1875-1899
The Dawes Act

LESSON PLAN
The Dawes Act

LESSON PLAN
The Process

LESSON PLAN
Learning Advice

Resources
Nebraska Department of Education
Content Area Standards

Created by Michael Young, former History Department Chair, Omaha Burke High School. Edited by Lonnie Moore (Teacher, Omaha South High Magnet School) & Karen Graff (former Elementary Teacher).
The Dawes Act

Lesson Objectives:

1. Students will analyze the implications of the Dawes Act for Native Americans.
2. Students will analyze the pros and cons of the Dawes Act.
3. Students will evaluate the Federal Government's Indian policy during the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century.
4. Students will develop skills to analyze primary documents, maps, letters, etc.

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.3; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5 | SS HS.1.1; SS HS.3.4; SS HS.4.1; SS HS.4.2; SS HS.4.4; SS HS.4.5

Language Arts: LA 8.1.6 Comprehension; LA 8.3.1 Speaking; LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency | LA 12.1.6 Comprehension; LA 12.2.1 Writing Process; LA 12.2.2 Writing Modes; LA 12.3.1 Speaking
Lesson Plan - Option #1

Introduction: Option #1

Introduce the lesson by providing students with the Chief Joseph Quotation handout located in the Resources section at the end of this document or project the following on an overhead transparency:

"Do not misunderstand me and my affection for the land. I never said the land was mine to do with as I chose. The one who has the right to dispose of it is the one who has created it. I claim a right to live on my land, and accord you the privilege to live on yours. The earth is the mother of all people and all people should have equal rights upon it. You might as well expect the rivers to run backward as that any man who was born a free man should be contented when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases..."

Chief Joseph

Conduct an oral discussion with students by using the following questions as a guide:

- Who is Chief Joseph?
- What point is Chief Joseph making about Indian ownership of the land?
- How did the white man's use of land differ from the Indian's use of land?
- How did the white man's view of land ownership differ from the Indian's view?
- Do Native Americans own land today?
- Do you agree with Chief Joseph's view of land ownership?

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.3; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5 | SS HS.1.1; SS HS.3.4 ; SS HS.4.1; SS HS.4.2; SS HS.4.4; SS HS.4.5

Language Arts: LA 8.1.6 Comprehension; LA 8.3.1 Speaking; LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency | LA 12.1.6 Comprehension; LA 12.2.1 Writing Process; LA 12.2.2 Writing Modes; LA 12.3.1 Speaking

1875-1899 The Dawes Act
Introduction: Option #2

1. Instruct students to underline powerful lines or write down images that come to mind for each verse. After students have read the lyrics, ask volunteers to describe the images that came to mind.

2. Ask students to discuss the meaning of the song and to compare/contrast the words of the song to the views of U.S. government officials of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

3. Have students read a description of the Dawes Allotment Act in their textbook or from the Nebraska Studies 1875-1899 timeline and have them compare/contrast the text of "Don't Drink the Water" with the text of the Dawes Act. http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1875-1899/the-dawes-act/

4. The use of contemporary music could be augmented by music from Native American musicians either from the band Indigenous, or from Robbie Robertson's "Contact from the Underworld of Red Boy," that interestingly combines traditional and contemporary musical riffs and offers a similar take on dispossession of native peoples, but from a native songwriter.


   http://theband.hiof.no/albums

   contact from the underworld of red boy.html

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.3; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5 | SS HS.1.1; SS HS.3.4 ; SS HS.4.1; SS HS.4.2; SS HS.4.4; SS HS.4.5

Language Arts: LA 8.1.6 Comprehension; LA 8.3.1 Speaking; LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency | LA 12.1.6 Comprehension; LA 12.2.1 Writing Process; LA 12.2.2 Writing Modes; LA 12.3.1 Speaking
Have students read the Dawes Act section of the 1875-1899 timeline on Nebraska Studies:
http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1875-1899/the-dawes-act/

Next, instruct students to read the "Dawes Act" document, linked from the above page. Conduct an oral discussion with students using the following questions as a guide for the discussion:

a. Who is Dawes?
b. What are the key provisions of the Dawes Act?
c. Why was the Dawes Act passed?
d. How did Native Americans react to the passage of the Dawes Act?
e. Was the Dawes Act successful? Why or why not?
f. If you had the opportunity to revise the Dawes Act, what modifications would you suggest to make the act more successful?

Direct students, either as individuals or as a cooperative endeavor, to use the National Archives Written Document Worksheet located in the Resources section at the end of this document as a guide for analyzing the Dawes document.

