

Read this passage about the code talkers who helped during World War II and answer the questions that follow.

The Code Talkers

Have you ever used a secret code? During a war, secrets are very important. Armies must send orders and news to each other. They do not want other armies to know their secrets. That's why they use codes.

Making a good code is hard. Most codes have a pattern. To crack a code, people look for its pattern. Then they can understand what the code is saying.

In World War II (1941–1945), the United States used many codes. The army in Japan kept cracking the codes. Then the U.S. Army found a code that no one could crack. It was based on the Navajo (NAW-vuh-HO) language.

The Navajo people live mostly in Arizona and New Mexico. They only speak their language. They do not write it. Some Navajo sounds are hard for non-Navajos to make. These sounds are made in the back of the throat. During World War II, only about 30 non-Navajos in the world knew the Navajo language!

Carl Gorman was a Navajo. He was 34 years old when the U.S. Marines began looking for Navajo “code talkers.” Gorman was too old to join the Marines, but he wanted to help. So, he did not tell them his real age.

Gorman spent four years in the war. He used a radio to send orders in code. He also told his leaders what Japan's army was doing. The Japanese grew angry. They couldn't crack this code! Finally, they learned that it was Navajo. But they could find no one to tell them what it meant. Then they captured a Navajo soldier. They thought they had the key. But this man was not a code talker. And there was more to the code than knowing the Navajo language!

The Navajo code talkers also made a code within their language. They called different planes by the Navajo words for different birds. They called submarines “iron fish.” They used Navajo words to spell, too. For example, the Navajo words for apple, ant, and ax could each stand for the letter A.

It was a lucky thing that these men still spoke their native language. Most of them had to speak English in school. They were scolded when they spoke Navajo. One time, Gorman was chained to an iron pipe at his school. The school did this to punish him for speaking Navajo.

Most people didn't know about the Navajo code talkers. America's leaders wanted them to be a secret. They thought they might need the Navajo code again. Then America found new ways to make codes. So, the secret about the Navajos was told.

After the war, Gorman taught and became an artist. He liked to make paintings of horses. His art was shown all over the world. His son Richard Carl (R.C.) Gorman became a famous artist, too.

Standard 4R3.h

1. In paragraph 6, the author writes that the Japanese army could not “*crack this code.*” What does the word *crack* mean in this paragraph?

- A break down or fail
- B move or go quickly
- C make a snapping sound
- D find an answer; understand

Standard 4R1.e (I)

2. Why was the code talkers’ code more difficult to break than other codes?

- A The code did not follow a pattern.
- B Words are spelled differently in the Navajo language.
- C The code talkers replaced the names of things with different words.
- D The code was based on an unwritten language that few people knew.

Standard 4R1.a (I)

3. How did the code talkers use Navajo words for different birds?

- A to represent airplanes
- B to identify their enemies
- C to show important routes
- D to name different vehicles

Standard 4R1.g (I)

4. What is the main purpose of paragraph 4 in this passage?

- A to prove that some languages are not written
- B to give information about the Navajo language
- C to show how many people speak the Navajo language
- D to explain why the Navajo people live in Arizona and New Mexico

Standard 4R1.g (I)

5. In paragraph 8, the author writes that “It was a *lucky thing* that these men still spoke their native language.” Why does the author say it was a *lucky thing*?

- A The Navajo language is not a written language.
- B The Navajo language is the best language for a code.
- C Few people in the world know how to speak the Navajo language.
- D The men were not allowed to speak Navajo when they were in school.