

The Life and Death of  
CRAZY HORSE



by Russell Freedman

Drawings by Amos Bad Heart Bull

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**The Life and Death of Crazy Horse** Russell Freedman , Amos Bad Heart Bull (Illustrator)

A biography of the Oglala leader who relentlessly resisted the white man's attempt to take over Indian lands.

## The Life and Death of Crazy Horse Details

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## **From Reader Review The Life and Death of Crazy Horse for online ebook**

### **Stephanie says**

This book offers an in-depth look at the Sioux warrior 'Crazy Horse.' He grew up during a time of great conflict between Native Americans and white settlers. While western expansion motivated the whites, Native Americans fought for preservation of their lands and way of life. As a warrior, Crazy Horse possessed many unusual traits. He did not take scalps or any objects from a battle, and did not boast of his heroic acts. He constantly and consistently resisted white man's treaties, and justification for their invasion of Native American lands. Crazy Horse embraced his spirit visions which so greatly influenced his life and his death. I found this book to be very informative, with descriptive and accurate accounts of historic events. I enjoyed the pictures, which are illustrations made during the 1800's. The appendix evidences a huge amount of research for this book. Good for students wishing to know more about Native American life and History.

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### **James says**

Solid book, but sort of a weird stylistic amalgam. On the one hand there is the novelistic, sort-of-chatty point of view characteristic of Landmark-style children's biographies: "Curly was the first boy to mount and break one of the wild horses. When they all returned to the village, he was leading his newly captured pony." The later, more documented portion of Crazy Horse's life is narrated with the neutral, according-to-the-sources tone of history written for adults ; "I heard a terrific volley of carbines,' recalled Moving-Robe-Woman.'The bullets shattered the tipi poles.'" The winter count (tribal history) drawings by a near-contemporary Oglala named Amos Bad Heart Bull are powerful.

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### **Ava says**

I loved this book! I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is interested in Native American history or biographies.

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### **AnnieM says**

Russel Freeman is a talented author who can take someone as mythical as Crazy Horse yet make him a real person like he was. He was someone who loved his people. Freeman can take topics like Native American land theft and make it less decisive. He gives the facts and the passion without inflating the anger or wrongs of either side.

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### **John F. says**

The Life and Death of Crazy Horse is a classic. Everyone in America should read this story. It is a sad story.

It is a story that should \*not\* have happened.

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### **Wallace Johnson says**

Genre: I placed this title in my reading log under Biography/Autobiography Junior Books

Summary: A historical journey taken through the life and times of a great warrior, leader, and friend named Crazy Horse.

Critique:

(a.) This is a great biography and I feel the strength lies within the author bringing some of the experiences that Crazy Horse faced in his life by using descriptive details.

(b.) On page 8, Crazy Horse, who was called Curly as a boy, learned his first great lesson in life: no one, not even a newborn infant, could be allowed to put the people in danger. A single cry could guide a roving enemy to the village, or scare off game during a hunt. On page 36 – 38, it talks of Curly who is on a horse-raiding expedition and while he sees an enemy lurking through the tall grass, he fires an arrow and kills the stranger. When he goes to scalp the dead Indian, he then realizes he killed a woman. He is unable to take her scalp and made fun of by his fellow warriors on their journey home.

(c.) Page 140 talks about how Crazy Horse surrendered, giving up his horse, his gun, and his freedom to an enemy who he never lost to in battle. I can visual that scene which fills my heart with sadness because of the way this turned out, not only for the Sioux, but all the Indians that were living the Great Plains during this time.

Curriculum Connection: A book that can be read in English or History. The information within the book is interesting, fascinating and breathtaking, in my opinion. Granted, it was a rough time for many in our history, but is something that should never be forgotten.

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### **Alan Chen says**

Easily 4.5 stars. Not a perfect book because there are too many characters, but it is superior to other biographies by Freedman in that he manages to give callbacks to the people who reappear by reminding us of how they used to figure into the story. The events are described in heavy detail and can be divided into 4 sections: Crazy Horse himself, Indian life, negotiations, and battles. These are also hard to keep track of, but the strategic placement of pictures and especially the maps make it easy to follow along. Sometimes the pictures represent the actual event, while other times the pictures are representative of what might have happened.

As usual, Freeman succeeds in painting most of the whole picture, from all sides of view. Whenever possible, he tries to explain the motives driving each sides actions. For example, after a major peace treaty was signed, the US mostly left the Indians alone, though this might have been because of the Civil War

going on. Later, when the US tried to buy the sacred Black Hills for \$6 million, the Indians refused even though they neither knew nor cared that over \$1B worth of gold was in that area. Throughout the history is a long trail of broken promises, fraudulent treaties and basic scumbaggery by the encroaching US. Though a few specific people are picked out for their exceptionalism (usually those who try to befriend the Indians or keep the peace), it is hard not to see the Indians in a favorable light. While attacks by the US Army are described in detail, in contrast the Indian raids are mostly glossed over with the exception of attacks that made headlines in the US. The Battle of Little Bighorn, for example, gets half a chapter for buildup and a full chapter describing the battle, along with one of the book's four great maps.

