

# Unbreakable Code

## Level 1

## Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

<p><b>Talking in Code</b></p> <p>Fill in the code by the correct answer.</p>	<p><b>Talking in Code</b></p> <p>Answer the questions below.</p> <p><b>Answers</b></p> <p><b>Unbreakable Code B</b></p> <p>1. Name _____</p> <p>2. Chester Nez _____</p> <p>3. Navajo _____</p> <p>4. U.S. Marine Corps _____</p> <p>5. Mitopeca _____</p> <p>6. Unbreakable _____</p> <p>7. Decision _____</p> <p>8. Code talkers _____</p> <p>9. Commanders _____</p> <p>10. Observation _____</p> <p>11. Grenade _____</p> <p>12. Both _____</p> <p>13. Congressional original _____</p> <p>14. <b>Unbreakable Code B</b></p> <p><small>Navajo Code Talker Project 101</small></p>
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Level 2 ■ ■

## Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

**Level 3**

## Words to Know list, Reading Selection, and Reading Comprehension questions

## Assemble the Unit

Reproduce and distribute one copy for each student:

- Visual Literacy page: Navajo Code Talker Dictionary, page 11
  - Level 1, 2, or 3 Reading Selection and Reading Comprehension page and the corresponding Words to Know list
  - Graphic Organizer of your choosing, provided on pages 180–186
  - Writing Form: Honoring the Code Talkers, page 12

## **Introduce the Topic**

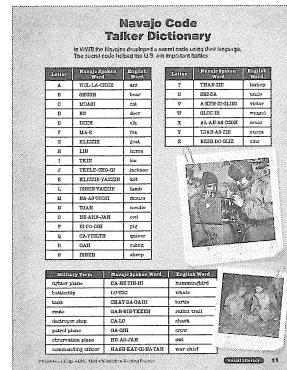
Read aloud and discuss the Navajo Code Talker Dictionary. Explain that during World War II, the Navajos developed a secret code using their language. Tell students that one part of the code was an alphabet, and the other part used Navajo words for military terms. The enemy was never able to break the code.

## **Read and Respond**

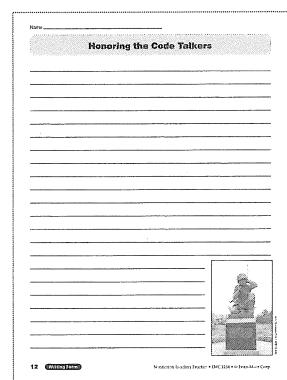
Form leveled groups and review the Words to Know lists with each group of students. Instruct each group to read their selection individually, in pairs, or as a group. Have students complete the Reading Comprehension page for their selection.

## **Write About the Topic**

Read aloud the leveled writing prompt for each group. Tell students to use the Graphic Organizer to plan their writing. Direct students to use their Writing Form to respond to their prompt.



### Visual Literacy



## **Writing Form**

# Navajo Code Talker Dictionary

In WWII the Navajos developed a secret code using their language. The secret code helped the U.S. win important battles.

Letter	Navajo Spoken Word	English Word
A	WOL-LA-CHEE	ant
B	SHUSH	bear
C	MOASI	cat
D	BE	deer
E	DZEH	elk
F	MA-E	fox
G	KLIZZIE	goat
H	LIN	horse
I	TKIN	ice
J	TKELE-CHO-GI	jackass
K	KLIZZIE-YAZZIE	kid
L	DIBEH-YAZZIE	lamb
M	NA-AS-TSOSI	mouse
N	TSAH	needle
O	NE-AHS-JAH	owl
P	BI-SO-DIH	pig
Q	CA-YEILTH	quiver
R	GAH	rabbit
S	DIBEH	sheep

Letter	Navajo Spoken Word	English Word
T	THAN-ZIE	turkey
U	SHI-DA	uncle
V	A-KEH-DI-GLINI	victor
W	GLOE-IH	weasel
X	AL-AN-AS-DZOH	cross
Y	TSAH-AS-ZIH	yucca
Z	BESH-DO-GLIZ	zinc

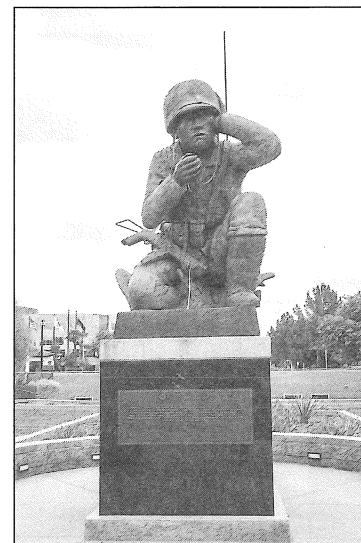


Military Term	Navajo Spoken Word	English Word
fighter plane	DA-HE-TIH-HI	hummingbird
battleship	LO-TSO	whale
tank	CHAY-DA-GAHI	turtle
route	GAH-BIH-TKEEN	rabbit trail
destroyer ship	CA-LO	shark
patrol plane	GA-GIH	crow
observation plane	NE-AS-JAH	owl
commanding officer	HASH-KAY-GI-NA-TAH	war chief



