

Chester Nez and the Unbreakable Code: A Navajo Code Talker's Story

Discussion Guide

Grades 2nd-4th

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Ask: Why might someone have to create a secret language? Jot down student responses on a whiteboard or poster paper.
- Read the inside cover of the book with students to preview the text.
- Use RIF's [K-W-L chart](#) individually or as a class to activate students' thinking as they begin reading a new book.
- Frontload vocabulary: *captive, sacred, worth, ancestor, honor, code, efficient*

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- Why did the missionary tell Betoli he had to change his name?
- How were Chester and his classmates treated at the boarding school?
- What events inspired Chester to create his own language?
- How was Chester's new language able to lead them to victory in the war?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- With students, discuss ways that Chester Nez persevered through challenges. What character traits allowed for him to be successful?
- Consider using RIF's Historic Figures Activity Guides to allow for students to make connections and expand on what they have learned.
- Extension: Have students explore The Navajo Code (located in the back of the book). Encourage them to create their own secret message with a friend!

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.
- Visit RIF's [Sustainable Futures](#) center to learn more!