Instruct students to compare and contrast the Dawes Act with the Homestead Act. A copy of the Homestead Act is available at the National Archives 100 Milestone Documents website located at:

Direct students, individually or in a cooperative learning activity, to use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two documents. A sample Venn diagram is located in the Resources section at the end of this document. After students have completed their diagrams, have student volunteers place them on an overhead transparency or on the chalkboard. The teacher can then use the various diagrams to point our similarities and differences among the various diagrams constructed by the students.

Have students read the quotes of the following persons from the Dawes Act section of the Nebraska Studies 1875-1899 timeline: Alice Fletcher; a Nez Perce Indian; Senator Dawes

Ask students to compare and contrast the three quotations. The teacher can use the following as a guide for the discussion:

a. Define the following terms: thralldom; Sphinxes; civilized; Magna Carta
b. Who are the following? Alice Fletcher; Nez Perce; Henry L. Dawes
c. What do you think Alice Fletcher meant when she said the Dawes Act would be like the Magna Carta for the Indians?
d. Why do you think Fletcher felt the tribes and reservations systems were not good for the Indians? Do you agree?
e. Why would Indians be opposed to the Dawes Act?
f. What characteristics did Dawes feel made a person civilized? Would the Indians agree with his views? Why or why not?
Provide students with copies of the following quotes about the Dawes Act, located in the Resources section at the end of this document.

"The Indian may now become a free man; free from the thralldom of the tribe; free from the domination of the reservation system; free to enter into the body of our citizens. This bill may therefore be considered as the Magna Carta of the Indians of our country."

Alice Fletcher

"The Dawes Act was a way to break up the whole tribal structure of Native American nations. Instead of saying you are a group of people, all of a sudden you are individual landowners — you are Americans. And so it was designed to break up community, to civilize people, make us farmers, and also break up our tribal structure."

Charlotte Black Elk

"Alice explained... the land allotment... and her wish that the whole people would see the wisdom of the great change... At length one man stood up, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow... He said, 'We do not want our land cut up in little pieces...' A groan of assent ran along the dark line of Sphinxes... "We must come together and decide whether we will have this law...' She told them that there is nothing for them to decide... The law must be obeyed."

Jane Gay

Then instruct students to answer through oral discussion or as an individual writing assignment the following:

a. Who are the following people? Alice Fletcher; Charlotte Black Elk; Jane Gay
b. Compare and contrast the views those three people have of the Dawes Act.
c. Do you agree with any of their views? Why or why not?

Background information is provided at PBS. The West. The Outcome of Our Ernest Endeavors located at:

http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/eight/ourearnest.htm

Review with students the provisions of the following pieces of legislation: Dawes, Burke, and Wheeler Howard (Indian Reorganization Act). Then have students, individually or in groups, create an expanded Venn diagram to compare and contrast the three pieces of legislation.

Background information for the Burke Act and the Wheeler Howard Act:

Wheeler Howard Act 1934: https://www.historylink.org/File/2599

Learning Advice

1. Review the History Nebraska website at https://history.nebraska.gov/ and familiarize students with the Nebraska History magazine located at: https://history.nebraska.gov/publications/nebraska-history-magazine

   Teachers/students can order copies of the magazine from the NSHS or check with their local library to see if they have copies.

2. Review the contents of the Nebraska Department of Education Social Science Resource Home Page and review the links with students. https://www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/

   Have students identify and/or define the following terms after they have had the opportunity to read the information contained on the Nebraska Studies website concerning the Dawes Act:

   - allotment Burke Act Dawes Act Homestead Act
   - Indian reservation system Magna Carta Nez Perce
   - Indians severally Henry L. Dawes Alice Fletcher Jane Gay Susette La Flesche

   Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler Howard Act) Helen Hunt Jackson's book, A Century of Dishonor (1881)

Conclusion:

Students will have learned the provisions of the Dawes Act and how Indians viewed the act. Furthermore, students will evaluate why people like Henry Dawes and Alice Fletcher supported the act and what they hoped to achieve. Students will also have learned what the goals of the Federal Government were with reference to the Indian population from the late 1880s to the late 1930s. Students will have learned how to analyze primary resources by utilizing the National Archives analysis worksheets.

Assessment Activities:

   One or both of the following activities could be used to assess student knowledge.

   Activity 1: Analytical Essay

   1. Instruct students to do a written essay of a minimum of 500 words analyzing the pros and cons of the Dawes Act and include a discussion of the following:

      a. Why did Dawes propose the Dawes Act and was he successful in achieving his objectives?
      b. How did the Indians view the act?
      c. How would the student have modified the act to make it more acceptable to the Indians?

