

# The Unbreakable Code: Navajo Code Talkers

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<b>Grade Level</b>	3
<b>Duration</b>	3 class periods

## National Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

#### Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

#### Element 4: Human Systems

9. The Characteristics, Distribution, and Migration of Human Population on Earth's Surface.

#### Element 6: The Uses of Geography

17. How to apply geography to interpret the past

## AZ Standards

### ELA

#### Reading

##### Key Ideas and Details

**4.RL.1** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### Writing

##### Production and Distribution of Writing

**4.W.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Language

##### Conventions of Standard English

**4.L.2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- Use correct capitalization.
- Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
- Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

## Arizona Social Science Standards

### GEOGRAPHY

**The use of geographic representations and tools helps individuals understand their world.**

**3.G1.1** Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in Arizona over time.

### HISTORY

**The development of civilizations, societies, cultures, and innovations have influenced history and continue to impact the modern world.**

**3.H1.1** Utilize a variety of sources to construct a historical narrative exploring Arizona's cultures, civilizations, and innovations.

## Overview

Codes are used to keep secrets. History is all about great stories of mankind. Put the two together and you have an engaging learning experience for students as they learn about the Native American code talkers of WWII. While Native Americans from several tribes were used as code talkers, this lesson will focus on the Navajo.

## Purpose

In this lesson, students will learn the role Navajos played in winning World War II. Students will understand historical aspects of reservation life, read maps to gain understanding, and apply geography to an historical event.

## Materials

- The Unbreakable Code – Sara Hoagland Hunter. 1996. Rising Moon Press. Flagstaff, AZ.
- Code Talker Locations map [https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/Code\\_Talkers\\_Location\\_Map.pdf](https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/Code_Talkers_Location_Map.pdf)
- Colored pencils for map work
- Copies of the code (pages at back of book)
- Arizona's Indian Reservations map [https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ\\_Reservations.pdf](https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ_Reservations.pdf)
- Facts Sheets (2 pages)
- More Lesson Background for Teacher
- Writing Prompt and Checklist
- Scoring Guide

## Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Recall facts from reading materials.
2. Identify the contributions of the Navajo Code Talkers in World War II.
3. Locate positions where code talkers played a major role on a map of the Pacific Theater.
4. Write a journal entry.

## Procedures

### SESSION ONE

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students if anyone has a grandparent or an older person in their life who likes to share stories about their childhood. Elicit some retelling of stories that the students have heard, and then have the class discuss what the purpose of these stories might be.
2. Set the stage for the book by a) framing the time period (most of the people in the story would be 100 years old or older), b) location of the story (Pacific Ocean) and the story genre (historical fiction). *Historical Fiction is described as a way to incorporate real history into a readable fictional story that contains a plot and characters. Historical fiction has subject matter that deals with real, identifiable historical situations and/or personalities. The period and culture described in an historical novel are usually accurate but the people may not have lived—they are fictional.*
3. Explain to the class that you will be reading a book that is historical fiction. As you are reading, they are to look for cultural and historical facts. Explain cultural facts as those that come from living within a group of people—the things you learn from your family or community. Historical facts are those that relate to history. These usually include lists of events and dates that are remembered. These dates and events may be shared by many cultures. Write the two headings on the whiteboard and under cultural, give the example of language. Under historical, give the example of WWII was in the 1940s.
4. Read the book, The Unbreakable Code to the class. Stop to add examples under the two headings as the students identify them.

### SESSION TWO

1. Begin this session with the mapwork. Project the Arizona's Indian Reservations map and locate the Navajo reservation. Now distribute and project

the Code Talker Location map.

[https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/Code\\_Talkers\\_Location\\_Map.pdf](https://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/Code_Talkers_Location_Map.pdf)

- Have students put an X on the map where the Navajo Reservation would be found. Emphasize how far these marines were from their home when they went to fight in the Pacific theater.
2. Now have the students label on the Code Talker Location map: 1) Pacific Ocean, 2) United States, 3) Asia, and 4) Australia
  3. Highlight each of the battle spots indicated on the map and then ask the students to connect the dots to create a circle. This would be the "PACIFIC THEATER" of the war in which the code talkers played the biggest part. Label the Pacific Theater.
  4. Explain that in warfare, a theater or theatre is normally used to define a specific geographic area within which armed conflict occurs. A war would have to occur over a large portion of the globe in order to be considered large enough to have separate theaters, and the term is not used in the singular. World War II was a big war. It had two theaters: European and Pacific. Show the European Theater on the map.
  5. Project the alphabet that created the code (back of the book). It's important to realize that Navajo is a spoken language, not a written language so written forms had to be created. Note: J is a jackass (good time for learning a synonym)
  6. Share that there were also code talkers from other Native American tribes, although most code talkers were Navajos. Review the contributions of the code talkers and how they used their language to help the World War II effort.

### SESSION THREE

7. Project and distribute the Fact Sheets and read them to the class. Have students continue to look for cultural and historical facts that are not already on the whiteboard.
8. Explain the Writing Prompt and Scoring Guide.

## Assessment

### Geography

Mapwork can be graded for accuracy. Mastery will be considered 90% or higher.

### ELA and History

Writing Prompt can be scored with the Scoring Guide. Mastery will be considered a score of 16 pts or higher.

## Extensions

Students could use the Navajo code to write their name or write a simple message to each other.

## Sources

The Unbreakable Code – Sara Hoagland Hunter.  
1996. Rising Moon Press. Flagstaff, AZ.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_Johnston\\_\(code\\_talker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Johnston_(code_talker))

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/decades-us-government-forcibly-placed-native-students-western-schools-effects-felt-today-180959502/>

[http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc\\_hist\\_boardingschools](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_hist_boardingschools)