

"The SCHOOL Days Of an Indian Girl"

Part 1

Directions; Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. What is the *iron horse*? Why does Sa call it that?
2. Who are *palefaces*? Why does Sa call them that?
3. Is Zitkala Sa's primary audience other Indians or white Americans? What gives you this indication?
4. What is an example of how the behavior of the palefaces differs from the way Zitkala Sa's own people might have acted towards her?

5. Zitkala Sa is given the name “Gertrude Simmons Bonnin.” Do you agree with the adoption of American names in this situation? Why or why not?

Part 2

6. Define *assimilation*.

7. Zitkala Sa describes the cutting of her hair as a traumatic and extremely emotional experience. In your opinion, do you think her reaction is justified or is she an overreacting child?

8. How is the cutting of her hair something to grieve?

The Big Picture

Read the following excerpt from the NPR article, "American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many."

The federal government began sending American Indians to off-reservation boarding schools in the 1870s, when the United States was still at war with Indians.

An Army officer, Richard Pratt, founded the first of these schools. He based it on an education program he had developed in an Indian prison. He described his philosophy in a speech he gave in 1892. "

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one," Pratt said. "In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

9. In your own words, what does Pratt mean when he says, "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man?"



10. These images were often used by boarding schools as promotional evidence of the school's success at assimilating and civilizing Indians. Others view these images as evidence of cultural genocide (the deliberate destruction of the cultural heritage of a people or nation). What is your response to these images?