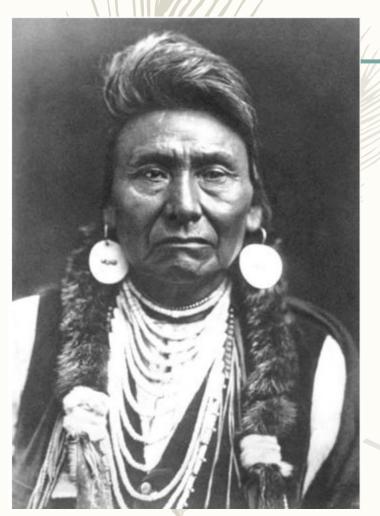


## Chief Seattle's Speech

Additional Notes

## Chief Seattle



- He was a leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes in Western America.
- The Native Americans were the ones who originally lived in the land that is now known as America.
- Christopher Columbus mistakenly called them 'Red Indians' and the name was popular for a long time, now it is no longer used.

### Introduction

- The Native Americans had a close relationship with nature. They respected all aspects of nature
- When the white settlers came to America, they took over the land that used to belong to tribes like Chief Seattle's
- The Native Americans were forced away from their lands and made to live in areas that were reserved for them
- Chief Seattle's speech is a powerful response to the American government's treaty to buy the lands that belonged to the Native Americans.
- The speech requests the Americans to respect nature and the land.

### Chief Seattle's Speech (1887)

- The speech begins by asking how land or sky can be bought or sold. To Chief Seattle's people, <u>nobody owns the land</u>, so it cannot be sold.
- "Every part of the Earth is sacred to my people"
- The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the *red man.* (red man = the Native Americans) This line is Chief Seattle telling us
   that his people are part of nature.
- Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, <u>for it is the mother of the red</u> <u>man.</u> Unlike the white people who go to heaven when they die, the Native Americans return to the earth. They see the earth as a <u>mother</u>

### More family imagery

- The perfumed flowers are our sisters
- the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our **brothers**.
- The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family.
- So just like Nature is their mother, all the different parts of nature are also part of their family
- This is why it is difficult for Chief Seattle to sell his land to the Americans – to the Great Chief in Washington.
- Who is the Great Chief in Washington? The US President

# Why does Chief Seattle not want to sell his land?

- The land is like a part of the family for the people of his tribe
- The land is **sacred** to them. It is holy.
- Seattle's people are part of nature. Since they have always lived in harmony with nature, their memories are part of the land
- The rivers are the brothers of the people. They quench thirst, they
  provide transportation, and they help to feed the future
  generations
- Chief Seattle reminds the US President to treat the rivers with kindness

# How is the white man different from the red man?

- The white man does not understand the culture of the Native Americans
- Chief Seattle thinks that the white man does not understand the importance of the land
- They just take over whatever they want.
- He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold
- The white man's greed will destroy nature, according to Chief
   Seattle

# Why does the Chief not like cities?

- The white man lives in big cities instead of being with nature
- Chief Seattle feels that there is no silence in the cities, they are full of noise
- You cannot hear any of the sounds that you hear when you are out of a city – the sounds of nature
- The chief says that maybe it is because he is not 'civilised' like the whites, he does not understand – by saying this, he is questioning whether it is civilised to destroy nature or to preserve it.

#### Air

- Chief Seattle now talks about how important the air is to his people
- He requests the white men to take care of the air, because it is something we all share
- all things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man,
- The white men do not seem to notice if the air is full of pollution but the red men do
- It is air that gives everyone life, and it must be preserved to be fresh and clean <u>for future generations</u>

### Animals

- Chief Seattle now brings the topic of animals
- "The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers."
- White men often hunt for fun, and for sport, unlike the Native
   Americans who only hunt when they need to
- This is also something that is very saddening for Chief Seattle, because as he believes:

whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

# What must the white man teach the children?

- the land is holy
- the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of the grandfathers of the Native Americans.
- the earth is our mother.
- Whatever happens to the earth, happens to the inhabitants
- All things are connected, as is displayed by the next line:

Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it

# What does Chief Seattle say about God?

- Chief Seattle compares the idea of god for the white man with the idea of god for his people
- Even if they both had different religions, they share the same destiny
- In sharing that destiny, the red man and the white man are like
- brothers. "Our god is the same god"
- God sees everyone equally, red man and white man
- God sees the earth as precious, so to harm the earth is to harm God.
- So if the white man does not respect the earth, they will have to face the result of their action

### Conclusion

- At the end of the speech, Chief Seattle is wondering why the white man is able to take over the land and treat it so badly
- The wild buffalo have been slaughtered, wild horses are tamed, the empty forests are now populated with many people,
- telephone cables are covering the land that used to be clear
- "The end of <u>living</u> and the beginning of <u>survival</u>."
- As a result of the actions of the white man, it is no longer living, but a struggle to stay alive.