



## War, Massacre, or Terrorism?

*This MysteryQuest examines the documents relating to a clash between a white road-building crew and Aboriginal peoples in 1864 in British Columbia. Students will develop an understanding of the value judgments contained in reporting about newsworthy events, and learn to write a fair-minded account.*

*A critical thinking challenge to accompany*

### ***Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History***

#### ***We Do Not Know His Name: Klatsassin and the Chilcotin War***

**<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/07/indexen.html>**

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*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC<sup>2</sup>)*  
**[www.tc2.ca](http://www.tc2.ca)**

#### **Ages**

16-18

#### **Courses**

Canadian history, law, First Nations studies

#### **Key Topics**

- media bias
- fair-minded reporting
- First Nation/European conflict on the West Coast
- Chilcotin War

## Critical Challenge

Write a persuasive editorial for a local newspaper that asserts that the events of 1864 in the Chilcotin area were one of a war or a massacre.

## Broad Understanding

- Students will learn about the effect of value laden language in the reporting of events, and will also learn how to write a fair-minded account.
- Students will learn about various perspectives on the nature of the conflict between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples in 1864 in British Columbia.

## Requisite Tools



### *Background knowledge*

- knowledge of the settlement of 19th century British Columbia
- basic knowledge about Native /non-Native relations in 19th century British Columbia



### *Criteria for judgment*

- criteria for writing a fair-minded account (e.g., clearly stated position; neutral (not “loaded”) language; supporting evidence; reference to definitions of war, massacre, and terrorism)



### *Critical thinking vocabulary*

- fair-minded
- loaded language



### *Thinking strategies*

- data chart



### *Habits of mind*

- fair-minded

## Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/07/indexen.html>.

## Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of directions found on the website is reproduced next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

## Suggested Activities

### Introduce Klatsassin and the Chilcotin War

- Using *Introduction* as a guide, explain to students the challenge that is the focus of their investigation.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1864 a series of killings sent a chill across Canada. The blood of 14 men, spilled into the Homathco River before dawn on the morning of April 29th, 1864, was only the beginning of this conflict. By the end of May, 19 road-builders, packers, and a farmer were dead. Within six weeks an army of over 100 men had arrived in the area to catch the killers.

The killings took place in a remote triangle in central British Columbia that, at the time, was inaccessible by road or even horse trail. The dead men had all been part of the teams trying to build a road from the Pacific coast to the recently discovered goldfields of the Cariboo.

This area was traditional territory of the Tsilhqot'in people who had lived on the high Chilcotin Plateau for centuries, perhaps for thousands of years. The survivors of the attacks identified the principal leader of the more than 20 people involved in the killings as a Tsilhqot'in chief, who was called "Klatsassin" by his people.

Historians have variously called this incident a war, a massacre, or an act of terrorism. But which is it? Soldiers who kill many others during the course of war are not likely to be punished for these killings; in fact they may be honoured for these actions. Committing the same killings outside the context of war would likely result in serious consequences. But here again it may depend whether the killers were acting on behalf of their people to bring about a desired political goal, or simply acting for personal gain or revenge. In short, there is much at stake in deciding upon the kind of incident. You will be invited to examine selected historical documents from the time and draw your own conclusions about which term — war, massacre, or terrorism — most fairly describes this event.

- Using *The Task* as a guide, outline the activities that students will undertake.

#### THE TASK

This MysteryQuest invites you to assess the underlying nature of a violent conflict between whites and First Nations peoples in 1864. Was the killing of the road crew an act of terrorism by the Tsilhqot'in to discourage further trade and traffic in the area? Or were they defending their territory against an invading population? Perhaps they were avenging the deaths of their people who were killed by the European introduction of smallpox years earlier?

You will begin by considering the differences between the terms "war," "massacre," and "terrorism." You will read about the background to this incident and then examine historical documents looking for statements that suggest how this event should be described. Finally, you will decide on the most appropriate term and explain your choice in a one-page essay.

### Reflect on war, massacre, and terrorism

- Brainstorm with students how they would define the terms *war*, *massacre*, and *terrorism*. After several suggestions have been given, provide students with the definitions found in *Step 1: Reflect on war, massacre, and terrorism* to verify their understanding of the terms. Draw their attention to the subtle difference between the terms.

