




Teacher Inquiry Kit: K-5

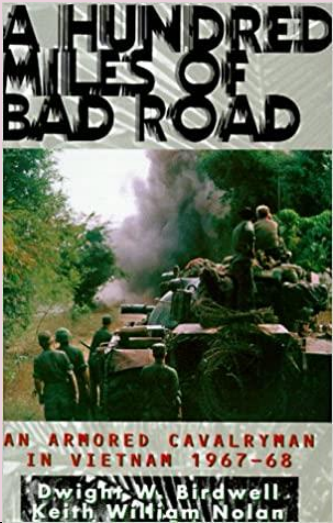
Dwight Birdwell

Title	Specialist Five Dwight W. Birdwell: Medal of Honor Recipient and Former Chief Justice of the Tribunal of the Cherokee Nation
Author(s)	Laura Douglas
Grade Level	K-5
Soldier	Dwight Birdwell
Tribal Affiliation	Cherokee
Branch of Service	Army
Dates of Service	Enlisted May 1966, Deployed Vietnam War 1967-1968
Essential Question	How did Dwight Birdwell military service impact his career?
Contextual Paragraph	<p>Dwight W. Birdwell was born in Amarillo Texas on January 19, 1948. He was a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and grew up in the predominantly Cherokee Indian community of Bell, Oklahoma. He attended Bell Grade School and graduated from Stilwell High School in 1966 before entering the Army on May 24, 1966.</p> <p>Birdwell was assigned to Troop C, the first American ground unit to respond to the attack on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base which was under attack during the Tet Offensive on January 31, 1967. Birdwell's tank commander was seriously wounded so Birdwell took command and continued firing on the attacking People's Army of Vietnam until he used all his ammunition. He retrieved two machine guns from a crashed helicopter and continued firing until his weapon was damaged and he was injured.</p>

	<p>Birdwell ran through enemy fire to retrieve more ammunition for his troops from other damaged vehicles. Birdwell received his first Silver Star for his heroism in battle on January 31, 1968.</p> <p>Birdwell risked his life again on July 4, 1968, to rescue more American troops, some of them wounded, who were stranded in a battle zone in an enemy-occupied village. He exposed himself to heavy enemy fire while loading all the wounded and evacuating them to safety. He then went back into the village to rescue more Americans, for which he was awarded his second Silver Star for bravery.</p> <p>Birdwell returned to the United States in December 1968, attended Northeastern State University and then the University of Oklahoma School of Law. He graduated in 1976 and began his law practice. He opened his own firm and concentrated on Energy, Natural Resources and Indian Law.</p> <p>He was a member of the Judicial Appeals Tribunal (Supreme Court) of the Cherokee Nation from 1987 to 1999, serving as its chief justice from 1995 to 1996 and 1998 to 1999. The Tribunal is responsible for resolving all disputes arising within the Cherokee Nation. He helped lay the foundation of the Cherokee tribe's modern court system. In 1997, Birdwell co-authored <i>A Hundred Miles of Bad Road</i>, an autobiographical Vietnam war story written by a "tanker" about his tour of duty before and after the Tet Offensive.</p> <p>As of 2022, he is still a practicing attorney in Oklahoma City. He and his wife have been married for 53 years and have two children and two grandchildren.</p>
C3 Standards	<p>C3 Standards: https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3</p> <p>D2.Civ.2.3-5. Explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation and draw implications for how individuals should participate.</p> <p>D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.</p>
Primary Source 1:	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQl0wCZph-8

	
Title of Primary Source	Spc. 5 Dwight W. Birdwell Receives Medal of Honor from President Joe Biden on July 5, 2022
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the date of the incident for which Mr. Birdwell received the Medal of Honor? How many people were in Mr. Birdwell's troop that day? How many were Viet Cong enemy troops were there? 2. Can you see anything that Mr. Birdwell is wearing in the video that tells you his tribal affiliation? 3. According to President Biden, what or who does Mr. Birdwell credit for encouraging him to serve in the military? 4. Where in the line of tanks was Mr. Birdwell's tank? Why do you think this position is important? 5. During the battle, when Mr. Birdwell was low on ammunition, where did he get more weapons?
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe 3 incidents that Birdwell experienced that caused him to receive the Medal of Honor? 2. What characteristics of a hero does Mr. Birdwell possess?
Primary Source 2: 	https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/birdwell/
Title of Primary Source	Medal of Honor: Specialist Five Dwight W. Birdwell
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closely examine the photos on this website. Describe three of the photos that you see from different times in Birdwell's life. Click on the images to read more about each.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Name three characteristics that demonstrate Birdwell's patriotism and dedication to his country? Name three characteristics that demonstrate Birdwell's patriotism and dedication to the Cherokee nation? "From the exposed position of the tank commander's hatch, Birdwell engaged the enemy with machine gun fire and provided situation reports to his squadron commander until the communications system became damaged due to enemy fire." Why do you think it was important that Mr. Birdwell provide situation reports? What could have happened had he not done this? Describe the events for which Mr. Birdwell was awarded the second Silver Star?
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the Medal of Honor ceremony with President Biden, Mr. Birdwell was also inducted into the Pentagon Hall of Heroes. Why do you think there are two different ceremonies? What does each one represents? Research the Silver Star and the Medal of Honor. What the requirements for receiving them? How are they similar and how are they different?
Primary Source 3 	<p>https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/tet-offensive.</p> <p>https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tan_Son_Nhut_Air_Base_during_the_Tet_Offensive.jpg – image</p>
Title of Primary Source	Soldiers during the Tet Offensive, Vietnam War 1968, The History Channel
Suggested questions for the source (3-5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What military base was nearly taken during the Tet Offensive? What was the most significant city attacked and important buildings that were overrun in the Tet Offensive? How many soldiers died during the Tet Offensive? Look at a map of Vietnam. Find the locations involved in the Tet Offensive. What do you notice about the geographic area?


