



Worksheet 5. Reading: *Chief Seattle*



Chief Seattle was an important Native American leader in the middle of the 19th century. He was considered very wise by everyone. As he was about to sign a land treaty with the United States government in 1854, it is said that he gave a heartfelt speech to the governor of the state of Washington. It was a memorable speech because of its recognition of the necessity to preserve the land, an important and timely topic today. A translation of the speech was published in the Seattle Sunday Star newspaper on October 28, 1857, and simpler versions appeared later. This passage is based on the thoughts in one of the simpler versions.

Read Chief Seattle's speech. Then read the notes and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 The President in Washington tells us that he wishes to buy our land. But how can
- 2 you buy or sell the land? We do not understand how you can buy or sell the land
- 3 or the sky. The idea is strange to us. We do not own the freshness of the air and
- 4 the **sparkle** of the water, so how can you buy them?

- 5 Every part of the earth is **sacred** to my people. Every shining pine tree, every
- 6 sandy **shore**, every **mist** in the forest, every **meadow**, every **humming** insect.
- 7 All are **holy** in the memory and experience of my people.

- 8 We know the **sap** which runs through the trees just like we know the **blood** that
- 9 runs through our **veins**. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The
- 10 **perfumed** flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle -- these
- 11 are our brothers.

- 12 The rivers are our brothers. They **quench** our thirst. They carry our canoes and
- 13 feed our children. You must give the rivers the kindness that you give your
- 14 brother.

- 15 You must remember that the air is **precious**, that the air shares its **spirit** with
- 16 all the life that it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath
- 17 also received his last **sigh**. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life. Will
- 18 you teach your children what we have taught our children -- that the earth is our
- 19 mother?

- 20 Your **destiny** is a mystery. Does anyone know what will happen? What will
- 21 happen when the buffalo are all killed? When the wild horses are **tamed**? What
- 22 will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the **scent** of too
- 23 many people, and the view of the hills is spoiled by talking wires?

- 24 We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's **heartbeat**. So, if we sell you
- 25 our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it, as we have cared for it. Hold in
- 26 your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land
- 27 for all children, and love it. The earth is precious.

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freshness = the quality of being new, clean, and bright
heartfelt = very strongly felt and sincere
holy = sacred
land treaty = a legal agreement about the ownership of land
meadow = a field with wild grass and flowers
mist = a light cloud low over the ground that makes it difficult for you to see very far
precious = valuable and important, not be wasted or used without care
quench = to stop yourself feeling thirsty, by drinking something
sacred = extremely important and respected, often in a religious way
sap = the watery substance that carries food through a plant
sparkle = a bright shiny appearance, with small points of flashing light
talking wires = the Native American phrase for *telegraph wires*
version = a copy of a document that is a little different from other copies

Circle the letters of all the correct completions.

1. Chief Seattle was _____.
 - a. an important governor in Washington
 - b. an important Native American leader
2. This speech is about _____.
 - a. the relationship of people to land and nature
 - b. how much money he wants for the land
3. Chief Seattle says that _____.
 - a. the Native Americans don't want to sell the land
 - b. nobody really owns the land
4. Chief Seattle wants to know _____.
 - a. what will happen to the horses and the buffalo in the future
 - b. what will happen when too many people live on the land
5. The year of the speech is 1854. In line 23, *talking wires* refers to the wires for _____.
 - a. the telegraph
 - b. TV
6. In the speech, Chief Seattle mentions _____.

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| a. trees | e. insects |
| b. the shores | f. flowers |
| c. the forest mist | g. deer |
| d. the sky | h. cities |