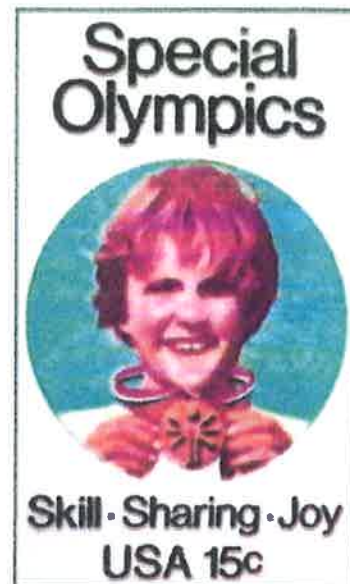


High School



Reading Comprehension: Informational Text Bundle

DIRECTIONS
INTRODUCTION

Read this story/passage and answer the questions that follow. This passage tells about a code that helped the United States during World War II in the Pacific.

Baffling the Enemy

Wars don't start immediately. The warning signs of war are like the small bubbles that begin to form in water set to boil. Countries readying for war begin preparations long before the first hostile act occurs. During these preparations, all sides try to find ways to gain an advantage. A common tactic is to keep your own military plans secret while trying to uncover the plans of your enemy. In order to do this, many militaries develop their own codes and employ code-breakers to pick apart the codes of their enemies. There were many codes used and broken during World War II. However, there was one code that defied all attempts to break it.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States became engaged in a difficult worldwide war in the Pacific Ocean, Asia, Europe, and Africa. The U.S. had some codes in place at that time, but those in charge were always looking for a code that would stump enemy decoders.

California engineer Philip Johnston made a suggestion to the United States Marine Corps about how this might be done. As the son of a missionary to the Navajo, Johnston had grown up among the tribe—or Dine, as they call themselves—and learned their language. He said that, since few people other than the Navajo knew this language, it would be the perfect code for the military. Part of what made it so ideal was that it would be a hard language for someone to learn since it was only an oral—not a written—language. This meant that thousands of words would have to be memorized. Dialects, sounds, changes in pitch, and syntax add to its complexity.



*Philip Johnston with
an unidentified
Navajo Code Talker.*

To evaluate if this language could form the basis for a code, Johnston offered to conduct a test. A group of Navajo was asked to encode, transmit, and decode a three-line message in English. The test proved a huge success. The Navajo were able to complete the task in 20 seconds, far faster than the half hour it took machines to do the same task. In May 1942, the first 29 Navajo code talkers began their training as U.S. Marines.

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The first task in forming an effective code-talking process was constructing a code that all Navajo code talkers could use. A dictionary was prepared that used a Navajo word for each of about 450 frequently used military terms. In addition, several Navajo words were selected to represent each letter of the English alphabet. The Navajo words used were typically the names of animals or common objects. Having more than one word to represent a single letter added to the difficulty of breaking the code. Both the dictionary and all the special military code words had to be memorized.



The original 29 Navajo Code Talkers

The Navajo words themselves made no sense when strung together. More importantly, they were not directly related to the information in the message. Here is how the code worked.



*South Pacific, 1943
Navajo Indians operate a field radio while attached to a Marine Artillery Regiment in the South Pacific.*

The message in English would be encoded or changed into Navajo words by a Navajo code talker. It would then be sent by radio or telephone to another Navajo code talker. That person decoded the message by changing the Navajo word into its English equivalent. The first letter of each of the English words became the message. (Figure 1 shows some of the sounds for Navajo words and their English translation.)

<i>Wol-La Chee</i>	= Ant	<i>Ah-Tad</i>	= Girl	= Pant	
<i>Be-La-Sana</i>	= Apple	<i>Klizzie</i>	= Goat	<i>Bi-So-Dih</i>	= Pig
<i>Tse-Nill</i>	= Axe	<i>Jeha</i>	= Gum	<i>Ne-Zhoni</i>	= Pretty

Figure 1


Let's take a message like "Need backup." The sender could use the Navajo words for *needle, ear, elk, deer, badger, apple, cow, kettle, uncle, and pant*. The first letters of the English translations of these words would spell out the message. However, the code

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talkers could have chosen other Navajo words representing the same initial English letters to send the same message.

Approximately 400 Navajo Marines served as code talkers during the war. They were attached to every Marine unit and were involved in all of the major battles in the Pacific. One of the most memorable battles was fought on the island of Iwo Jima in 1945. Marines raising the flag on an extinct volcano, Mount Suribachi, were caught on film and the photograph was later used as a model for an impressive statue in Washington, D.C. The actions of the code talkers during that battle give an indication of how important these men were in the war. Records indicate that, for 48 hours, six code talkers sent and received about 800 flawless messages.