<p>Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What celebration happening on the day that the Tet Offensive began? Research other battles and wars that began on significant dates and celebrations. Why do you think military strategists begin battles on holidays and celebrations? 2. What was the Battle of Hue? Describe its significance in the Vietnam War.
<p>Primary Source 4</p> 	<p>https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0891416285/ref=x_gr_w_bb_sout?ie=UTF8&tag=x_gr_w_bb_sout-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0891416285&SubscriptionId=1MGPYB6YW3HWK55XCGG2</p>
<p>Title of Primary Source</p>	<p>A Hundred Miles of Bad Roads</p>
<p>Suggested questions for the source (3-5)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The title of Mr. Birdwell's book is A Hundred Miles of Bad Roads: An Armored Cavalryman in Vietnam 1967-68. What is a cavalryman? 2. Describe the photo on the cover of the book? Why do you think this image was selected? 3. This book has been described as "a Vietnam war story written by a "tanker" about his tour of duty before and after the Tet offensive." What is a tanker? What context clues help you determine this?
<p>Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research other books written about the Vietnam War from the point of view of a soldier. Why do you think it's important to read these stories? How are these different from news article by journalists? What other points of view might be important to hear?
<p>Primary Source 5</p>	<p>https://www.loc.gov/item/2017878945/</p>



<p>Title of Primary Source</p>	<p>US Army Medal of Honor</p>
<p>Suggested questions for the source (3-5)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the Medal of Honor. Describe what you see. Describe the colors and symbols on the Medal. 2. How many Medals of Honor recipients have there been? 3. Who was the first person to receive the Medal of Honor? Why did they receive the medal? 4. Who was the first woman to receive the Medal of Honor? Why did she receive the medal?
<p>Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the history of the Medal of Honor. What do you think is the most interesting fact about this Medal? 2. Research medals and awards given by other branches of the military. How is the Medal of Honor similar? How is it different?
<p>Primary Source 6:</p>	<p>https://indiancountrytoday.com/the-press-pool/chokeoee-nation-citizen-dwight-birdwell-receives-medal-of-honor-from-president-biden</p>



Title of Primary Source	Cherokee Nation citizen Dwight Birdwell receives Medal of Honor with Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What character traits does Mr. Birdwell possess that you wish you had? 2. How many years ago was the Vietnam War? 3. Why was it important for the Cherokee Nation Secretary of Veteran Affairs Joe Crittenden to be at the Medal of Honor ceremony? What do you think he does at the Cherokee Nation Secretary of Veteran Affairs? 4. “Not every service member has received the full recognition they deserve,” President Biden said during the Medal of Honor ceremony. “Today, we are setting the record straight.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did he mean by this? What evidence do we have that “we are setting the record straight?”
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only a handful of Cherokee people have received the Medal of Honor. Name two Cherokees who have received the Medal of Honor for their service in World War II. Can you find the names of any other Cherokee people who have received this honor?

Primary Source 7: 	https://www.cherokeecourts.org/History/Biographies-of-Judicial-Officials/Justice-Dwight-W-Birdwell
Title of Primary Source	Judicial Biography of Justice Dwight W Birdwell
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long has Birdwell been practicing law? 2. How has Mr. Birdwell's military experience carried over to his community service and career? 3. What kind of law does Birdwell practice? 4. What is Birdwell's wife's name? How long have they been married? What other information can you find about his wife?
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research the Cherokee Tribunal. How is it similar and different from the US Supreme Court?
Works Cited	<p>Birdwell, D. W., & Nolan, K. W. (1997). <i>A Hundred Miles of Bad Road: An Armored Cavalryman in Vietnam, 1967-68</i>. Presidio.</p> <p>"Biographies of Judicial Officials: Justice Dwight W Birdwell." <i>Cherokee Courts</i>, Retrieved on August 11, 2022 from https://www.cherokeecourts.org/History/Biographies-of-Judicial-Officials/Justice-Dwight-W-Birdwel.</p>

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