   2. Include a thesis statement, documentation, a bibliography, etc. Use a rubric to assess student knowledge. Teachers can create their own rubric or use one of the following rubrics:

Activity 2: Multiple Choice

Answers to the Multiple Choice assessment activity:
Print out enough copies for each student of the THE DAWES ACT Multiple Choice worksheet in the Resources section of this document.


Possible Extension Activities:
Instruct students to review Archives of the West located at http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/lesson_plans/lesson03.htm

1. Have students review the two documents listed under activity 3 number 4: Indian Policy Reform by President Chester Arthur and The Dawes Act. After students have read the first document, make two columns on the blackboard, one labeled "problems" and the other "solutions." Elicit from students the following information and list their answers on the board:
   b. What solutions does Arthur offer to remedy the situation?
   c. Whom does Arthur blame, if anyone, for the sorry state of Indian and U.S. relations?
   d. What is the "tone" of his speech?
   e. How does Arthur view American Indians?
   f. What do you think are his sources of information?
   g. What is your opinion of the solutions he puts forth? Debate them one by one.

Then have students turn to the extract from the Dawes Act in the Nebraska Studies 1875-1899 timeline.
http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1875-1899/the-dawes-act/

Have them answer the following questions after they have read the information:
   a. In what ways does the Dawes Act seems to remedy the problems identified by Arthur?
   b. In what ways does the act seem to be protecting Indians?
   c. In what way(s) does the act weaken and dismantle the power of Indian nations?
   d. What do you predict will be the outcome of the Dawes Act on Indian nations?

2. Have students access PBS's The West and the segment titled "The Outcome of Our Earnest Endeavors" from Episode 8 "One Sky Above Us" located at:
http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/eight/ourearnest.htm
Learning Advice

Activity 2: Multiple Choice

After students have had the opportunity to read the information, engage students in a discussion using the following questions as a guide:

a. Who were Alice Fletcher and Jane Gay, and what were their views of the Dawes Act?

b. Who were the Nez Perce and Chief Joseph? How did Chief Joseph feel about the Dawes Act?

c. Why did the Nez Perce call Alice Fletcher the Measuring Woman?

d. Was the Dawes Act a success story for the Nez Perce? Why or why not?

e. Was the Dawes Act, in general, a success or failure with reference to improving the lives of Native Americans?

3. Direct students to select an existing reservation in the United States, research its history, and determine the circumstances that allowed it to continue to exist throughout periods of varying federal policies. Ask students to report their findings in the form of a newspaper feature story.

4. Instruct students to read the background information and document from the National Archives' Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: Maps of Indian Territory, the Dawes Act, and Will Rogers' Enrollment Case File located at:


Review the information with the students and then assign students, individually or groups of students, to complete one of the following lessons located at


1. Brainstorming/ Group Discussion
2. Map Analysis and Comparison
3. Class Discussion
4. Document Analysis
5. Creative Writing

5. Debating the Dawes Act

- Divide the class into teams. Each team will present an argument, which focuses on a different controversy about the Dawes Act. Both teams should read selections from "With the Nez Perces" by E. Jane Gay:

http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/eight/fletcher.htm

and "What Were the Results of Allotment" by Professor E.A. Schwartz:

http://www.k12.wa.us/IndianEd/TribalSovereignty/High/USHighSchool/USHighSchoolUnit2/Level2-Materials/ReadingBetweentheLines.pdf

nebraska studies.org
Directions for each team are as follows:

Team I

Team I will pretend that they are being brought before a Congressional Committee in 1900 to re-evaluate the Dawes Act, and to hear alternative plans. Class members on Team II will act as members of Congress at the hearing.

Team I should be divided into three smaller groups composed of from two to five students each. One group will be assigned to defend the Dawes Act. The two other groups must brainstorm alternative legislation to the Dawes Act and present it before the Committee. When the three groups have presented their plans to the Congressional Committee, the Committee (i.e. the rest of the class) will discuss the plans and vote to adopt the one it deems best.

Team II

This team will debate an issue of current historical interpretation. They will be divided into two opposing sides to debate the following resolution:

Resolved: That the Dawes Act was the result of well-intentioned reformers who had reasonable expectations that it would improve life for American Indians. The affirmative team will support the proposition, the negative team will argue against the proposition.

Class members in Team I will act as judges for the debate presented to the class by Team II.

- Teams can be divided with each member assigned to debate one particular issue such as:
  a. Who were the most active sponsors of the Dawes Act?
  b. Were the sponsors aware of whether or not the kind of land allotted under the Dawes Act was actually suitable for farming?
  c. Was it unreasonable to believe that private property and farming were superior to communally held land devoted to hunting, gathering and/or farming?
  d. What role, if any, did Indians themselves play in arguing for or against the Dawes Act?
  e. What happened to land not allotted to Indians? What does this show about possible motives of the plan?

