peaceful and hard-working people.

## Your Mission

Prevent the murders of the Osage people.

## Osage Indian Murders History Quiz

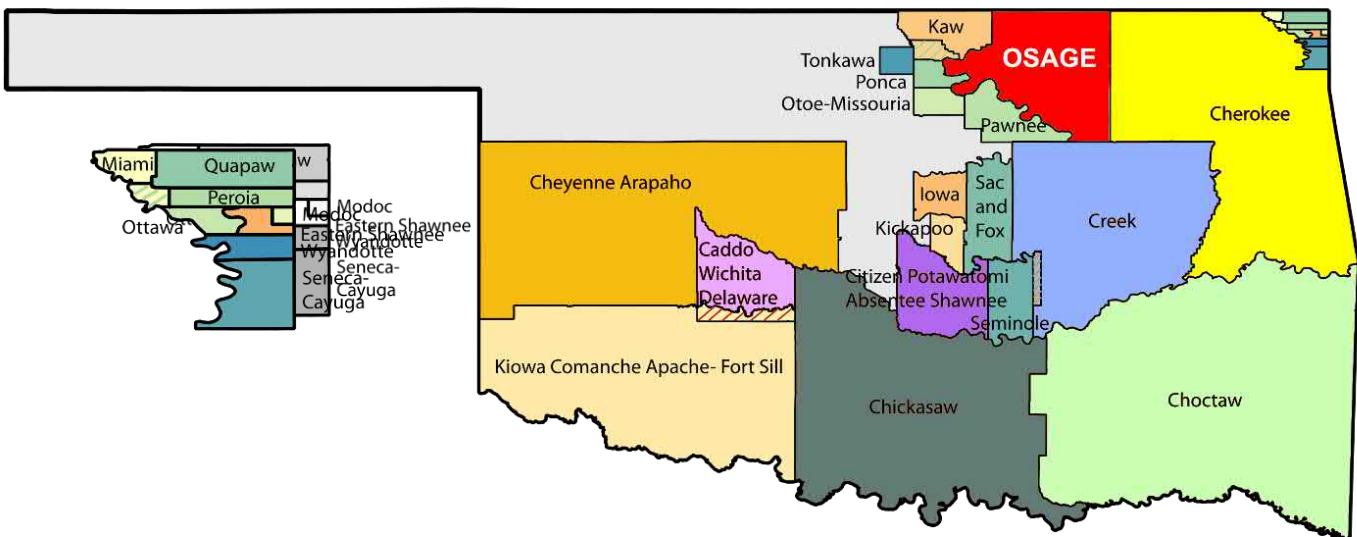
1. The Osage tribe first formed in \_\_\_\_.
  - a. Kansas
  - b. Oklahoma
  - c. the Eastern United States
  - d. various areas
2. Oil was discovered on Osage lands in \_\_\_\_.
  - a. 1897
  - b. 1921
  - c. 1925
  - d. 1997
3. The official reason Osage were given guardians to help them with \_\_\_\_.
  - a. drilling oil
  - b. education
  - c. saving their money
  - d. farming
4. \_\_\_\_ was one of the first Osage victims of the "Reign of Terror".
  - a. Mollie Kyle
  - b. Lizzie Q. Kyle
  - c. Anna Brown
  - d. William Hale
5. The Osage asked the FBI to help them because \_\_\_\_.
  - a. the FBI was very famous
  - b. the FBI offered to help
  - c. the FBI was responsible for helping native people
  - d. no one else would help them

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the United States government implemented the guardian program for the Osage Indians?
2. Only people who were more than 50% Osage were required to have a guardian. What role do you think our "blood" or genetics play in who we are as people? What role can stereotypes about people's ethnicities play in how they are treated?
3. The Osage case was the first time the FBI tackled a murder case. Do you know of any famous cases the FBI has solved or been unable to solve?
4. The Osage felt their reputation was highly damaged by the "Reign of Terror". Why or how is a community affected when they suffer from negative publicity, even when it is not their fault?

## Projects

1. **Be a Part of History to Complete the Mission:** Travel back to 1920 when the oil is pumping, the Osage are getting rich, and none have been murdered yet. How will you stop the “Reign of Terror”? Will you start by talking to the Osage people themselves or to the people who want to take their money? You know about William Hale and his nephews, but there are other people to watch out for too.
2. Continue the story- After some of those guilty of murdering the Osage were put in prison and the government changed the law allowing only Osage to inherit headrights, did life return to normal? Write about 1-2 pages from the perspective of an Osage person living during this time.
3. Research the Osage Indians-What are some other ways we can remember them other than for the “Reign of Terror”?
4. Research an indigenous group from your area of the world- Where did they come from? What were their accomplishments? What was/is their relationship with the national government of their area? As you read, use “Supplement 6: List of Sources or References”) to help you determine how biased or unbiased the information is.
5. Write a letter to the United States government asking them to change the law requiring the Osage landowners to have guardians. Be sure to include two or three strong reasons why the law should be changed.