#### STEP 1: REFLECT ON WAR, MASSACRE, AND TERRORISM


Before deciding what term best describes this incident, we must be clear about the difference between the acts of war, massacre, and terrorism. Consider the following definitions:

- **War:** a conflict between the armed forces of two or more states or coalitions; a conflict conducted to achieve certain political goals.
- **Massacre:** a slaughter; the savage and excessive killing of many people, especially of non-combatant civilians; to murder cruelly or violently.
- **Terrorism:** an attempt to further a group's interests by intimidating others; a policy intended to spread a feeling of terror or alarm.

The differences between these terms are subtle. For example, an act of terrorism might include the cruel killing of innocent villagers during a war. It might best be described as an act of terrorism if its primary function was neither a military objective nor a simple act of revenge, but to spread fear among the population.

Consult the chart *Comparing War, Massacre, and Terrorism* for further elaboration of these terms. You may want to search the internet to locate other definitions to help you distinguish between these three terms. Add any points you find that have not already been listed on this chart.

- Duplicate and distribute copies of *Comparing War, Massacre, and Terrorism* to students, individually or in pairs. Invite students to add any other points raised in their discussion.



**Comparing War, Massacre, and Terrorism**

War	Massacre	Terrorism
may be unjust or justifiable	is unjust, involves the killing of innocent people	involves violence against people who are in some way associated with the problem
longer in duration	could be a one-time event	typically involves more than one event
occurs between political entities	can be carried out by individuals or small groups	can be carried out by small or large groups
attacks happen on both sides	one-sided hostilities	one-sided hostilities
usually as a defence of the key interests of the group	may be impulsive, motivated by revenge or the need to cover up a crime	usually the result of frustration over ongoing actions by a powerful force

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## Learn about the conflict

- Following *Step 2: Learn about the conflict* as a guide, direct students to read the Timeline document found in *Evidence in the Case Overview Documents*. Ask students to identify the ten most significant events.
- Instruct students to read the brief introductions in the remaining five overview documents to learn about the conditions leading up to the incident.

### STEP 2: LEARN ABOUT THE CONFLICT

Before you look at historical documents, it will help to learn more of the background to this event. In *Evidence in the Case* there is a list of six "Overview documents" prepared by creators of this website; these documents explain the context for this incident. Begin by looking at the Timeline and identifying the ten most significant events. Next, read the brief introductions presented in the other five overview documents to learn about the conditions leading up to the incident.

### EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

#### Overview documents

- Timeline
- Context
- Smallpox Culture
- Road Building Culture
- Tsilhqot'in Culture
- Fur Trade Culture

## Examine historical documents

- Using *Step 3: Examine historical documents* as a guide, explain to students that they are going to examine selected historical documents and think about the justification for using the term war, massacre, or terrorism to describe the incident.

### STEP 3: EXAMINE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

You are now ready to examine selected historical documents and think about the justification for using the term war, massacre, or terrorism to describe the incident. Locate the six sources from the list of "Primary documents" found in *Evidence in the Case*.

For each historical document, use a copy of *Determining the Kind of Incident* to record the following:

- statements that provide clues as to the underlying nature of the incident;
- the inference you draw from each piece of evidence about the kind of incident (war, massacre, or terrorism);
- and why you think each piece of evidence supports the term you suggest.

For example, you might record that one document claims that the Native people had a lawless spirit induced by the drinking of whisky. This implies that the incident might appropriately be seen as a massacre since the statement suggests there was no clear purpose for the killings. Refer to the chart *Comparing War, Massacre, and Terrorism* to remind you of the features that distinguish each kind of incident.

- Direct students to the six sources from the list of Primary Documents found in *Evidence in the Case*.
- Duplicate and distribute copies of *Determining the Kind of Incident* to students. Explain that they will need a copy of this chart for each historical document.

### EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

#### Primary documents

##### Newspaper articles

"An Indian War Impending", The British Colonist, August 30, 1862

"The Bute Inlet Massacre and Its Causes", The Victoria Colonist, June 13, 1864

"Waddington and Bute Inlet", The British Columbian, June 18, 1864

##### Colonial correspondence

Frederick Seymour, "Letter to Newcastle, No. 7" – May 20, 1864

##### Testimony

Testimony of Ach-pic-er-mous, May 31, 1865

##### Oral History/Interview

Henry Solomon, The Escape of Chedekki [Sumayu], Nemiah: The Unconquered Country, 1992

## Develop criteria for a fair-minded argument

- As a class, discuss findings from the documents. Ask students whether the opinions expressed in the documents seemed fair-minded - why or why not? Brainstorm with students criteria for judging a fair-minded argument. From a list of seven or eight criteria, select three or four that include such things as clearly stated position, neutral (not "loaded") language, supporting evidence, and reference to definitions of war, massacre, and terrorism.