Acquire a copy of the Spring 2003 Vol. 84. No. 1 issue of Nebraska History from the History Nebraska https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/publicationsNH2003Fletcher.pdf and make copies of the article titled 'I Plead for Them' An 1882 Letter from Alice Cunningham Fletcher to Senator Henry Dawes,” pages 36-41. After students have had an opportunity to read the article, have them answer the following questions orally or in a written format:

- Who are Alice Fletcher and Henry Dawes?
- Why is Alice Fletcher writing to Dawes?
- Is Alice Fletcher's letter a primary resource? Why or why not?
- Does Alice Fletcher's letter appear to have influenced decisions made by Dawes? Explain.
- Does Alice Fletcher approve of the Dawes Act? Explain.
- Cite what you consider to be the three most significant points made in Alice Fletcher's letter and explain why.
The Dawes Act

1875-1899

resources

Books, Magazines and Web 10
Chief Joseph Quotation 11
Dawes Act Quotations 12
Written Document Analysis Worksheet 13
Two-Part Venn Diagram 14
Three-Part Venn Diagram 15
The Dawes Act Multiple Choice Worksheet 16

Nebraska Department of Education Academic Standards
https://www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/

Nebraska Department of Education Social Studies and History Standards

National Archives
http://www.archives.gov/index.html

Library of Congress Learning Page Lesson Plans
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/index.html

nebraskastudies.org
The Resources

**Book Resources**

**Magazine Resources**

**Web Resources**
100 Milestone Documents, National Archives.
PBS. New Perspectives of the West.
[http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/)
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/nbhihtml/pshome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/nbhihtml/pshome.html)
Teaching with Documents Lesson Plan: Maps of Indian Territory, the Dawes Act, and Will Rogers' Enrollment Case File. National Archives. Digital Classroom.
Graphic Organizers
[http://www.graphic.org/venbas.html](http://www.graphic.org/venbas.html)
Nebraska Dept. of Education Academic Standards.
[https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/](https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/)
Nebraska Dept. of Education State Social Studies/History Standards.
[https://www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/](https://www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/)
History Nebraska.
[https://history.nebraska.gov/](https://history.nebraska.gov/)
The Resources

Web Resources

- History Nebraska: Nebraska History magazine
  https://history.nebraska.gov/publications/nebraska-history-magazine
- History Nebraska: Nebraska Trailblazer
  https://history.nebraska.gov/education/trailblazers
- Rubrics General Rubric
  http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/rubric.htm
- The American Memory Collection. Library of Congress.
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html
- The Library of Congress Learning Page: The Historians’ Sources: Analysis of Primary Sources. “Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources.”
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/analyze.html
"Do not misunderstand me [and] my affection for the land. I never said the land was mine to do with as I chose. The one who has the right to dispose of it is the one who has created it. I claim a right to live on my land, and accord you the privilege to live on yours. The earth is the mother of all people and all people should have equal rights upon it.

“You might as well expect the rivers to run backward as that any man who was born a free man should be contented when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases..."

Chief Joseph
"The Indian may now become a free man; free from the thralldom of the tribe; free from the domination of the reservation system; free to enter into the body of our citizens. This bill may therefore be considered as the Magna Carta of the Indians of our country."

Alice Fletcher

"The Dawes Act was a way to break up the whole tribal structure of Native American nations. Instead of saying you are a group of people, all of a sudden you are individual landowners, you are Americans. And so it was designed to break up community, to civilize people, make us farmers, and also break up our tribal structure."

Charlotte Black Elk

"Alice explained... the land allotment... and her wish that the whole people would see the wisdom of the great change... At length one man stood up, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow... He said, 'We do not want our land cut up in little pieces...' A groan of assent ran along the dark line of Sphinxes... 'We must come together and decide whether we will have this law...' She told them that there is nothing for them to decide... The law must be obeyed."

Jane Gay
Meet the document.

Type (check all that apply):
- Letter
- Speech
- Chart
- Newspaper
- Report
- Email
- Congressional document
- Patent
- Telegram
- Court document
- Advertisement
- Press Release
- Memorandum
- Identification document
- Presidential document
- Other

Describe it as if you were explaining to someone who can’t see it.

Think about: Is it handwritten or typed? Is it all by the same person? Are there stamps or other marks? What else do you see on it?

Observe its parts.

Who wrote it?

