

## *The Forced Marches*

*By Rhonda Gutierrez*

These activities are about one aspect of the Long Walk of the Navajo which is the forced marches. There are 53 individual marches from 1863-1866. These activities are for grades 5<sup>th</sup> and up through high school and there are activities that are for all grade levels and include working with maps, reading primary source materials, critical analysis and creative writing. This unit focuses only on the marches and doesn't discuss the reasons for the march or what happened once the Navajo arrived at Fort Sumner which will be covered in other units.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. How did the Navajo get to Fort Sumner?
2. Who went on the marches?
3. What routes were they marched on?
4. How long were the marches and how long did they take?
5. What were conditions like on these marches?
6. Can we ever know how many people died on these marches?

### **Objectives:**

After completing this unit, students will be able to...

1. Discuss the treatment that the Navajos received on the marches.
2. Describe the conditions, understand the human impact and express empathy for those who made the trek.
3. Understand the routes, geography along the routes and how seasons impacted the marchers.
4. Calculate averages and use those calculations to estimate death rate of the marches.

### **Index of the Stories of the Long Walk**

Stories copied from: Oral Stories of The Long Walk by the Din4 of the Eastern Region of the Navajo Reservation, Crownpoint, NM 1990. The stories selected from the book were those that focused on the Long Walk and the only changes from the original text was selection and in many cases ending the story to include only portion of the story focusing on the long walk period.

Fred Bitsilie, Mary Jim Charley, Anna Haney, Jane Hasteen, Ruth Beyale, Norma Keesonnie, Mary Pioche, Mary Sandoval, and Annie Succo. For the entire text, you may go to:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015024895453&view=1up&seq=5>

### **My Dear Diary Activity**

Much of what we learn about the events in history come from historical records such as military records, census, tally counts, birth, death and marriage notices, maps and other official records. From those records we get the overall idea of what happened. However to really understand the human impact of that history, historians and anthropologists turn to the oral or written stories, poetry,

### **Materials**

Oral Stories of the Long Walk, Long Walk Maps, Bosque Redondo (History of the Long Walk by Ackerly)

### **Key Concepts**

- As many as 53 forced marches from 1863-1866.
- People were removed from throughout the homeland and placed at Fort Canby (Fort Defiance) or Fort Wingate (Fort Huelteroy).
- Not all Navajos made the marches but estimated 60% or more did.
- Estimated that between the wars against, the marches and internment, about 1 in 3 Navajo died.

### **Grades**

Grades 5<sup>th</sup> and up. Modifications for activities provided. Lower grades can be taught material with modifications. Grades 5 – 12 include Common Core and NM

journals, and letters of those who were directly affected by the events. One prime example is “Diary of Anne Frank”. For this activity, the students will read oral stories gathered in 1990 of elders who were told these stories from their grandparents who were at Fort Sumner. Oral stories passed on especially about something so terrible as the Long Walk were hard to talk about and many details, places and dates may have been forgotten. However these stories tell of the hardships and uncertainties that the family members experienced and taken together validate the suffering thereby giving the often dry facts of history the shade of humanity.

The objective of this lesson is to explore the human story of suffering of the forced marches to Fort Sumner by those who walked the many miles. To do so, have the students read the oral stories and then pick a persona to adopt or take on for the activity and then write a journal account of their journey to Fort Sumner. Based upon the age of the students, this can be a set of pictures or short diary accounts of only a few days or for older students the complexity can be increased to include a journal entry for every day for a month or two the person traveled from Fort Canby (Fort Defiance) or Fort Wingate II to Fort Sumner. For older students they could even begin with how they get to the starting forts.

To pick personas, this could be teacher led or student’s choice. The personas can also include people of all ages and various fates again based upon the age of the students. See Persona Worksheet for ideas or simply print and have the students draw out a persona with their fate. Included are two persona pages – the first with roles and fates as many people died in route. The other page doesn’t include fates and as the teacher you can decide if you wish to have the students do the activity including people who die along the route.

Once students pick a persona from either the list or of teacher making with or without fates decided, then they are to create a diary story of their trip. To use as a model, you may read from the Dear America series of historic fiction written about different times in history. One title was written about a Navajo girl on the Long Walk, “The Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow” by Ann Turner. See excerpt below:

*The First death. At least it is not snowing when we pack up our blankets, gather our animals together, and set off – once again. But the cold seeps under our blankets, through the soles of our moccasins, and I see Grandmother stumbling once or twice over clumps of dried grass. High Jumper hurries to help her, and that leaves Sah-nee and her father trying to help Dezbah move forward.*

*Soon, they fall behind and though we try to help them along, we are too heavily loaded. The last time I see them, they are two people standing still with a crumpled, dark shape between them. One person bends over, straightens, and moves forward again. I hear my friend’s mourning wail on the wind.*

*No soldier stops to help. When Sah-nee joins us, she speaks through the tears, “She is dead- all of a sudden. We had to leave her.”*

*I hate that my dream came true, and I hate that Dezbah will not sleep beside me tonight.*

*This is the first death, and Grandfather says there will be many more. (pgs 115-116)*

To help set the stage so to speak for students, you may read to them an excerpt from the poem “In 1864” by Luci Tapahonso.

