



Now Presenting...

## **Sarah Winnemucca: A Leader for Peace**

*Sarah Winnemucca was a Native American interpreter, writer, and diplomat. In this play, which is based on actual events, Sarah mediates a conflict between the U.S. Army and her fellow Paiutes. These negotiations established her credibility among whites and Indians as a mediator and diplomat.*

6 parts

Program..... page 72  
Script.....pages 73–76  
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### **Setting the Stage**

#### **Background**

Give students background information on the reservation system in the United States. Explain: "As settlers moved west, they displaced Native Americans, who often fought back. Eventually, the U.S. government required that all Native Americans move to reservations, and the army was called upon to enforce this rule. Some Native Americans cooperated, but others did not. Sarah Winnemucca's father, for example, refused to live on a reservation. Young Sarah went to live with her grandfather, who believed the Paiutes should try to cooperate with whites. Later she lived with a white family in California and learned how to read and write English. As our play opens, Sarah has returned to her homeland in western Nevada with her brother Natchez."

#### **Staging**

Students may clap plastic bowls against the floor to mimic the sound of galloping horses at appropriate moments in the play.

#### **Encore**

Students might wish to learn more about Native American women who were effective leaders. Encourage them to check out *Sarah Winnemucca: Northern Paiute Writer and Diplomat* by Ellen Scordato and *Sacajawea* by Joseph Bruchac.

### **Vocabulary**

**Introduce and discuss the following words before reading the script. Then check comprehension by having students use each word in a sentence.**

**abide:** to submit to

**authorize:** to give official approval or permission for something

**criticize:** to find fault with

**interpreter:** a person whose work is to translate spoken words from one language to another

**intimidate:** to use threats or violence in order to frighten someone

**persuade:** to use reasoning or urging to get someone to do something

**prophetic:** something that makes a prediction

**provisions:** food and other supplies

**senseless:** foolish; having no point or purpose

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## **Sarah Winnemucca: A Leader for Peace**

*When a Paiute Indian is killed by a white settler, other Paiutes plan to seek revenge. How can a young woman with no political experience stop this chain of violence?*

### **Characters**

Narrator..... \_\_\_\_\_

Sarah Winnemucca..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(a Paiute diplomat)

Natchez Winnemucca..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(Sarah's brother)

Hugh Nugent..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(a government agent)

Aaron Jerome ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(a Captain with the U.S. Army)

Paiute Elder ..... \_\_\_\_\_



# Sarah Winnemucca: A Leader for Peace

..... **Characters** .....

Narrator	Hugh Nugent
Sarah Winnemucca	Aaron Jerome
Natchez Winnemucca	Paiute Elder

.....

**Narrator:** It is 1866. Sarah Winnemucca and her brother Natchez live on a Paiute reservation in Nevada. They are discussing a horrible crime against another Paiute with one of their elders.

**Paiute Elder:** It is true, my children. Our dear brother has been killed.

**Sarah:** No! What happened?

**Paiute Elder:** Agent Nugent sold some gunpowder to our brother, even though it's against the law. Later, another white man killed our brother for carrying the forbidden gunpowder. The people are furious and want to take revenge against Nugent.

**Natchez:** If the people take revenge, we will surely be punished. The army will make our lives miserable. Sarah, what should we do?

**Sarah:** Let us go and warn Nugent. We will tell him to get away as quickly as possible.

**Narrator:** With that, Sarah and her brother jumped on their horses and rode like the wind to see Nugent. Natchez stood guard while Sarah tried to reason with the agent.

**Agent Nugent:** So, the Paiutes are coming to get me, are they? Let them! I'll show those red devils how to fight!

**Sarah:** Mr. Nugent, please try to see reason. This can only lead to disaster.



**Agent Nugent:** And whose fault would that be? I refuse to be intimidated by a band of unruly Indians!

**Natchez:** *(entering)* Sarah, I just heard that the Paiute warriors have raided a settlement and fatally wounded two white men. They should be here shortly.

**Agent Nugent:** You see? The Paiutes can't abide by the law. I'm going to Camp McDermit to see Captain Jerome. The army will teach you all a lesson you won't forget! *(leaves)*

**Sarah:** Oh, Natchez. What can we do? I've been having frightening dreams ever since the new moon. I pray they don't prove to be prophetic.

**Natchez:** All we can do is wait. We will know what to do when the time comes.

**Narrator:** The next day a messenger arrives at Sarah's camp. He brings with him an urgent message from Captain Jerome.

**Paiute Elder:** *(handing the note to Sarah)* Sarah, the note is addressed to you. Captain Jerome must know you are the only one here who can read and write English. Tell us what the note says.

