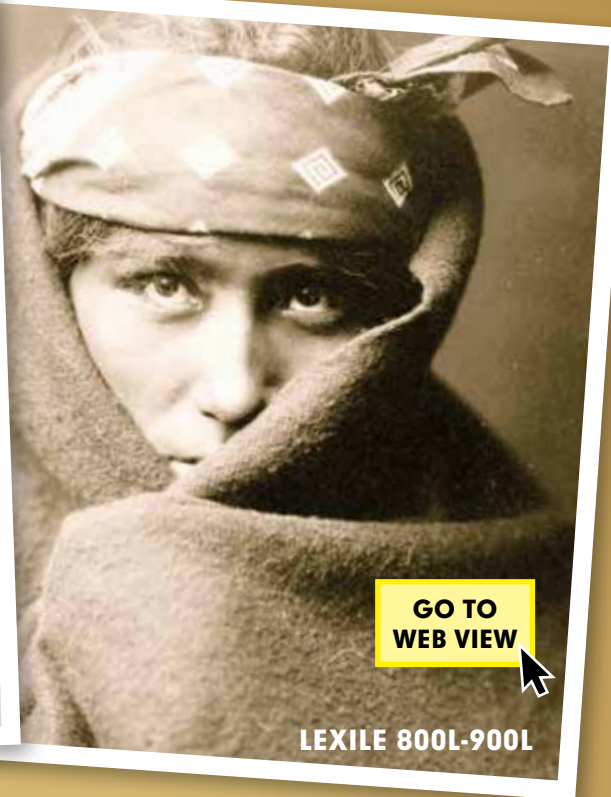




WOULD WE





**GO TO
WEB VIEW**

LEXILE 800L-900L

BE KILLED?



VINTAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES (DOLLY); LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES (SIOUX BOY); ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES (NAVAJO BOY); LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (ALL OTHER IMAGES)

In the late 1800s, thousands of Native Americans were taken from their families. These children were sent to boarding schools to “learn the ways of the white man.”

This is their story.

BY LAUREN TARSHIS



Was 11-year-old Ota Kte going to be killed?

The year was 1879. Ota Kte, a member of the Lakota tribe, was riding on a train with 83 other Native American children. They had left their families in the Dakota plains and were now traveling east to a mysterious land called Pennsylvania. Watching over them was a white man in an Army uniform.

Ota Kte's father had told him that the children were being taken to a school—but Ota Kte was sure the soldier had tricked his father. That's because Ota Kte knew one thing: Never trust a white man.

For longer than he had been alive, Ota Kte's people had suffered at the hands of white people. White men stole their land, brought deadly “white man” diseases, and started endless wars.

Ota Kte watched this white soldier as the train traveled east. How had this man persuaded so many Native American people to send their children away? And what did he really want with Ota Kte?



PAUSE AND THINK: Who was Ota Kte? Where was he going?

VOCABULARY

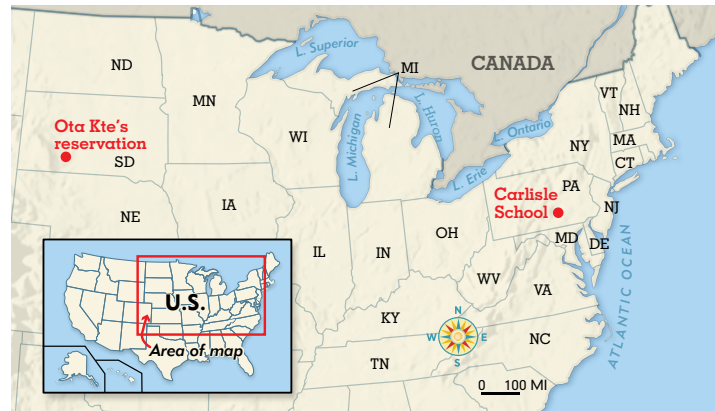
unique: special and different; unlike anything else

ancestors: family members who lived in the past

despair: a feeling of no longer having hope

heritage: the stories, achievements, history, and beliefs that are part of a group

thriving: succeeding; doing well



A LONG JOURNEY Ota Kte was a member of the Lakota tribe. Before being sent to the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania, he lived on a reservation in South Dakota.

