Not all Indian tribes left their lands peacefully. Some of them chose to fight back against the settlers that they saw as invaders. One of the greatest victories for the Indians was at the Battle of Little Bighorn. The battle is also known as Custer's Last Stand.

In late 1875, some Sioux and Cheyenne Indians left the reservation they were living on. They were angry. White men had been looking for gold in the Black Hills. The Black Hills was very important to the tribes that lived near them. To the Indians, the Black Hills were sacred land.

The government did not want the Indians to leave the reservation. It wanted to protect the miners who were looking for gold. The government sent in the army to help the miners and to force the Indians back to the reservation.

In June of 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer led a group of soldiers toward the Little Bighorn Valley. Custer had been a strong leader during the Civil War. He was not worried about any battles with the Indians. Custer was sure that his soldiers were stronger.

On June 25, Custer found a group of Indians. There were about forty warriors in the group. He decided to attack. Scouts warned him that there were a lot more warriors in a village nearby. Custer didn't listen.

Custer divided the soldiers into three smaller groups. Each group had about 225 soldiers. He then sent each group in a different direction. His plan was to surround the Indian warriors and kill them. Custer didn't know there were almost two thousand more warriors waiting for him.

As one group of soldiers attacked one side of the village, Custer went to the other side. Custer quickly realized he was outnumbered. The Indian warriors soon had the soldiers surrounded.

Custer had to retreat. He tried to make a stand on a ridge nearby. Custer told his men to shoot the horses and hide behind them. He hoped the horses would help protect the soldiers from the bullets. It did not work. In less than an hour Custer and all of his men were killed.

The Indian warriors stripped the bodies of the soldiers after the battle. Scouting parties found them. Today a monument stands in this area. No one is exactly sure what happened during the battle. None of them were left alive to describe it.

It was a huge victory for the Indians. They did not get to enjoy it for long. The government now had a reason to send in more soldiers. The Indian warriors didn't have enough men to fight back.

Congress said that no food rations should be given to Indians until they did what the government wanted them to do. The borders of the reservation were also changed. The new reservation did not include the Black Hills. The Indians had lost their sacred land.

Indians longed for their old way of life. It was gone. Never again did Indians live freely in the West. Further attacks weakened the Indians more. Their land and their culture were never the same again.
Battle of Little Bighorn

Questions

1. Why did some Sioux and Cheyenne Indians leave the reservation?
   A. The government let them go back to the plains.
   B. There was no food.
   C. Settlers came looking for gold.

2. What happened to Custer and all of his men?

3. What did Custer tell his men to use to protect themselves during the battle?
   A. The rocks
   B. The trees
   C. Their horses

4. What stands in the area today where Custer and his men were killed?
   A. A sign
   B. A fort
   C. A monument

5. Why did settlers go to the Black Hills?

6. About how many warriors in all were waiting for Custer?
   A. Two thousand
   B. Two hundred
   C. Two

Did killing Custer and his men help the Indians or hurt them? Explain.
Should Custer have attacked the Indians? What else could he have done?