

Grade 9 Answer

Reasons for Differences

4/4
Marks

Question:

Why might the authors of Interpretations A and B have a different interpretation about the Battle of Little Bighorn? Explain your answer using Interpretations A and B and your contextual knowledge. (4 marks)

Answer:

Interpretation A, written by Bruce A. Rosenberg in 1974, reflects the perspective of a historian with the benefit of hindsight and academic analysis. As a professor of American Civilization, Rosenberg had access to more detailed information and military records, allowing him to focus on Custer's mistakes and provide a critical view of Custer's leadership.

In contrast, Interpretation B is written by Nelson Miles in 1896, only 20 years after the battle and from the perspective of a military officer. Miles was writing in his memoirs after receiving the Medal of Honour, so his interpretation focuses more on the emotional response of the public and the tragedy of the event. As a fellow soldier, Miles was likely more sympathetic to Custer and focused on the heroic narrative rather than his mistakes.

Feedback:

This answer would get 4/4 marks because it recognises a difference in the provenances, and explains why this would lead to a difference in the interpretations.

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.