

Grade 9 Answer

Interpretation Evaluation

8/8
Marks

Question:

Which interpretation gives the more convincing opinion about the Battle of Little Bighorn? Explain your answer based on your contextual knowledge and what it says in Interpretations A and B. (8 marks)

Answer:

Interpretation A is more convincing about the Battle of Little Bighorn because it provides a detailed analysis of the key factors that contributed to Custer's defeat, supported by contextual knowledge. Rosenberg, writing in 1974, emphasizes Custer's mistakes, such as his underestimation of the Native American forces and lack of awareness about their superior weaponry. This aligns with historical evidence showing that Custer's failure to gather accurate intelligence about the size and strength of the Native American forces led to his men being overwhelmed. Custer led 200 soldiers to attack the Sioux and Cheyenne, but due to them being vastly outnumbered they were killed in less than an hour. Rosenberg's focus on Custer's unpreparedness reflects modern interpretations that highlight Custer's overconfidence and poor judgment, making this a convincing interpretation.

Interpretation B, written by Nelson Miles in 1896, focuses on the public reaction to Custer's defeat, describing the widespread mourning and shock in the United States. While this captures the emotional response at the time, it does not explain the reasons behind the defeat. The description of the event as a "massacre" reflects the one-sided view held by many Americans, who saw Custer as a heroic figure. However, this interpretation is less convincing because it fails to address the tactical errors and the context of U.S. expansion and conflict with Native American tribes, which are crucial to understanding the battle's outcome. In conclusion, while Interpretation B reflects contemporary public sentiment, Interpretation A is more convincing because it provides a detailed and well-supported explanation of the factors that led to Custer's defeat, supported by factual military and historical context.

Feedback:

This answer would get 8/8 marks because the pupil has given a complex evaluation of the interpretations based on contextual knowledge, and they have given their overall judgement on which interpretation is more convincing, with reasoning.



Interpretation A

An excerpt from a book on the Battle of Little Bighorn written by Bruce A. Rosenberg and published in 1974. Rosenberg was a Professor of American Civilization at Brown University.

All during June 1876, events and Custer's own mistakes conspired against him. Experience in the plains wars indicated that the problem in fighting the Indians was not so much defeating them as it was getting them to stand and fight at all. This was one of Custer's major worries. ... Finally, he was not aware that many of his future foes were armed with Winchester repeating carbines, whereas his own men were equipped with single-shot Springfields. Thus of the three major aspects of military intelligence - the number of the enemy, their willingness to fight, and their armament - Custer was ignorant and unprepared.

Interpretation B

An excerpt from Nelson Miles' memoirs: 'Personal Recollections and Observations'. Miles was a US army officer and published his memoirs in 1896, 5 years after he won the Medal of Honour.

On the top of the first page of the morning papers of July 5, 1876, in large black letters, was the one word, "Horrible." The journals announced that a good part of General Custer's command of the Seventh Cavalry had been annihilated on the Little Big Horn in Montana. Custer's command was very popular with the citizens of that region. The news of this massacre, as it was called, created intense excitement and sympathy. In fact, there had been no such demonstration of sorrow since the appalling tragedy of April 12, 1865. Buildings were draped in mourning.