

How Diné Marines Built the Navajo Code

Use the broad explanation and focused answers after the child checks the reading.

USE AFTER THE SOURCE CHECK

Tick the ideas you can find. Drawings and own words count.

01

A communication problem led to Diné authorship

What to look for in your child's explanation

- ☐ An enemy could pick up a radio message.
- ☐ The Marines needed a fast way to hide the message's meaning.
- ☐ Johnston suggested the program, but the first 29 Diné recruits built the code with communications staff.

THE LEARNER MIGHT WRITE OR DRAW

"The signal could be caught, so the Marines needed a fast system with protected meaning. Johnston suggested the program, but the first 29 made the code."

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 1, 1.1-1.7

☐ Clear ☐ Partly there ☐ Missing ☐ Needs correction

02

The first 29 built and revised two layers

What to look for in your child's explanation

- ☐ One part of the code gave words special military meanings.
- ☐ Another part could spell names and new words.
- ☐ Repeated letter codes might reveal a pattern, so the Code Talkers added more choices.

THE LEARNER MIGHT WRITE OR DRAW

"The word list did military meanings, but the alphabet spelled new names. Repetition caused a problem, so common letters got more choices."

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 2, 2.1-2.7

☐ Clear ☐ Partly there ☐ Missing ☐ Needs correction

03

Trained use and historical harm belong together

What to look for in your child's explanation

- ☐ Trained Code Talkers sent and rebuilt messages using the code.
- ☐ Native children were punished for speaking their languages, and wartime service did not undo that harm.
- ☐ Secrecy delayed public recognition for years.

THE LEARNER MIGHT WRITE OR DRAW

"The code needed trained senders and receivers, not just a language. The government had punished Native languages before needing Diné Bizaad, and secrecy delayed recognition."

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 3, 3.1-3.7; Passage 4, 4.1-4.7

☐ Clear ☐ Partly there ☐ Missing ☐ Needs correction

Answers to the three questions

After your child's source check, use the key for each question they answered. Own words count.

QUESTION 1

What did the first 29 Diné recruits build, and why did the military need that system instead of simply sending ordinary messages in Diné Bizaad?

A clear answer includes

They created the original special military code with communications personnel after Johnston proposed recruiting Navajo speakers. The military needed communication that was quick to use and harder for an enemy interceptor to understand. The system gave selected Diné words agreed military meanings and used an alphabet to spell terms; ordinary Diné Bizaad alone did not supply that shared military structure.

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 1, 1.1-1.7; Passage 2, 2.1-2.7

QUESTION 2

How did the code's vocabulary and alphabet solve different problems, and what changed when repeated alphabet patterns created a possible weakness?

A clear answer includes

The special vocabulary represented planned military meanings. The spelling alphabet handled names, locations, and other terms outside the vocabulary. Repetition could show a pattern, so common letters were given alternatives. The alphabet expanded from 26 to 44 terms, and vocabulary expanded from about 211 to about 411. This was intentional system revision by people, not a feature of the language itself.

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 2, 2.1-2.7

QUESTION 3

Why did the Navajo Code require trained people, and why must their wartime work be taught beside boarding-school suppression and delayed recognition?

A clear answer includes

Code Talkers needed Diné Bizaad and English, the memorized special vocabulary and alphabet, understanding of the order, equipment training, and accurate reconstruction by another trained person. Many had experienced language punishment in boarding schools; later military need did not repair that harm. Classification until 1968 limited public explanation and delayed recognition. The wider story includes Native Code Talkers from many nations.

WHERE TO CHECK Passage 3, 3.1-3.7; Passage 4, 4.1-4.7