

## Interpret Reading: Compulsory Attendance at Government-Run Osage Boarding School - Roping Osage Indian Children

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following. Complete Vocabulary Matching and Interpretive Questions

Excerpts from writings of **Osage historian - Mathews, John Joseph** *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973.

### Education - idealism and coercion (p. 720)

“Miles [U.S. Agent L. J. Miles, a/k/a Major Miles], being a [Quaker] Friend, believed that the keystone to civilization for the Osages was agriculture and education, and he worked hard to get parents to send their girls to the sandstone buildings on the hill. But he was so sincere about the matter that he must surely in his dedication have **transgressed** some of his own **principles**. He got the Osage Council to pass a **compulsory** education law [in 1884], wherein **annuities\*** were withheld from parents who refused to send their children to school.”

\*annuities were basically legally-due interest payments on financial investments of the Osages - the Osage used these funds to feed their families who otherwise could starve



### **Roping Osage Children (pp 729-730)**

“The Colonel [Agent Lieutenant Colonel Freeman, Agent 1894-1898] would train the minds of the children through education as one would train troops for success in battle., and when the girls over seven and under fourteen were held in their villages [instead of being sent to school] by their reluctant parents or when they would find loose pickets [fence-posts] in the tall picket fence that surrounded the grounds of the great sandstone school building and escape, he would send the Indian police after them.

“There were some men of character and standing among the Indian police, such as young Thunder-Fear and Gray Bird, but there were (p. 729) others who became **suffused** with their importance, and when the girls resisted, they would hold their arms behind their backs and

load them in the wagon, tying them to the bow slots. When after reaching the agency some of them jumped from the wagon and ran, the police overtook them on their horses, and roping them, they would drag them up the dusty hill to the school buildings.

“These were the older girls, who fought like brought-to-bay bobcats. They would fall as they struggled against the ropes, and their long black hair would make traces in the deep dust of the road, and their clothing was **rent**, but unlike the brought-to-bay bobcat, they made no sound and there were no tears; only silence and sweat that muddied the dust of their faces.

“The boys were like the mustang, and finally gave up. They climbed onto the lower or middle rib of the tall picket fence in their part of the grounds, and stood in rows looking over the pickets far across the hills.” (p. 730)

### Background Vocabulary - Matching:

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| 1. <b>E</b> compulsory   | A. to cross over, to go beyond the limits of something               |
| 2. <b>D</b> coercion     | B. filled up with, spread over                                       |
| 3. <b>A</b> transgressed | C. (older usage) torn  |
| 4. <b>F</b> principles   | D. the process of forcing someone to do something                    |
| 5. <b>G</b> annuities    | E. something that is <i>compelled</i> , mandatory, you have to do it |
| 6. <b>B</b> suffused     | F. beliefs, basic values   |
| 7. <b>H</b> abuse        | G. a sum of money payable at regular intervals, i.e. annually        |
| 8. <b>C</b> rent         | H. to treat a person or animal with cruelty or violence              |

### DISCUSSION OR ESSAY QUESTIONS:    **answers will vary**

1. The author says the U.S. Agent Miles “transgressed some of his own principles.” **What principles** do you think Agent Miles and Agent Freeman violated in their education policies? **Basic human rights and decency, respect for family integrity, parental rights, compassion for children, respect for other cultures, etc.**
2. In what ways did their actions constitute **actual abuse**? **Physical harm - roping is very dangerous-skin abrasions, broken bones, broken neck-paralysis; a form of kidnapping, dehumanization**
3. What were **alternative** actions might have been taken? **Setup schools near Osage families as was done with white rural children; allow children to sleep at home at night with their own families; respect Osage language, culture and dress, etc.**