

**Study Guide, by Stephanie Wood,
for the Primary Source:
Report of Forest Grove School, Oregon, 1882
“Training School for Indian Youth”**

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/assimilation/pdf/forest_grove.pdf

Introduction for Teachers and Students: This reading begins way at the bottom of page 187. We will approach it with **questions**, that include **observations**, and finally **reflections**, as recommended by the Library of Congress, which has published this report as a primary source of relevance for the history of the boarding school experience for Native peoples, within the larger topic of assimilation, as discussed in our introduction.

Vocabulary for Review: Reviewing vocabulary can help us get at perspectives that are embedded in language. Language can be offensive, of course, especially when we are studying a primary source that does not come from a tribal community but rather from the settler colonial point of view. So, try to prepare to discuss terminology in as sensitive a way as possible. Omit any terms you find too offensive for your classroom.

- **heathenism** (p. 187, bottom)
- **civilization** (p. 187, bottom), and “**civilizing the Indian**” (p. 188, top)
- **vocational training** (implied, though not the language used here; p. 188)
- **virtue** (p. 189, last line of “Girls’ Department” paragraphs)
- **disciplinarian** (p. 190, top)

The Primary Source Under Study:

1) **Observe:** It’s a good practice to start examining any primary source material with the *interrogatives*: who, what, where, when? What is the name and title of the person who has written this report? When did he write it and where?

Reflect: Is there anything about his occupation that might suggest something about how boarding schools were administered in the late nineteenth century? Think about the date, and how education might be different between that time and now, in the 21st century. Think about the location and what that region was like in the late nineteenth-century. What tribe was most affected by this school? (look on p. 187, bottom, and the bottom of p. 190)

2) **Observe:** This report is directed to “SIR.”

Reflect: Who might have been the intended *audience* and how might that affect the report’s contents? (p. 187, bottom)

3) **Observe:** In his introduction to the report, the author discusses “Indian education” as a topic that has been theorized a great deal, with special emphasis on “how not to do it” (p. 187, bottom).

Reflect: Why was there so much controversy about the subject in the 1880s? What can we infer is this author's approach, when he quotes the reference to what happened to an "Indian who graduated at Yale" and then "relapsed into tenfold heathenism" (p. 188, top) What were the goals of educators at boarding schools? Have these goals changed in our day?

4) **Observe:** In the paragraph called "Work Accomplished" (p. 188), the author mentions that there were "ten children allowed from the Umatillas." This means the Umatilla tribe allowed ten of their youth to attend this boarding school.

Reflect: Why might the tribe have "allowed" this? What were their options? If some children were not allowed to attend, what might have been the tribal perspective on the boarding school?

5) **Observe:** What is the full count ("tabulation") of students, boys vs. girls, and from how many Native communities (p. 188, toward the top)?

Reflect: Why might there be fewer girls? What might it have been like to be the lone Paiute or the lone Snohomish at the school?

Potential Activity: Map the locations of the Native communities that are sending students to this school, and be sure to locate the school as best you can. Check for accuracy in how the community names are spelled and discuss the fluidity of spelling in the nineteenth century.

6) **Observe:** The next several paragraphs (pp. 188-189) refer to various types of vocational training (blacksmithing, shoemaking, "carpentering," and farming) that were given to the boys at the boarding school and in the town. Note the discussion of money raised (e.g. "credit of shop," which points to a positive balance after income and outflow), all the buildings constructed, the sewer built, and the wood chopped.

Reflect: What kind of an education are these boys getting? Is equal attention given to more academic subjects (history, literature, science, math, etc.)? Why would the emphasis have been placed on teaching Native boys these various trades instead of academics?

7) **Observe:** The author suggests that the boys who were doing the carpentry were "inspired by the thought that they are working for their people." (p. 188, bottom half)

Reflect: This inspiration may have been real or perceived, but let's reflect on how much of the rest of the work described was probably NOT considered of direct benefit to the Native students. If not the Native community, then who was primarily benefitting from the labor of these Native youth, and what does that say about the nature of the school?

8) **Observe:** We see indications that controversies existed at that time about "white" labor compared to "Indian" labor (p. 189).

Reflect: Why does this author prepare to defend his position that Native laborers worked harder than "whites"? How does this discussion compare to today's discussion

about farm labor? What should we conclude about the statement that “whites” and “Indians” were earning the “same wages”?

9) **Observe:** In the section about the “Girls’ Department” (p. 189) we see the nature of the “education” of Native girls, again with an emphasis on work (sewing, cooking, laundry). Comparisons are also made between the fate of girls at the boarding school vs. their lives on the reservations.

Reflect: What do we learn here about the division of labor by gender? How do the types of work given to the girls compare to the types of work given to the boys? What do we learn of the biases (or racism) imbedded of the observations of this author--and of the “Indian agent” at The Dalles--about the pros and cons of having girls at the school vs. having them in their own communities? What is your view of these questions today?

10) **Observe:** The author editorializes in the “Girls’ Department” section about how “encouraging” it is to see the girls learning about protecting their “virtue.” (p. 189)

Reflect: This author seems very satisfied and enthused, in general, about what he sees as successes at this school. What are the implications of such changes he and the teachers are creating in the ways of life of the boys and girls? Are there pros and cons here? Why was virtue not mentioned with regard to boys?

11) **Observe:** In the paragraph on the “School Room” (p. 189, bottom) we find out that “grammar” has been dropped and Swinton’s Language lessons have been replaced by something else (not explained).

Reflect: This is further information about the academic curriculum (or lack thereof). Can we assume that indigenous languages are not being taught (whether spoken, read, or written)? What are the implications of these language policies?

12) **Observe:** In the paragraph on “Employés” (pp. 198-190), the author shares his concerns about the difficulty of finding suitable employees (not called teachers); how each job is compensated, and the relative pay. Note that the highest paid employee is a “fair disciplinarian.”

Reflect: Once again, he emphasizes he trades, and there is no mention of hiring any teachers to cover academic fields. What is the implication of needing a disciplinarian? What does the adjective “fair” suggest? From whose point of view?

13) **Observe:** The “Carpentering” paragraph (p. 188) mentions a “sick ward” for the girls, and the “Employés” paragraph (p. 190) mentions a physician. Then the author gives us a full paragraph of the “Health of the School” (p. 190), including the argument that “the proper education of the Indian means life, not death.”

Reflect: Taking the long view, would you agree that this kind of education was healthy for Native children and families? Are there pros and cons?