Under Control

As Ota Kte rode that train east, America's Indian tribes were in trouble. A century earlier, more than 1.5 million Native people were living in America. They belonged to hundreds of **unique** tribes—just like Ota Kte's. His **ancestors** had always lived freely across a large area of the Great Plains.

But by 1879, white people and the U.S. Army had pushed most tribes off their lands. At the same time, “white man” diseases had wiped out much of their population. America's 300,000 remaining Native Americans were forced to live on small pieces of land called reservations.

For Native people, this was a shocking and upsetting change. The new land was often difficult to farm, and hunters could no longer roam freely. Many tribes faced hunger and **despair**.



PAUSE AND THINK: What had happened to Native Americans by 1879?

The Carlisle School

Enter the white man on the train—U.S. Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt. He made Native



A BIG CHANGE At Carlisle, students were photographed soon after they arrived. Years later, they were photographed again. “Before and after” pictures like these pleased the U.S. government. They hoped Carlisle would make Indians more “American.”



American people believe that he wanted to help. He told them that he could provide their children with a better education.

Pratt had convinced the U.S. government to start a boarding school for Native Americans. It was called the Carlisle School. That’s where Ota Kte was headed on the train that day.

But Pratt didn’t just want to educate Native American children. He planned to strip them of their **heritage**. In his opinion, they needed to lose their “Indian-ness” to succeed in America.

And so Captain Pratt did intend to “kill” part of Ota Kte—the Indian part.

Luther Standing Bear

The changes began the moment Ota Kte stepped through the gates of Carlisle. Like all students, he was given a Christian first name: Luther. Then his father’s last name was changed to English. That’s how Ota Kte became Luther Standing Bear.

Along with his new name came a new “American” look. His long hair was cut short. His leggings and moccasins were replaced with an itchy wool uniform and black leather boots. He was forced to learn English and to say Christian prayers at meals.

Luther went to classes and did his chores. At night, he heard children around him sobbing.



PAUSE AND THINK: Who started the Carlisle School?





LEARNING TO BE "AMERICAN"

The Indian boarding schools were the idea of Captain Richard Henry Pratt (shown at right). At these schools, boys learned things like shoemaking. Girls were taught housekeeping. All children were forced to speak only English.



being late to class. Some schools even beat children for not speaking English.

Meanwhile, students lived in crowded buildings where deadly diseases spread easily. Hundreds of Native American children died.



PAUSE AND THINK: How was life difficult at these boarding schools?

He missed his family too, but he remembered what his father had told him—that an education would give Luther a better future.



PAUSE AND THINK: Where did the name Luther Standing Bear come from?

Homesick

The U.S. government saw Carlisle as a huge success. After a visit, one government agent wrote a letter stating that the school was solving the “Indian problem” and that the children there were **thriving**. But were they?

What was it really like for young children to be sent so far away from their families? Most became very homesick. Many fought back against the strict rules. Others tried to run away.

Still, the U.S. government opened other schools like Carlisle—and rather than being asked to send their children, parents were forced. By the early 1900s, tens of thousands of Native American children were at boarding schools.

All of these schools punished students for

Caught Between Two Worlds

Over the decades, Native Americans began to demand more rights. They wanted their children closer to home, and they wanted them at schools that taught them to be proud of their heritage. One by one, the boarding schools were shut down. Carlisle was closed in 1918.

As for Luther Standing Bear, Carlisle changed his life forever. Like most of the school’s graduates, he returned to his reservation. But he no longer felt like he fit in. Luther was caught between two worlds.

Later on in life, Luther worked to educate others about his people. He became a writer and a voice for Native American rights. He spoke up about how the U.S. government treated Indians. And his books taught Americans about the Lakota tribe.

In that way, he worked to bring the Indian—in himself and others—back to life. •



PAUSE AND THINK: What two worlds was Luther caught between?