Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Military Use of the Navajo Code in WWII**

***Why did the US use the Navajo language for their codes during WWII?***

*Source: www.cia.gov*

In the heat of battle, it is of the utmost importance that messages are delivered and received as quickly as possible. It is even more crucial that these messages are encoded so the enemy does not know about plans in advance. During World War II, the Marine Corps used one of the thousands of languages spoken in the world to create an unbreakable code: Navajo.

World War II wasn’t the first time a Native American language was used to create a code. During World War I, the Choctaw language was used in the transmission of secret tactical messages. It was instrumental in a successful surprise attack against the Germans.

Germany and Japan sent students to the United States after World War I to study Native American languages and cultures, such as Cherokee, Choctaw, and Comanche. Because of this, many members of the U.S. military services were uneasy about continuing to use Code Talkers during World War II. They were afraid the code would be easily cracked, but that was before they learned about the complexity of Navajo.

In 1942, Philip Johnston was reading a newspaper article about an armored division in Louisiana that was attempting to come up with another code using Native American languages. Johnston knew the perfect Native American language to utilize in a new, unbreakable code.

The first 29 recruited Navajos (one dropped out) arrived at Camp Elliott near San Diego in May 1942. One of the first tasks for these recruits was to develop a Navajo code. The Navajo language seemed to be the perfect option as a code because it is not written and very few people who aren’t of Navajo origin can speak it. However, the Marine Corps took the code to the next level and made it virtually unbreakable by further encoding the language with word substitution. During the course of the war, about 400 Navajos participated in the code talker program.

A skeptical lieutenant decided to test their skills and the code before trusting them to deliver actual combat messages. The Code Talkers successfully translated, transmitted and retranslated a test message in two and a half minutes. Without using the Navajo code, it could take hours for a soldier to complete the same task.

From then on, the Code Talkers were used in every major operation involving the Marines in the Pacific theater. Their primary job was to transmit tactical information over telephone and radio. During the invasion of Iwo Jima, six Navajo Code Talkers were operating continuously. They sent more than 800 messages. All of the messages were transmitted without error.

The Navajo Code Talkers were treated with the utmost respect by their fellow marines. Major Howard Connor, who was the signal officer of the Navajos at Iwo Jima, said, “Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima.”

***How was the Navajo Code used?***

* The Navajo Code uses a combination of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Plain text when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ could be spelled out in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and for each \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ acronyms would be used.
* Most commonly used \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ terms and key subjects would be with a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ word.
* If the plain text is ‘**Drop**’  
  It would be translated into English cipher text first:  
    
  D -> Deer  
  R -> Rabbit  
  O -> Owl  
  P -> Pant

Deer = BE  
Rabbit = GAH

Owl = NE-AHS-JAH  
Pant = CLA-GI-AIH

The resulting transmission:  
**BE GAH NE-AHS-JAH CLA-GI-AIH**

* Of course not all words are transmitted in such a way. Entire words are replaced with Navajo words that have a different literal meaning. Since it is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language and it does not have words that directly correspond to modern \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and military terms, words in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language are used to represent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ terms and names.   
    
  Such as:  
  'tank' would be referred to as a '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_', 'submarine' would be referred to as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_', 'bombs' (carried on aircraft) would be called '\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_'.

***Practice Decoding a Message:***

*Use the Navajo Dictionary to decode the following message.*  
 NE-HE-MAH =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

AL-TAH-JE-JAY =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

BEH-NA-ALI-TSOSIE =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

BILH =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

WOL-LA-CHESE, **D-AH**, NE-AHS-JAH, **NA-AS-TSO-SI**, TKIN, **MOASI** =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A-YE-SHI =\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Now it’s YOUR Turn!***

* With a partner, write out a sentence using 8-12 words relating in some way to WWII.
* Note that there are no numbers in the dictionary, so they would have to be spelled out.
* Names of people would also have to be spelled out.
* Now encode your message, using one line per word and using the alphabet for any words not in the dictionary. (separate letters in spelled words like in the example above)
* Leave the “answer” side blank so another group can attempt to solve your puzzle, but write down your message somewhere so you don’t forget.

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