*We had such a long distance to cover.  
Some old people fell behind, and they wouldn't let us go back to help them.  
It was the saddest thing to see—my heart hurts so to remember that.  
Two women were near the time of the births of their babies,  
and they had a hard time keeping up with the rest.  
Some army men pulled them behind a huge rock, and we screamed out loud  
when we heard the gunshots. The women didn't make a sound.  
but we cried out loud for them and their babies.  
I felt then that I would not live through everything.*

*When we crossed the Río Grande, many people drowned.  
We didn't know how to swim—there was hardly any water deep enough  
to swim in at home. Some babies, children, and some of the older men  
and women were swept away by the river current.  
We must not ever forget their screams and the last we saw of them—  
hands, a leg, or strands of hair floating.*

*There were many who died on the way to Hwééldi. All the way  
we told each other, "We will be strong, as long as we are together."  
I think that was what kept us alive. We believed in ourselves  
and the old stories that the holy people had given us.  
"This is why," she would say to us. "This is why we are here.  
Because our grandparents prayed and grieved for us."*

The length and depth of the journal writing is up to needs of time and grades of students. This can be for several days up to before and until they get to fort. With younger students modifying the activity to include pictures to make a picture book instead of a diary and with older students a diary of the events.

### My Dear Diary and Persona Activity

Instructions: Check off a persona for this lesson from the list below:

1. Four year old Navajo girl who is traveling with your aunt because your parents were separated and you don't know if they alive.
2. Twelve year old boy who was injured during a battle with the soldiers and traveling with mother and two siblings. Your father was killed in the battle that you were injured.
3. Ten year old girl traveling with your family but you get sick along the way from the food.
4. Seventy-six year old man who is traveling with your family, but you get sick from hunger and age.
5. Twenty-five year old woman who is in the last months of pregnancy and go into labor.
6. Fifteen year old girl who has been separated from your family and you don't know the fate of them.
7. Eight year old boy who is traveling with your older brother and younger sister and both parents. You have never seen a soldier before.
8. Fifty three year old woman who is caring for your granddaughter who is three. Your daughter was killed by soldiers before going to Fort Defiance.
9. Thirty two year old Navajo headman who surrendered with your band of Navajo after being attacked, many animals killed and arrived in Fort Defiance (Canby) without much food.
10. Twenty five year old man who surrendered with the headman after being attacked and several of your family and friends were killed.
11. Twenty four year old woman traveling with your husband and you are a few months pregnant.
12. Nine year old boy traveling with your grandfather who is blind. Your parents are with you along with a younger sister.
13. Thirty nine year old man who is traveling with your wife and teenaged daughter and mother-in-law.
14. Fourteen year old girl who is traveling with your family – mother and father and grandmother.
15. Eighty two year old woman who is traveling with daughter and son-in-law and granddaughter

## My Dear Diary and Persona Activity with Fate

Instructions: Check off a persona for this lesson from the list below:

1. Four year old Navajo girl who is traveling with your aunt because your parents were separated and you don't know if they lived. You were taken in route to the fort near Las Vegas to work on a cattle ranch by a Spanish family.
2. Twelve year old boy who was shot in your arm during a battle with the soldiers and traveling with mother and two siblings. Your father was killed in the battle that you were injured. You become very sick but manage to get to the fort.
3. Ten year old girl traveling with your family but you get sick along the way from the food. You pass away before reaching the fort.
4. Seventy-six year old man who is traveling with your family, but you get sick from hunger and age and you pass away before making it to the fort.
5. Twenty-five year old woman who is in the last months of pregnancy and go into labor. You live but you have to leave the baby behind because it is weak and came too early.
6. Fifteen year old girl who has been separated from your family and you don't know the fate of them. You make it to the fort.
7. Eight year old brother who is traveling with your older brother and younger sister and both parents. You have never seen a soldier before. You make it to the fort.
8. Fifty three year old woman who is caring for your granddaughter who is three. Your daughter was killed by soldiers before going to Fort Defiance. You make it to the fort.
9. Thirty two year old Navajo headman who surrendered with your band of Navajo after being attacked, many animals killed and arrived in Fort Canby without much food. You make it to the fort.
10. Twenty five year old man who surrendered with the headman after being attacked and several of your family and friends were killed. You make it to the fort.
11. Twenty four year old woman traveling with your husband and you are a few months pregnant. You make it to the fort.
12. Nine year old boy traveling with your grandfather who is blind. Your parents are with you along with a younger sister. You make it to the fort.
13. Thirty nine year old man who is traveling with your wife and teenaged daughter and mother-in-law. You make it but your mother-in-law doesn't.
14. Fourteen year old girl who is traveling with your family – mother and father and grandmother. Your grandmother dies on the trip.
15. Eighty two year old woman who is traveling with daughter and son-in-law and granddaughter. You do not live to get to the fort.

