

Discussion Questions for “The Piikuni and the U.S. Army’s Piegan Expedition”

1. How have “friendly” and “hostile” been defined within the context of U.S.-Indian relations? What do such terms reveal about the United States’ views toward indigenous nations?
2. Why did Sheridan order a winter strike against the Piikunis, and why did he (and others) recommend striking a “friendly” camp instead of a “hostile” one?
3. Henderson lists several incidents in 1869 in which white settlers and teamsters killed Piikunis (Blackfeet). Compare how government officials respond to these murders to how it responded to the murder of Malcolm Clarke. What do you think accounts for the differences?
4. What advice did some of the scouts give to Baker? Why didn’t Baker take this advice?
5. What was Heavy Runner doing when he was shot? What does this tell us about his expectations at that moment? (Explain.)
6. What details of the survivors’ accounts stood out to you?
7. Who was William Pease? How did his account of the massacre compare with Baker’s official report? Why does it matter that these accounts differed?
8. Henderson claims that the military command deliberately falsified reports. What evidence supports this claim?
9. There were multiple explanations for the deaths of women and children. What were they, and which seems most plausible?
10. According to a survivor account, the troops took the blankets and robes they wanted and then burned the rest of their supplies. How does this account bring into question Baker’s assertion that they burned supplies to prevent the spread of small pox? What other reason(s) might the troops have had for burning supplies and lodges?
11. Why do you think survivors’ claims for restitution were not honored by the federal government?
12. Henderson claims that “the ideology of Manifest Destiny” has been used “to obscure the ruthlessness of the United States’ dispossession of indigenous inhabitants.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

[“The Piikuni and the U.S. Army’s Piegan Expedition: Competing Narratives of the 1870 Massacre on the Marias River,”](#) Rodger C. Henderson, *Montana The Magazine of Western History* (Spring 2018): 48-70.