## Prepare your finding

- Using *Step 4: Prepare your finding* as a guide, instruct students to write a 250-word explanation that clearly states whether they believe the incident was a war, a massacre, or terrorism. Remind students to follow the criteria for a fair-minded argument.

### STEP 4: PREPARE YOUR FINDING

Armed with the evidence you have found to support each description of the incident, write a 250-word explanation that clearly states whether you believe it was war, massacre, or terrorism. Provide evidence from the documents to support your conclusion, making frequent reference to the meaning of these terms.



### Determining the Kind of Incident

Statement from the document	Inference	Explanation
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	
	This suggests the incident is <input type="checkbox"/> war <input type="checkbox"/> massacre <input type="checkbox"/> terrorism	

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## Evaluation

- Use the rubric *Assessing Inferences Drawn from Evidence* to evaluate student completion of charts. Use the rubric *Assessing Historical Conclusions* to assess students' 250-word explanation of the event.

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**KLATSASSIN and the CHILCOTIN WAR**

MysteryQuest 7 Evaluation Materials 2 (Rubric)

**Assessing Historical Conclusions**

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
<b>Clearly explains the important evidence</b>	Identifies and very clearly explains the most important evidence for the conclusion.	Identifies and clearly explains most of the important evidence for the conclusion.	Identifies some relevant and important evidence for the conclusion; explanations are generally quite clear.	Identifies very little relevant evidence for the conclusion; explanations are only occasionally clear.	Identifies no relevant evidence for the conclusion; none of the explanations are clear.
<b>Offers plausible conclusion</b>	The conclusion is highly plausible and highly justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is clearly plausible and justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is plausible and adequately justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is plausible but barely justifiable given the evidence provided.	The conclusion is implausible and not justifiable given the evidence provided.

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MysteryQuest 7 Evaluation Materials 1 (Rubric)

### Assessing Inferences Drawn from Evidence

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
<b>Identifies relevant and important evidence</b>	Identifies the most important and relevant statements in the documents.	Identifies the required number of relevant statements, including most of the important ones in the documents.	Identifies some relevant statements in the documents, but the important ones are omitted.	Identifies some relevant statements in the documents, but none of the important ones are included.	Identifies no relevant statements in the documents.
<b>Draws plausible inferences</b>	Draws highly plausible inferences about the implications of the statements; provides convincing reasons for the inferences.	Draws plausible inferences about the implications of the statements; provides good reasons for the inferences.	Draws generally plausible inferences about the implications of the statements; provides reasons for some of the inferences.	Draws some plausible inferences about the implications of the statements; provides little justification for the inferences.	Draws generally implausible inferences about the implications of the statements; provides very little justification for the inferences.

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## Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in *Extension*.

### EXTENSION

#### *The legacy today*

Read a selection of the documents in *The Chilcotin War Today* and identify the issues that keep the incident alive for the Chilcotin peoples.

#### *Causes of the conflict*

What were the underlying reasons for this conflict? Did smallpox cause it? Or was it the building of a road through the Chilcotin territory? Or were the seeds already sown in the years of the fur trade? Read the following overview documents written by the creators of the website and summarize the arguments supporting each suggested cause of the conflict. Create a pie chart indicating the percentage of influence each of these causes had in the killing of the men on the road crew. You may want to consult *Creating a Pie Chart* for instructions on how to complete a pie chart.

Context  
Smallpox Culture  
Road Building Culture  
Tsilhqot'in Culture  
Fur Trade Culture

#### *Comparing kinds of evidence*

Some people suggest that "oral history" is not as reliable as "written documents" when it comes to providing evidence of the past. Look at the following primary documents — one that describes itself as "oral history" and others that are "written historical documents." What are the similarities and differences between them? What are their strengths and weaknesses as "evidence" about the Chilcotin War?

Oral History/Interview: Henry Solomon, *The Escape of Chedekki* [Sumayu], *Nemah: The Unconquered Country*, 1992

Colonial Dispatches: Frederick Seymour, "Letter to Newcastle, No. 7" – May 20, 1864