# Orders on the Plains

How a military post and its troops carried out federal Indian policy

**OKH.C.3.1.E** "Examine the purpose for western military posts, such as Fort Sill, and the role of military regiments, such as the Buffalo Soldiers, in implementing Indian policy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two reasons the army needed Fort Sill, circle two actions soldiers took, and write 1 beside a sentence showing a consequence for Native people.

### Fort Sill and Federal Power

1 In 1869, the U.S. Army established Fort Sill in Indian Territory, in what is now southwestern Oklahoma. Its location put soldiers near the lands assigned to Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache people under the 1867 Medicine Lodge treaties. Federal leaders wanted those nations to live on reservations instead of moving freely across the Plains. A permanent post gave the army a place to store supplies, station troops, and send out patrols. It also made federal power visible near the reservations. For Native communities, the post was not simply a building project. It was part of a policy that restricted where people could live and travel.

2 The army used western posts to turn policy into action. From Fort Sill, soldiers could monitor reservation boundaries, escort supply wagons, and pursue groups that resisted confinement. During the Red River War of 1874 to 1875, army campaigns against Comanche, Kiowa, and other Plains peoples helped force more people onto reservations. The post connected distant orders from Washington to armed operations on the ground. Officials described reservations as a way to bring order, but many Native people saw lost access to hunting grounds and reduced control over their lives. A fort's purpose therefore depended on whose experience you considered.

3 Among the regiments sent west were the Buffalo Soldiers, a name given to Black U.S. Army troops. Members of the 10th Cavalry served at Fort Sill in its early years. Like other soldiers, they patrolled, guarded supplies, and carried out orders connected to reservation policy. They did not write that policy, but their service helped the government enforce it. These troops faced racial discrimination within the army even as they exercised federal power over Native nations. Their history shows that a soldier could be denied equal treatment by one institution while helping that institution limit another group's freedom.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Fort Sill's location help the army enforce reservation policy?

2. How did two activities based at Fort Sill help turn federal policy into action?

3. What was the 10th Cavalry's role in reservation policy, and how did that role differ from the role of federal leaders?

4. Why might an army official and a Native resident describe Fort Sill's purpose differently? Use evidence from the passage.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum sign calls Fort Sill "a post that brought order to the Plains." Write a 75 to 105 word replacement sign that evaluates that claim. Explain the post's purpose, how Buffalo Soldiers helped carry out policy, and one consequence for Native nations; distinguish the soldiers from the leaders who made the policy.

ANSWER KEY

# Orders on the Plains

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.3.1.E

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons the army needed Fort Sill, circle two actions soldiers took, and write 1 beside a sentence showing a consequence for Native people. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Why did Fort Sill's location help the army enforce reservation policy? | **It placed troops near lands assigned to Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache people, where they could patrol and monitor the reservations.** |
| 2 | How did two activities based at Fort Sill help turn federal policy into action? | **Soldiers monitored reservation boundaries and pursued groups that resisted confinement, helping enforce the policy that Native nations live on reservations.** |
| 3 | What was the 10th Cavalry's role in reservation policy, and how did that role differ from the role of federal leaders? | **Members of the 10th Cavalry carried out orders through duties such as patrols. Federal leaders made the policy; the soldiers helped enforce it.** |
| 4 | Why might an army official and a Native resident describe Fort Sill's purpose differently? Use evidence from the passage. | **An official might say the post helped bring order by enforcing reservations. A Native resident might point to restricted travel, lost hunting grounds, and reduced control over daily life.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Fort Sill helped the federal government enforce reservation policy near Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache lands. The post supplied troops and supported patrols, so calling its work “order” tells only the government's side. Members of the 10th Cavalry, among the Black troops known as Buffalo Soldiers, served there and carried out orders; they did not create the policy. Military campaigns and patrols helped restrict Native travel and access to hunting grounds. The soldiers also faced discrimination in the army. A fuller sign should show both the government's goal and the loss of Native freedom.

Accept other supported examples of duties, including escorting supply wagons or guarding supplies. In the museum sign, look for an evaluation of “order” that includes both the federal purpose and a Native consequence.