

AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS



Introductory Set

Using a farm as an example, ask students who owns it—the farmer? the community? the country? How do we determine who owns land? Historically how have countries gained or lost territory?

Explain to students that most American Indian groups did not believe people owned land and thus you could not buy or sell it; it was just yours to use. They were merely stewards of the land, much like students and their desks. They do not own the desks, but they are theirs to use.

Lesson

Have students examine the map of American Indian reservations at <http://www.independencetrail.org/native-americans.html> Then compare it to the map at <http://bit.ly/b2vB8o>

Discuss as a class what reservations are and why they were created. Then ask students to look at the map of the reservations again. Using their knowledge of U.S. geography, why were the reservations created where they were? (It was land with few natural resources and poorly suited for farming.)

Divide students into groups. Assign each group one of the primary documents about life on reservations found at <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/eight/wkmiles.htm>.

As a class, discuss what living conditions were like on reservations at the turn of the century. Finally, have each student assume the role of an American Indian living on a reservation in 1890.

Have them write a diary entry about what their life is like.