## Mapping Activity

Again feel free to modify any activities to meet the needs of the students, time frame and age. The objective of the map activity is to get students to 1. Use legends on maps to calculate distance, 2. Using a rate per day, students will be able to calculate using the formula of distance equals rate times time how long it took people walking at a rate of 12 – 20 miles per day, and 3. Developing empathy for the people walking after discovering the time and distance of the forced marches.

Process: have students decide a starting point for removal to Fort Canby (Fort defiance) or Fort Wingate II and a route to take to Fort Sumner. Discussion around using the legend usually consists of showing students how to create their own ruler from paper of the legend or using a ruler, how to use the ruler to measure distance. Then students use that ruler to measure the route by applying the ruler to create a “best fit” along the route. The point is to calculate the total distances using the legend. If there are significant bends in the trail, instruct students how to use their legend ruler to measure the bends. For younger students it may be helpful to give them a rate of speed such as 15 miles per day. For older students you could have them calculate the time it took at different rates of speed such as how long if they walked 12 miles per day vs 18 miles per day. The range of times that are recorded by the soldiers was between 12 and 20 miles per day. For even more advanced, you could have the students vary rate based upon terrain – the more rough, have them decrease the rate and flatter terrain would be faster so increase the rate and then you could have those students average the speeds.

Included are several maps created for use in the feasibility study regarding designating the routes as historic trails. There is the main map which includes all routes and several maps that zoom into specific areas. This activity can be done with using the main map or for greater accuracy the detailed maps.

To create empathy, it may be helpful to then ask the students to think back over the last month of their lives and imagine instead of the activities that they did, they instead walked, slept on the ground and were either hot or cold depending upon the year. Depending upon the grade level, you could ask them to draw a picture of what they think it would have been like, or to write a short description using the writing prompt: If I had to walk this route, I think it would have been like.... And I would’ve felt....

## Extension Readings and Activities

The PDF file Bosque Redondo is “A Navajo Diaspora: The Long Walk to Hw4eldi” by Neal Ackerly and in it, the author describes using source materials the long walks, the conditions, limitations of the research and points out some of the more notorious marches. Noteworthy is Table 1 which is the chronology of marches beginning in August, 1863 until the return home in 1968. Another resource regarding the marches is the book “Navajo Roundup” by Lawrence Kelly (1970) in which he uses primary sources to tell the story of the forced marches. For example, from page 125 detailing the results of one march led by Captain John Thompson (typos and misspellings were in original text):

*Fort Sumner New Mexico,  
April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864.*

*Captain*

*I have the honor to report my arrival at the Post on the 13<sup>th</sup> inst. with 2400 Navajo Indians. I left Fort Canby, N.M on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1864, - with 2170 Indians Received at Bear Springs NM 97 more, and arrived at Los Pinos N.M. on the 19<sup>th</sup> and left on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. I received at Los Pinos 360 but had to send back 300 from Bairds Ranch after being*



two days out for want of transportation. I received at San Jose one (1) and at Bernal Springs NM twenty four(24) I have lost since I left Canby 197 by deaths and gained on the trip 245, which gain was made on the road between Fort Canby and Los Pinos NM by Indians coming in from the mountains. The Indians have lost 50 head of horses and mules which were stolen by Mexican thieves – the Inf under my command captured six head of the stolen animals at San Antonita NM and for the want of mounted men to follow up the Robbers the balance were lost.

Respectfully Submitted

J. Thompson, Capt 1<sup>st</sup> Cavly N.M. Vols

In response to Captain Thompson's report, Carleton commented...

*"...The Adjutant General will see that 197 of these Indian prisoners of Captain Thompson's party, when he left Fort Canby, died en route. The weather was very inclement, with terrible gales of wind and heavy falls of snow; the Indians were nearly naked; and, besides, many died from dysentery, occasioned by eating too heartily of half-cooked bread, made of our flour, to which they were not accustomed."* (Carlton to Thomas, April 24, 1864)

### Statistical Analysis

The following chart adapted from Ackerly's table 1, includes the marches and the death totals that could be ascertained. The military records tended to be precise in many ways and very lacking in details at other times. Then the nature of how the people were gathered up and the multiple staging grounds also made accurate record keeping challenging. Sometimes one commander began a march and then would be replaced or join with another march. Many people were written down as missing and not marked as deceased and sometimes there isn't mention as to what happened. For example, the march in October of 1864 reported to have included over 1200 being led by Lieutenant Hubbell in a newspaper article in the *New Mexican* October 28, 1864 and then reported in military records on December 2, 1864 that 1020 Navajo people arrived but no notation as to what happened to the 180 people presumed missing.