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Honoring the Code Talkers



Sue Stokes / Shutterstock.com

## **Words to Know**

### **Talking in Code**

Navajo  
U.S. Marine Corps  
bilingual  
unbreakable  
decision  
code talkers  
commanders  
complicated  
observation  
grenade  
oath  
Congressional  
original

## **Words to Know**

### **Code Talkers**

code talkers  
Navajo  
U.S. Marine Corps  
bilingual  
decision  
reservation  
military  
complicated  
convinced  
equipment  
similar  
observation  
memorized

## **Words to Know**

### **Secret Code**

U.S. Marine Corps  
recruiters  
bilingual  
Navajo  
reservation  
damaged  
grazing  
hardships  
endured  
enlisting  
communicate  
commanders  
translated  
sworn  
secrecy

**Unbreakable Code ■**

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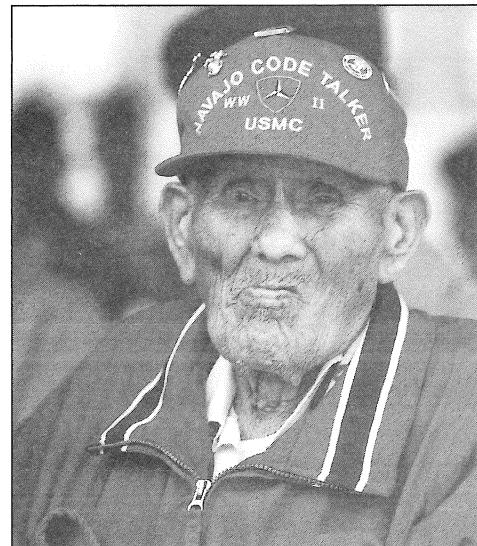


# Talking in Code

The world was at war in 1942, and the United States needed fighting men. Chester Nez was a young Navajo high school student. The U.S. Marine Corps came to his school with a special mission in mind. The Marines were looking for young men who were bilingual.

## Speaking Navajo

Chester Nez grew up speaking Navajo, and he could also read and write English. He was sent to a boarding school with other Navajo children when he was 8 years old. The children were told not to speak their own language. Chester Nez had his mouth washed out with soap for speaking Navajo. He learned to speak English, but he didn't forget Navajo.



Chester Nez wears his Navajo code talker hat in 2014.

## An Unbreakable Code

People of the Navajo Nation had not always been treated well by the United States. However, when Chester Nez heard that the U.S. Marines needed him, he made a big decision. He joined the Marines in order to do something for his country. Chester Nez and 28 other Navajo speakers were sent to California. They became the first code talkers. They invented a secret code, and they learned how to operate and fix radios. With their secret code, they could send messages from the commanders to the men. The enemy was never able to break their code.

What was the unbreakable code? It was the Navajo language. Not many people knew the language other than Navajos. It had never been written down. It was also a complicated language. The Navajo language did not have words for war machinery. So the code talkers used words in a way that was like poetry. For example, an observation plane was *ne-as-jah*. That means *owl* in Navajo. (An owl is a watchful bird of prey.) A destroyer ship was *ca-lo*, which means *shark*. *Ni-ma-si* was used for *grenade*. It was the Navajo word for *potatoes*!

Code talkers memorized more than 600 words. They had to work fast and be right every time. The code talkers helped the U.S. win important battles such as the battle of Iwo Jima.

## Keeping the Secret

When the war ended, the code talkers returned home. They had taken an oath not to discuss the secret code or their work. The code talkers were silent. In 1968, the U.S. government said they did not have to keep the secret anymore. In 2001, President George W. Bush presented the Congressional Gold Medal to Chester Nez and all of the original Navajo code talkers, living and dead.

## Talking in Code

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. To take an oath is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (A) speak in code  
 (B) speak in metaphors  
 (C) always tell the truth  
 (D) make a solemn promise
2. A code talker needed to be \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (A) unbreakable  
 (B) memorized  
 (C) complicated  
 (D) exact
3. What do you think about the fact that Chester Nez had to speak only English in school?  
 Give the pros and cons of his story.

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4. Why does the author say the secret code was like poetry?

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5. How do you feel about the conclusion of the code talkers' story?

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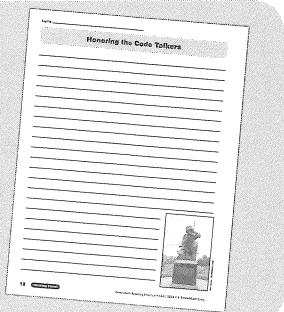


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### Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Write a poem about the Navajo code talkers. Use some words from the code dictionary on page 11 in your poem.



# Code Talkers

The United States joined World War II after Japanese forces bombed U.S. ships at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in December 1941. Chester Nez was a young Navajo high school student in 1942. The U.S. Marine Corps came to his school. They were looking for young men who were bilingual. They had a special mission in mind.

