

Wooden Leg was a very sleepy young Indian. His people—the Cheyenne—had just held an all-night dance. And the Sioux camp next door had had a party. Wooden Leg had gone to it too.

That morning he went to the river to take a bath. The weather was hot and the cool water felt good. After a while he came out and sat in the shade. Soon he was sound asleep.

He told what happened next:

“A lot of noise woke me. Something terrible was happening in the camp. I heard shots and women screaming. Old men were calling: ‘Soldiers are here! Young men, go out and fight them!’

“I ran home and got ready for battle. Quickly I put on new clothes. Then I got my pains and mirror. I drew a blue circle around my face. I painted red and yellow inside it. I combed my hair. I should have braided it neatly. But there was no time.

“My father had caught my best horse. He strapped a blanket on it. ‘Hurry!’ he told me. I rode off as fast as I could.”

Soldiers were attacking the Sioux camp. Wooden Leg described part of the fight:

“Little Bird and I were chasing a soldier. We were hitting him with our pony whips.

We did not try to kill him. But he turned and fired. The bullet hit Little Bird’s leg. At once I hit the white man with the heavy handle of my pony whip. He fell to the ground. I do not know what became of him.”

Soon the Indians drove the soldiers across the river. Then came a shout: “More soldiers coming from the north!” The Indians rode that way.

These soldiers, led by General Custer, were not ready. They were frightened and confused. Some dropped their guns and raised their hands. But the Indians took no prisoners. Wooden Leg told of the last moments of the battle:

“A Cheyenne chief called out ‘Come! We can kill all of them!’ We ran forward, shouting and jumping. And then all the white men went crazy. Instead of shooting us, they turned their guns on themselves.”

That was the famous Custer’s Last Stand. No one knows for sure what happened there. The Indians’ stories did not all agree. And there was no one to tell the white man’s side. Custer had led 225 men into the attack. Not one returned.

However, it was the Indians’ last stand too. It was the last major victory they ever won.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. On the morning of the battle, Wooden Leg was feeling very
A angry
B hungry
C sleepy
2. When the battle began, he was
A at the river
B in the Sioux camp
C home in bed
3. One thing Wooden Leg did *not* do when getting ready for the battle was
A put on new clothes
B paint his face
C braid his hair
4. Wooden Leg's father brought him his
A gun
B horse
C shoes
5. Wooden Leg and Little Bird attacked a soldier with
A arrows
B whips
C clubs
6. Wooden Leg became angry when the soldier
A kicked his horse
B shouted at him
C shot Little Bird
7. The first group of soldiers was
A sealed in a cave
B driven across the river
C trapped and killed
8. Wooden Leg said that Custer's soldiers were more
A prepared than the first group
B frightened than the first group
C cruel than the first group
9. Wooden Leg said that when the Indians made their big charge, Custer's men
A shot themselves
B called for help
C threw their guns
10. The story says that this battle was the last stand of
A Custer but not the Indians
B the Indians but not Custer
C both Custer and the Indians