Date started	Led by	Number of	Reported deaths	Route
8/27/1863	Holmes	51	2	Santa Fe
11/22/1864	Chacon-Calloway	188	3	Santa Fe
1/26/1864	Carson-Pettis	240	5	Santa Fe
2/4/1864	Berney	189	14 missing*	Santa Fe
2/25/1864	Berney	1473	10	Mountain
3/6/1864	Thompson	2400	197	Mountain
3/20/1864	McCabe	800	110	Mountain
4/2/1864	Berney	1445	14	Santa Fe
7/12/1864	Holmes	1209	0	Santa Fe
10/8/1864	Speed- Hubbell	454	10	Unknown
10/21/1864	Baldwin-Hubbell	1200	180 missing*	Via Fort Union

Analysis to include: Students will calculate rate of death per each of the 10 representative marches, then the average of the ten. Then they can use the average death rate to calculate the loss of life. Of course this is only an estimate and no way we will ever know the actual numbers given people died in forts waiting marching and during the marches and not accounted for and those who escaped and taken as slaves. The military did try to note these losses but record keeping was quite inconsistent.

To calculate the rate of death or percentage of people on any given route who died during that route, take the number of deaths divided by the total people marching and multiple by 100 to get the



percentage. So for the first march,  $2/51 \times 100 = 4\%$  which means that a total of 4% died. To calculate all of these, you may have students use calculators throughout or create spreadsheet and put in the formulas to generate the answers. The mean is the average of the numbers: add up all the numbers, then divide by how many numbers there are. In other words it is the sum divided by the count. Once students figure the rates for each march, then they would add those rates up and then divide by the total number of marches. It is open to debate whether to count the missing in the last march as deaths or to not because of the uncertainty. To then calculate an approximate death toll, students will take the total number of Navajo people who were marched and multiple by the rate. The total number of Navajo people marched is estimated between 9500 and 10,000. The number is various because of some people escaped and then were recaptured and marched once more to Bosque Redondo.

The military had many reasons to under estimate the deaths and the military estimate was about 500 people. Based upon the research, historians believe that 500 is an under-estimated number and it is likely that number is closer to a 1000. The calculations in this exercise are as follows:

Rates per trip: 4, 2, 2, 7, 1, 8, 14, 10, 0, 2, 15 (all %) Average death rate for the ten trips: 6%. Using 10,000 as the number of people who were marched  $\times 6\% = 600$  people who died which is within the estimated range. The difficulty with such a calculation is it is based upon reported number of deaths.

Other activities: The table can be utilized as an opportunity for several extension activities. For one, the students could create a timeline of the marches. An opportunity to graph out the number of Navajos on the march could expose trends and identify any patterns. Likewise, charting the months of each year and the number of marches may expose patterns.



**Standards:****Common Core**

Reading Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

	Key ideas & Details	Craft & Structure	Integration Knowledge & Ideas	Range of Reading & Complexity
Grades 6- 8	1,2	4, 6	7-9	10
Grades 9-10	1-3	4-6	7, 9	10
Grades 11-12	1-3	4-6	8, 9	10

**NM Benchmarks**

**5-8 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico:** explore and explain how people and events have influenced the development of New Mexico up to the present day

**5-8 Benchmark 1-C. World:** compare and contrast major historical eras, events and figures from ancient civilizations to the age of exploration

**5-8 Benchmark 1-B. United States:** analyze and interpret major eras, events and individuals from the periods of exploration and colonization through the civil war and reconstruction in United States history.

**Resources**

Ackerly, Neal. "A Navajo Diaspora: The Long Walk to Hw4eldi". 1998; Silver City, NM, dos Rios Consultants.

Chee, Patty, Benally, Judy, Yazzie, Milanda, Etsitty, Marie, & Henderson, Bessie C. "Oral History Stories of the Long Walk Hw4eldi Baa Han4. 1990; Crownpoint, NM Office of Indian Education Programs.

Correll, Lee J. "Through White Man's Eyes; A Contribution of Navajo History. 1979, Window Rock, AZ, Navajo Heritage Center.

Kelly, Lawrence. "Navajo Roundup," 1970, Boulder Co, The Pruett Publishing Company.

Turner, Ann. "The Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow". 1999; Scholastic, New York

Feasibility Study. Draft: Long Walk National Historic Trail. 2008, United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, Santa Fe, NM.