Who read/received it?

When is it from?

Where is it from?

Try to make sense of it.

What is it talking about?

Write one sentence summarizing this document.

Why did the author write it?

Quote evidence from the document that tells you this.

What was happening at the time in history this document was created?

Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this document that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?
This is a Venn Diagram. You can use it to write down factors that are unique to one item in the left hand sector. Then plot those factors that are unique to another item in the right hand sector. Then look for factors that are present in both and plot those in the middle.

The Venn Diagram is made up of two or more overlapping circles. It is often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets. In language arts instruction, Venn Diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences in characters, stories, poems, etc.

It is frequently used as a prewriting activity to enable students to organize thoughts or textual quotations prior to writing a compare/contrast essay. This activity enables students to organize similarities and differences visually.
This is a Venn Diagram. You can use it to write down factors that are unique to one item in sectors farthest from the center. Then look for factors that are present in all three and plot those in the middle. Finally, look for factors that cross over just two of the areas and plot those in the remaining overlapping sections.

The Venn Diagram is made up of two or more overlapping circles. It is often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets. In language arts instruction, Venn Diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences in characters, stories, poems, etc. It is frequently used as a prewriting activity to enable students to organize thoughts or textual quotations prior to writing a compare/contrast essay. This activity enables students to organize similarities and differences visually.
The Dawes Act
Multiple Choice Worksheet

Name

Directions: Circle the best answer.

1. Which of the following did not relate to distribution of land to Indians?
   A. Smith Act
   B. Wheeler Howard Act
   C. Burke Act
   D. Dawes Act

2. Which of the following was instrumental in getting the Dawes Act passed?
   A. Chief Joseph
   B. Alice Fletcher
   C. John Burke
   D. John Wheeler

3. The Dawes Act was designed to encourage:
   A. Indians to live on reservations
   B. the breakup of the tribes
   C. Indians to become more reliant on the federal government
   D. Indians to move to Canada

4. Which of the following was a leader of the Nez Perce Indians?
   A. Chief Standing Bear
   B. Chief Joseph
   C. Chief Gay
   D. Chief Black Elk

5. Senator Dawes hoped his legislation would:
   A. force the Indians to move to the Oklahoma Territory
   B. promote the assimilation of Indians into American society
   C. encourage Indians to stay on the reservations
   D. discourage Indians from competing with white farmers

6. The Indian who was the author of the following quotation was a member of which tribe?
   
   "We do not want our land cut up in little pieces..."
   
   A. Ponca
   B. Sioux
   C. Nez Perce
   D. Omaha

7. According to the provisions of the Dawes Act, land not allotted to the Indians was:
   A. reserved for African American immigrants
   B. sold to Indians still living on the reservations
   C. declared surplus and opened up to white settlement
   D. to be given to the various Indian tribes
Social Studies Standards

SS 8.4.1 Analyze patterns of continuity and change over time in the United States history.

SS 8.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 8.4.4 Evaluate and interpret sources for perspective and historical context.

SS 8.4.5 Apply the inquiry process to construct and answer historical questions.

HS

SS HS.1.1 Analyze the foundation, structures, and functions of the United States government as well as local, state, and international governments.

SS HS.3.4 Compare and contrast patterns of human populations and culture over space and time on a local, national, and global scale.

SS HS.4.1 Analyze and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time in history.

SS HS.4.2 Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of history.

SS HS.4.4 Evaluate sources for perspective, limitations, accuracy, and historical context.

SS HS.4.5 Apply the inquiry process to construct and answer historical questions.
English Language Arts Standards

### 8

**LA 8.1.6 Comprehension** Students will construct meaning by applying prior knowledge, using text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading increasingly complex grade-level literary and informational text.

**LA 8.2.1 Writing Process** Students will apply the writing process to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing using correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other conventions of standard English appropriate for grade-level.

**LA 8.3.1 Speaking** Students will develop, apply, and refine speaking skills and strategies to communicate key ideas in a variety of situations.

**LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency** Students will evaluate, create, and communicate information in a variety of media and formats (textual, visual, and digital).

### 12

**LA 12.1.6 Comprehension** Students will construct meaning by applying prior knowledge, using text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading increasingly complex grade-level literary and informational text.

**LA 12.2.1 Writing Process** Students will apply the writing process to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing using correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other conventions of standard English appropriate for grade-level.

**LA 12.2.2 Writing Modes** Students will write in multiple modes for a variety of purposes and audiences across disciplines.

**LA 12.3.1 Speaking** Students will develop, apply, and refine speaking skills and strategies to communicate key ideas in a variety of situations.