**Sarah:** *(reading aloud)* "Miss Sarah Winnemucca—Your agent tells us very bad things about your people killing two of our men. I want to see you and your brother Natchez so we can talk. Yours, Captain Aaron Jerome."

**Paiute Elder:** You must write him a response without delay.

**Sarah:** What will I write with? We don't have any pens or ink.

**Paiute Elder:** Here, take this stick and dip it in fish blood. Use these to talk on paper. Tell Captain Jerome you will meet him tomorrow morning.



**Narrator:** After writing the note, Sarah and a small group of Paiutes rode their horses to Camp McDermit. Jerome and Nugent were waiting for them.

**Agent Nugent:** Here they are. Ask them to explain why the Paiutes senselessly killed two innocent men.

**Captain Jerome:** Quiet, Nugent. I've heard your side of the story. Now I want to hear theirs.

**Sarah:** Mr. Nugent probably left out a few details. Two days ago he sold gunpowder to a Paiute. The Paiute was killed by a white man for possessing gunpowder. That's why our warriors wanted to take revenge.

**Captain Jerome:** I see. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Sarah:** Yes. Our people are nearly starving to death. Agent Nugent is supposed to supply us with provisions, but so far we have received nothing.

**Captain Jerome:** Your story is very convincing. The army is not authorized to get involved in Indian affairs, but perhaps I can help you. Would you be willing to return the favor?

**Sarah:** What do you want?

**Captain Jerome:** I hear that your father, Old Winnemucca, is in hiding. Do you know his whereabouts?

**Sarah:** I have not seen my father since my little brother was killed by soldiers years ago. After that, my father went to live in the mountains. He does not trust the white people, and wants to live as far away from them as possible.

**Captain Jerome:** I think your father can help to bring about peace in the settlement. The people respect him. Persuade your father to return, and we will provide you with cattle.



**Agent Nugent:** (*whispering in Jerome's ear*) Why give the cattle away for free, when we can sell them and make a profit?

**Captain Jerome:** Back off, Nugent! (*Nugent backs away, in silence.*) Well, Sarah? Do we have a deal?

**Sarah:** Captain Jerome, please excuse us while we talk in private. (*to the Paiutes gathered around her*) What do you think, my brothers and sisters?

**Paiute Elder:** I don't trust him. Why do they want to find your father? Maybe they're going to kill him! We've been lied to so many times before. Why believe them now? If you bring Old Winnemucca here and the soldiers kill him, his blood will be on your hands.

**Natchez:** Just because *some* white people are bad doesn't mean they are *all* bad. The army wants us to bring Old Winnemucca here to unite the people, just like Captain Jerome said. They want us to be peaceful. It's in their own best interest, because it's too much trouble to fight us all the time.

**Paiute Elder:** Perhaps you two are right. The life I once knew is fading fast. You young people can see the path to the future better than I. I will listen to your words. We will agree to the bluecoat's plan.

**Natchez:** Your words show that we still have much to learn from the wisdom you have gathered over the years. (*to Sarah*) Give Captain Jerome our answer.

**Sarah:** Captain Jerome, we accept your terms. My brother Natchez will leave tomorrow to go find Old Winnemucca. I'll stay here and inform the Paiutes of our decision. We will help each other, and in that way we will be partners.



**Captain Jerome:** You won't be sorry. You and your people will be cared for by the officers of the army.

**Narrator:** Natchez left the reservation to go find his father. Sarah stayed at Camp McDermitt and worked as an interpreter. The army and the U.S. government did not keep all of its promises to the Paiutes, but Sarah continued to struggle on their behalf for the rest of her life. In speeches and in articles, she heavily criticized the reservation system. Today she is remembered as a fearless leader and a champion of human rights.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Check Yourself

How well did you understand the play? Check your comprehension by answering the following questions.

1. When and where does the play take place?

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2. How does the play open?

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3. What would probably happen if the Paiutes took revenge on Agent Nugent?

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4. What kind of person is Agent Nugent? How do you know?

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5. What proposition does Captain Jerome make?

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6. What skills and qualities make Sarah a good leader?

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7. In your opinion, what are two possible criticisms against the reservation system?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Sequence of Events

Number these events in the story in order. Review the script for help. The first one has been done for you.

\_\_\_\_\_ Natchez goes to look for his father.

1 Agent Nugent sells gunpowder to a Paiute man.

\_\_\_\_\_ Captain Jerome sends a letter to Sarah.

\_\_\_\_\_ Captain Jerome asks Sarah and Natchez to go find their father.

\_\_\_\_\_ Agent Nugent leaves the camp to save his life.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sarah and Natchez go to see Captain Jerome.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sarah becomes an interpreter at Camp McDermit.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Paiute man is killed for possessing gunpowder.

\_\_\_\_\_ Two Paiutes get revenge by killing two white settlers.