Collected mostly as an oral history from survivors, it was surprising to me that the stories did not conflict much. Crazy Horse is consistently described not only as a fearless and cunning warrior known to pop culture, but as one of the most serious, moodiest, and introverted of them all. CH doesn't enjoy revelry, shuns the spotlight, and rarely fails to help those in need. About the only time he breaks form is when he elopes with someone whom he had already laid eyes on, but who was already married (but the husband might have faked a toothache while on a hunting party with CH - it's complicated).

This book subtly raises an interesting question: was the encroachment of the settlers and the subsequent war and displacement of the Indians inevitable? The default answer is of course, yes. While the Indians were persuaded to leave emigrants on the Oregon Trail alone except for limited trading, tensions began brewing when the settlers were less than careful to preserve the environments they traveled through. Later events, such as the various gold rushes and construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, turned the stream into a flood and brought out people who didn't want to travel through Indian lands, but to live on and exploit it. Eventually, backed by the industrial might and superior numbers of the US, the remaining bands were disarmed and evicted. Some gave in early, including a chief who remained defiant until he traveled to Washington for a summit and was shown the grand arsenal of guns and artillery that could be unleashed upon them.

However, the Indian War does not necessarily follow this traditional narrative. Though the Army usually prevailed in stand-up battles (or at least fought to a draw), the Indians were geniuses at luring the overextended Army into ambushes where they could be overwhelmed. Remember, the Army was fighting at the tail end of a supply chain that sometimes stretched to the East Coast, while the Indians were in their traditional hunting grounds. In places like the Bozeman Trail, outposts were isolated to the point where the soldiers could barely fight enough to feed themselves, let alone offer any meaningful protection to passing settlers.

The Battle of Little Bighorn is self-explanatory, but the consequences are not. Following the battle, most thought that they could now negotiate from a position of strength or at least that the US would give up and try elsewhere. Instead, they were issued an ultimatum stating all Indians had to either surrender by January 31 or face military action. Regardless of how many Indians were still willing to negotiate, there were no serious advocates of traveling through the harsh winter where an untold number of young and old might have perished. Deciding to remain put in the tipis until Spring, they were hit by roving bands of soldiers who scattered their camps and forced them to either surrender or starve. Thus, the war's endgame ended with a whimper, not a bang. What if the Army had not acted that winter? Might there have been a more equal settlement?

Of note are the illustrations: photographs of drawings done by one of the Sioux who was chosen to be a tribal historian. Assigned to mark years by drawing 1 significant event, he took it on his own initiative to create a more detailed, more comprehensive set of illustrations that proved to be a treasure trove in preserving history at a time when that history was being forcibly erased. The usual listing of adult biographies on Crazy Horse's life and related events is included, as well as timeline and index.

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### **Evan says**

It was both a pleasure and a pain to revisit frontier history and the slow, determined decimation of the Native Americans, particularly the Sioux. Reading about a man like Crazy Horse, you instantly want to see a picture of him, just to see how that sort of bravery might manifest itself. However, the book quickly informs the reader that Crazy Horse never allowed himself to be photographed. Hard to believe that the white settlers and government just plowed on through an inhabited land already rich with culture and history and a set way of life. The sense of entitlement that is transmitted through the details of the countless battles and broken treaties brought the familiar bitterness back to me. Having ancestors that were driven away from their homes on the Trail of Tears, I still mourn these wrongs that were committed.

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### **Nicole White says**

The Life and Death of Crazy Horse by Russell Freedman

1. Genre: Biography

2. The Life and Death of Crazy Horse is another great biography by Russell Freedman. He tells the story of Crazy Horse, the well-known Native American warrior who fought furiously to protect his Sioux land from the white men invaders in the 19th century.

3. a. Area for Comment: Plot development

b. I would have to say that much of the information in this book has been passed down and passed on through traditional spoken word stories; however, I think the author put the information together just as Crazy Horse would have wanted him to. The story of Crazy Horse is told as an adventure-filled tale of a Sioux war hero, but with most of the details being actual events. For an older student learning about the Native American's side of how America was founded, this book would be a great place to start. It offers a different perspective of the struggles, and ultimately the losses, Native Americans endured.

c. For example, Russell Freedman begins this biography by telling the reader what Crazy Horse was like as a child nick-named "Curly". Sprinkled in are Crazy Horse's possible thoughts and reasons for why he did the things he did. Also given are the reasons for why he participated in the war over land. The author paints a colorful picture of what Crazy Horse was like, which helps the reader form a detailed visual of Crazy Horse's life and all the events in it.