## Navajo Speaker

Chester Nez grew up speaking Navajo, and he also knew English. He was sent to a government boarding school with other Navajo children when he was 8 years old. The children were not allowed to speak in Navajo, only in English. Chester Nez had his mouth washed out with soap for speaking Navajo. However, years later, when Nez heard that the Marines needed Navajo speakers, he made the decision to join up. He wanted to do something for his country.

## A Secret Code

Philip Johnston was not a Navajo, but he grew up on a Navajo reservation. He thought that the Navajo language would make a good secret code for the military. For one thing, Navajo was not a written language. For another, very few people other than Navajos spoke it. It was also a complicated language. Johnston convinced Marine General Vogel to try his idea.

As a Marine, Chester Nez was sent with 28 other Navajo speakers to California. That is where they invented a secret code using words from their language. The Japanese were never able to break the Navajo code talkers' code.

## Like a Bird of Prey

The Navajo language did not have words for military equipment. So the code talkers chose words from nature that were similar. For example, an observation plane was *ne-as-jah*. In Navajo that means *owl*—a sharp-eyed bird of prey. A destroyer ship was *ca-lo*, which means *shark*. The code talkers also made up an alphabet using Navajo words for each English letter.

Code talkers memorized the code and had to work fast. They operated radios to send messages in battle. Because of them, the U.S. was able to win important battles. Remembering the battle of Iwo Jima, Major Howard Connor spoke highly of the code talkers. “Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima,” he said.



Code talkers spell out words using the alphabet they invented.

## Code Talkers

Fill in the circle by the correct answer. Then write the answers to numbers 3, 4, and 5.

1. Before the code talkers could learn the code, they had to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ⓐ work fast  
Ⓑ invent it  
Ⓒ pass a test  
Ⓓ pass along a message

2. In the context of this text, a *mission* is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ⓐ a strong calling  
Ⓑ a building  
Ⓒ an important assignment  
Ⓓ a trip to space

3. Why do you suppose the Marine recruiters chose to go to a school to find recruits?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

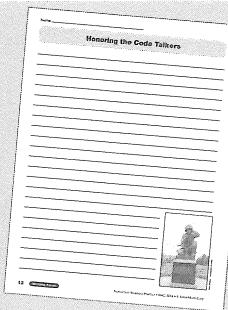
4. What were several traits and skills that a code talker had to possess?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. In your opinion, what made the code unbreakable?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Write About the Topic

Use the Writing Form to write about what you read.

Write a message to a code talker using a few words from the code talkers' dictionary on page 11.



# Secret Code

The year was 1942, and the United States was fighting World War II in Europe and in the Pacific. Chester Nez was a young Native American high school student. U.S. Marine Corps recruiters came to his school in Arizona to recruit young men who were bilingual. Chester Nez had grown up speaking the Navajo language, and he also knew English. He wasn't aware of it at the time, but the Marine Corps had an important mission for him and for 28 other Navajo speakers.

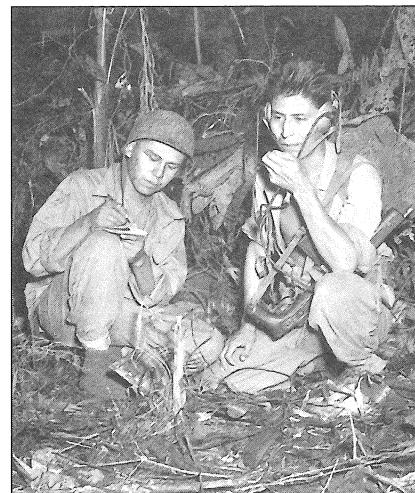
## Navajo Nation

Chester Nez was born on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, and his mother died when he was very small. As a boy, he spent time outdoors helping his family herd sheep. The United States government and the Navajo Nation did not agree. Government workers said sheep damaged the land with too much grazing. The sheep were killed, and this caused hardships. The Nez family and many others could no longer make their living by herding sheep. Chester Nez was sent to a government boarding school when he was 8 years old. The children were not allowed to speak in Navajo, only in English. Chester Nez had his mouth washed out with soap for speaking Navajo.

## Navajo Recruits

Chester Nez remembered the hardships endured by his people, but that did not stop him from enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps. He wanted to do something for his country. Twenty-nine Navajo recruits went to California, where they began inventing a secret code for sending messages on the battlefield. The secret code used the Navajo language, which was spoken, but not written down. Very few people outside of Navajos knew how to speak it. The code talkers memorized the entire code.

In battle, the code talkers used radios to communicate orders from the commanders. A code talker read a message written in English, and spoke it in code into his radio. The code talker at the other end heard the secret message and translated it back into English. The Japanese were never able to break the code. It helped the U.S. win many important battles, including the battle of Iwo Jima.



Navajo code talkers use a radio in the jungle under difficult conditions.

## Honored

The code talkers were sworn to secrecy after the war. They were silent about the work they had done. But in 1968 they were at last allowed to speak. On July 26, 2001, President George W. Bush presented the Congressional Gold Medal to Chester Nez and the other 28 original Navajo code talkers, living and dead.