Map of the tribes of Oklahoma's territory, 2012. Wikimedia Commons.

## References

- Grann, D. (2017). *Killers of the flower moon: The Osage murders and the birth of the FBI*. Vintage.
- Howell M. (2014, January 12). Greed, collusion lead to Osage murders. (2014, January 12). *The Oklahoman*. <https://www.oklahoman.com/article/3923054/stories-of-the-ages-greed-collusion-lead-to-reign-of-terror-against-osage-nation>
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). Osage. (n.d.). In *Britannica.com* Retrieved 17 May 2021 from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Osage>



## 6. List of Sources or References

When using academic sources for research, it's important to cite the FULL source at the end of your writing. Academic References should be listed in an academic format. APA and MLA are the two most common. The best website with the most current rules on academic format, which are constantly changing, is Purdue OWL. There are lots of free websites like Citation Maker or Citefast to help make a reference. It is important to check carefully when using these, as they are prone to making mistakes!

### General Notes

1. Alphabetize (A-Z) source lists using LAST Name (or group/article title if no name).
2. List all authors for a source, not just the first one!
3. *Italicize* book and journal titles.
4. Rules about article or webpage titles vary depending on the source and style.
5. Capitalization rules vary from style to style.
6. Use HANGING INDENT. Indent all lines after the first of each source. It makes them much easier to see on the list!

### References – APA

Andrews, C. (2013, Sept. 16). Nikola Tesla - The man and his legacy. *E & T Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2013/09/nikola-tesla-the-man-and-his-legacy/>

Cheney, M. (1981). *Tesla, the man out of time*. Prentice-Hall.

Ebert, Roger. (2006, June 1) *An Inconvenient Truth movie review*. Roger Ebert.com. [www.rogerebert.com/reviews/an-inconvenient-truth-2006](http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/an-inconvenient-truth-2006)

- Single-spaced
- Author's first name is initial
- Article not in quotes or italicized
- Web page name is italicized
- Date comes after author, in parentheses
- Only first word and proper nouns capitalized in titles

### Works Cited – MLA

Andrews, Crispin. "Nikola Tesla - The Man and His Legacy." *E & T Magazine*, 16 Sept. 2013, [eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2013/09/nikola-tesla-the-man-and-his-legacy/](https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2013/09/nikola-tesla-the-man-and-his-legacy/).

Cheney, Margaret. *Tesla: Man out of Time*. Prentice-Hall, 1981.

Ebert, Roger. "An Inconvenient Truth Movie Review (2006): Roger Ebert." *Roger Ebert.com*, 1 June 2006, [www.rogerebert.com/reviews/an-inconvenient-truth-2006](http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/an-inconvenient-truth-2006).

- Double-spaced
- Author's first name is spelled out
- Article and web page names in quotes
- Website name italicized
- Date comes after name of source
- Important words in titles capitalized

For more examples see Purdue's Online Writing Center website: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

## Free Research Sites for Students

- National Geographic Resource Library ( <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/resource-library> ) Reliable online encyclopedia with articles in a broad range of areas, sortable by resource type, category, and grade level.
- Simple Wikipedia ( [https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) ) Wikipedia written in simpler language, which is useful for ESL or EFL students and younger students.
- Encyclopedia Britannica ( <https://www.britannica.com/> ) authoritative and comprehensive, but the language is not graded. You can also check out Britannica Kids ( <https://kids.britannica.com/> ) for students K-12 and thus classroom safe with simpler language.
- 2Lingual ( <https://www.2lingual.com> ) a bilingual search engine so students can search in English and their first language.
- Kiddle ( <https://www.kiddle.co> ) a visual search engine, designed for kids but that can be helpful for ESL or EFL students, or to collect basic information on a topic. It's also classroom safe.

*(Note that I cannot take responsibility for the content of these third-party sites. These websites were free and reliable research sources at the time of writing but may have changed since then.)*

## Answers

Vocab 1. c 2. a 3. i 4. j 5. e 6. g 7. f 8. h 9. k 10. b 11. d

Quiz 1. a 2. a 3. c 4. c 5. d

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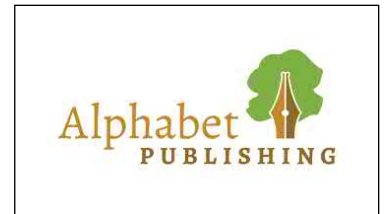


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- What happened to the colony of Roanoke Island?
- Who wrote Shakespeare's plays?
- Was there a way to keep Korea unified?
- Do aliens make crop circles or are they hoaxes?
- Was Genghis Khan a bloodthirsty barbarian or a wise and just ruler?
- Who robbed the Isabelle Stewart Museum?
- Who killed Tupac? Or is he still alive?
- What caused the hysteria around the Salem Witch trials?

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