

## Geography Application

**Custer's Last Stand**

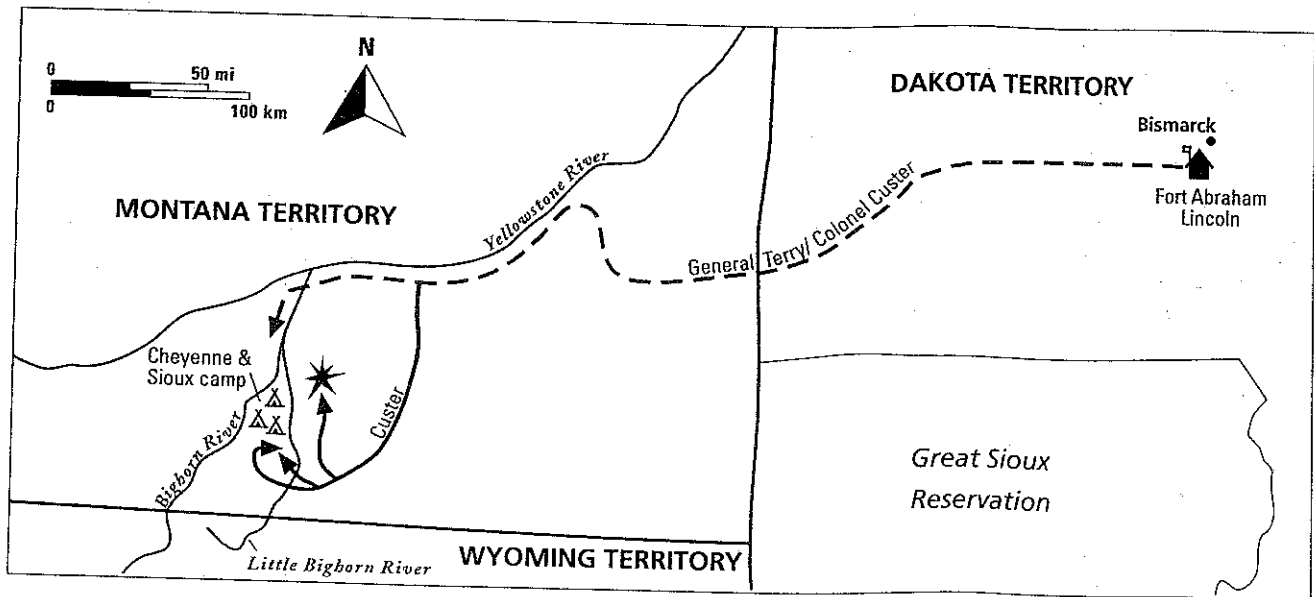
When the 7th Cavalry was formed in 1866, Civil War hero George Armstrong Custer became its commander. In 1874, the regiment was sent for duty in Dakota Territory and a date with destiny.

The discovery of gold had brought many white settlers to the Black Hills along the border of Wyoming and Dakota territories. This was land inside the Great Sioux reservation. So there were often clashes because the Cheyenne and Sioux had claimed the area as sacred. Soon they left the reservation and made plans to push away the intruders. Finally, the U.S. government took action.

Under chieftains Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, the Sioux and Cheyenne were gathered in a camp in southeastern Montana Territory. In June 1876, an expedition under General Alfred Terry and Custer left Fort Abraham Lincoln. It wanted to force the Native

Americans back to their reservation.

On June 22, Terry and Custer separated along the Yellowstone River. Custer took a southern route, and Terry was to attack from the north. But Custer apparently underestimated the size of the camp. On June 25, he split his 7th Cavalry of 600 men into three battalions. Those led by Marcus Reno and Frederick Benteen got bogged down in fighting south of the camp. At the same time, Custer and his 210 men rode north, east of the camp. They were soon overwhelmed by 2,500 warriors. Help did not arrive. In the fierce battle, Custer and all his men were killed. Terry's army finally approached from the north on June 26. The Sioux and Cheyenne camp quickly scattered in all directions. The map below follows Custer to his final battle.



### Interpreting Maps and Text

1. What was the cause of conflict on the Great Sioux reservation of Dakota Territory in the 1870s?

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2. Where was Fort Abraham Lincoln located?

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3. Which direction did Terry's and Custer's armies move to encounter the Native American camp?

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4. Why did Terry and Custer split their combined force?

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5. Between what rivers was the Sioux and Cheyenne camp located?

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6. Look again at the battle map. In what way do you think it supports the theory that Custer seriously underestimated the number of warriors he would face?

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7. Why were battalions led by Reno and Benteen unable to come to Custer's rescue?

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8. Why do you think the conflict was named the Battle of Little Big Horn?

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