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### **Josh P. says**

In The Life and Death of Crazy Horse by Russell Freedman, Crazy horse wants to fight for the freedom of his people but the U.S. government wants to take their land so Crazy Horse surrenders but is killed. The characters in the book are influenced and challenged by the setting in several ways. First, due to the rugged environments, the Indians rely on hunting to gather their food. "By the time he was ten or eleven, he had

joined a tribal hunting party and killed his first buffalo" pg. # 24. This shows that even at a young age curly had to do his part to help his tribe survive the rugged environment. Also, due to the warring nation of their tribe, the main characters need to fight their enemies to survive. "When he saw an enemy warrior creeping through the underbrush, he grabbed his bow and fired an arrow"- pg. 37 and 38. This is just the start of Crazy Horses path of the warrior. Lastly, the area where Crazy Horse and His tribe roam is near the Oregon trail, resulting in more conflict with white settlers. "They plundered the station's store and warehouse, burned the buildings to the ground, then rode away" pg. 54. This shows the deadly cycle of conflict between the Indians and the whites, which Crazy Horse took part in. To sum up, Crazy Horse and the other characters are affected and challenged by the environment they are in.

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### **Ashley says**

1. Biography
2. Written in part in story form, this biography tells of the interesting life of "Our Strange One" AKA Crazy Horse, a Sioux warrior. Recounting his victory at Little Bighorn, this mans life is retold by author Russel Freedman in a vivid and descriptive (sometimes a bit to graphic) way, this wordy text is a remarkable take of an outcast made hero.
3. Critique
  - a. The story aspect gives this biography a personal twist that relates the reader to Crazy Horse.
  - b. By adding personal information about his life, such as what kind of person he was, his thoughts and how he made his decisions the author gives Crazy Horse a humanistic quality that young readers can relate too.
  - c. "One does not sell the land on which people walk," he said. Unlike the talkative Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse spoke briefly when he spoke at all.
4. Curriculum connection: I would use this book to showcase early Native American art. I would ask students to recreate this art using charcoal and thick paper. I would ask them to first write a sentence describing a difficult time in their life. Then I would ask them to draw this sentence using simple images like the Native American's did in their paintings. I would also use this book to illustrate the battle at Little Bighorn. I would use it to showcase the opinions of the Native American's. I would ask students to compare and contrast the class text's version of the battle and this books depiction.

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### **Ashton Livsey says**

Genre: Biography

Summary: Crazy Horse, once called Curly, was a Sioux Indian who was a brave warrior that fought for Indian's rights against whites trying to steal their land.

Critique: a) When looking at a biography, especially for kids, I look for plot development and am interested in what details and stories the author includes.

A biography tells of the life and times of a specific person. In this particular book, the focus on Crazy Horse is well balanced, interesting, and informative. The story equally tells fun facts, tells of the setting, the goings on in the Indian world, and of the pressing whites. All the while the story flows, keeps the attention of the reader, and focuses on Crazy Horse.

The personal aspect really interested me because it is something you don't learn in school. You learn of Crazy Horse's name as a child, curly. You learn why he has one name when he is young and how he earns the name Crazy Horse, like his father before him. I also was interested in learning that Crazy Horse fell in

love, did not marry her, and then caused a ruckus trying to elope with her.

Curriculum Connection: This book is a great reference for teachers and students alike. Teachers can use it to show students how interesting the United States history is. Students can use this book to learn about Indians, and how their rights and land were slowly taken from them.

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### **Dayna Smith says**

A wonderful book! It is well researched and presented and the pictures are magnificent. A great way to introduce young readers to nonfiction, of which Freedman is a master.

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### **Katlyn Campbell says**

Genre: Biography

Summary: This title tells the exciting story of the life of Crazy Horse. Crazy Horse, a great Sioux warrior, played a pivotal role in Native American and United States History. The book tells the stories of events as small as the Indians ideas of the white man to ones as large as The Battle of Little Big Horn.

Critique:

a. Plot and Length

b. The Plot and length of this story although interesting and okay for me would be far too much for even a 6th grade student. The book is very long and has few truly interesting pictures for a child to look at. The book also jumps around to many different stories throughout Crazy Horses life, which are sometimes not relatable and in my opinion could confuse children. However, I enjoyed the book and definitely saw its value.

c. The best way, in my opinion, to show this view point is through the page numbers, 166. These pages are very large and again contain very few pictures.

Curriculum Connection: I believe that this book could be best used and related to the classroom in the area of history. I think that if used to research or for a project that this could be effectively used by a 5-6 grader.

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### **Amy says**

Russell Freedman is truly one of the most outstanding authors of informational books for children and young adults. This book was no exception. I knew little to nothing about this amazing man who fought and died for the cause of his people and the passion of his beliefs. The story was beautifully told and illustrated...I read this biography as our family was literally in many of the places where the key events of his life took place which made it especially poignant and powerful. This would be a great read aloud to elementary age children and a great starting point for a discussion of Native American history in this country.

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