For years, the Navajo code talkers and their work were kept secret. They went unrecognized by the government until 1992. At that time, they were officially honored with the opening of a permanent exhibit at the Pentagon in Washington. Among the memorabilia is the code the Navajo code talkers used and information about how it worked. There are also photographs of the Navajo and examples of the equipment they used to send and receive messages. ■

 **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**
Do you think using the Navajo code was a good idea? Why or why not?



ABOVE: There are six Flag Raisers in the photo. Four in the front line and two in back. The front four are (left to right) Ira Hayes, Franklin Sousley, John Bradley and Harlon Block. The back two are Michael Strank (behind Sousley) and Rene Gagnon (behind Bradley).

Strank, Block and Sousley would die shortly afterwards. Bradley, Hayes and Gagnon became national heroes within weeks.



BOTTOM PHOTO: December 1999. Assistant secretary of defense Arthur L. Money presents Charles Chibitty with a cased American flag that was flown over the capitol during ceremonies in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. The 78-year-old Chibitty was the last surviving World War II Army "code talker." Chibitty died on July 26, 2005. Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Broils, USA.

1. In paragraph 1, what does the author mean when he says, "The warning signs of war are like the small bubbles that begin to form in water set to boil"?

- A. There are many ways to avoid going to war.
- B. There is no way to stop a war once it has started.
- C. Small events will last longer than large conflicts.
- D. Small events often lead to a larger conflict.

HINT: This question asks you to predict what the author means by a specific phrase. Does the paragraph give any clues about the sentence's meaning?

2. The author attempts to

- A. show readers how to write their own codes.
- B. explain why code talkers were important.
- C. tell readers why code talkers are hard to find.
- D. describe how easy it is to break most codes.

HINT: This question asks you to determine the author's purpose. Think about what you have read. Why did the author write this passage?

3. Why did Phillip Johnston suggest using the Navajo language to encode messages?

- A. He thought it would be easy for code talkers to memorize the language.
- B. He knew that few people besides the Navajo could understand the language.
- C. He thought that it would take a long time for code talkers to decode the messages.
- D. He knew that the words used in the Navajo language were similar to English words.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread paragraph 3.

4. In paragraph 3, the word "complexity" means

- A. complication.
- B. surprises.
- C. beauty.
- D. effectiveness.

HINT: This question asks you to identify the meaning of the word "complexity." Reread paragraph 3. Are there any clues to the word's meaning in the paragraph?

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- 5. In paragraph 5, why does the author include information about the code used by the Navajo?**
- A. to tell readers how many code talkers were used
 - B. to describe how readers can easily learn the code
 - C. to show how difficult it was to break the code
 - D. to explain why code talkers were kept a secret

HINT: This question asks you to determine why the author included specific information. Reread paragraph 5. How does the information about the code affect how you understood the passage?

- 6. Though "Baffling the Enemy" is about the code used by the Navajo in World War II, it would be useful background reading for an oral report on**
- A. Navajo traditions and beliefs.
 - B. how World War II changed the world.
 - C. why many wars and conflicts end well.
 - D. successful codes used throughout time.

HINT: This question asks you to think about what the passage was about. Which of the answer options best fits the question being asked?

- 7. Why was the work of code talkers most likely kept secret?**
- A. In case the government needed to use the code again
 - B. because the government knew that people would be mad
 - C. so the code talkers could return to their normal lives
 - D. to help the code talkers find better jobs after the war

HINT: This question asks you to make a judgment about something related to this topic. Eliminate distractor answers in order to choose the best one.

- 8. How were the code talkers honored in 1992?**
- A. All of the code talkers received medals of honor.
 - B. The code talkers were finally paid for their work.
 - C. A permanent exhibit about the code talkers opened.
 - D. A book about the code talkers' work was published.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the end of the passage.

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9. Which of the following added to the difficulty of the Navajo code used during World War II?

- A. Each Navajo Marine had his own way of speaking the code.
- B. Each English letter had more than one Navajo word representing it.
- C. The code was written and spoken.
- D. The code was sent only by telephone.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread paragraph 5.

10. Which detail supports the author's central idea?

- A. The Navajo code took a long time for people to learn.
- B. Records indicate that, for 48 hours, six code talkers sent and received about 800 flawless messages.
- C. Other American Indian languages have been used as codes.
- D. Over 400 Navajo Marines served as code talkers.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. Think about what the passage was about. Which answer option best supports the central idea of the passage?

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11. In July 2001, four of the five Navajo code talkers still living and relatives of the other twenty-four received Congressional gold medals, expressing gratitude on behalf of the American people.

- Should these Marines have received anything more than medals for the role they had played during World War II? Explain.**

Use specific information from the article and any additional insight to support your response.