Historical Opinion: Two Views of Captive-Taking By Indians

Directions: Read the background and "A," and "B" sections below and then answer the questions.

Background: For centuries, Native Americans had fought Mourning Wars to capture women and children from other tribes. These captured Indians would replace those who had died. Europeans brought Small Pox, German Measles, and Influenza into contact with Native Americans and the death toll was catastrophic. Demographers estimate the death toll between 50-90% of the population. As a result, tribes had far greater need to replace their losses. During the French and Indian War, captive-taking (of civilians and soldiers) by Indians was used not only to rebuild their population but also weaken enemies and gain income through ransoms. "Over 1600 people were taken captive from New England during the French and Indian wars; some died in captivity, some were sold to the French, some were adopted into Indian communities." White settlers viewed captive-taking as evidence of savagery and reacted with fury.

[Modified quote source: Colin G. Calloway. *North Country Captives.* Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992, page ix.]

A. CAPTIVE-TAKING WAS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE

The French and Indian War's violence and brutality undermined, and ultimately destroyed, native peoples' ability to resist the expansion of Anglo-American settlement. The war's violence and brutality, moreover, encouraged whites—particularly those on the frontier—to hate Indians with undiscriminating fury.

B. CAPTIVE-TAKING WAS NECESSARY FOR INDIAN SURVIVIAL

"As much as half the population of any given [Indian] village or band died within days or weeks of an epidemic's appearance…. The only way to maintain population levels in the face of such devastation was for the survivors to undertake raiding expeditions...to take women and children from enemy groups as captives. They...could be adopted into the raiders' families as replacements for lost members, or...enslaved as substitutes for missing workers."

[Source: Anderson, Fred. *The War That Made America*, Viking, 2005., pp. viii and 5.]

1. Give examples of the French and Indian War's brutality (including captive-taking) that might have led whites to "hate Indians with undiscriminating fury." Use examples from the other documents and images you have already examined or come back to this later.

2. From an Indian point of view, what would be some of the pros and cons of bringing whites into Indian families as adopted members of the tribe?

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Deceased: those who have died

Demographers scientists who study human populations

Devastation destruction or damage

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Mourning: great sorrow, sadness **Deceased:** those who have died **captive taking** to take prisoners **fury:** great anger **Undermined:** weakened **Resist:** slow down or stop **Expansion:** growth **Settlement:** lands for farming and building communities **Undiscriminat-ing:** seeing no differences **Devastation** destruction or damage **Enslaved:** made slaves	**Background:** For centuries, Native Americans had fought **Mourning** Wars to capture women and children from other tribes. These captured Indians would replace those who had died or satisfy the **deceased's** spirit. These prisoners would be brought and educated as full members of the tribe. Europeans brought Small Pox, German Measles, and Influenza into contact with Native Americans and the death toll was catastrophic. The death toll was between 50-90% of the tribe's members. As a result, tribes had far greater need to replace their losses. During the French and Indian War, **captive taking** (of civilians and soldiers) by Indians was used not only to rebuild their population but also to weaken enemies and gain income through ransoms. "Over 1600 people were taken captive from New England during the French and Indian wars; some died in captivity, some were sold to the French, some were adopted into Indian communities." White settlers viewed captive-taking as evidence of savagery and reacted with **fury**. *[Modified quote source: Colin G. Calloway. North Country Captives. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992, page ix.]* **A. CAPTIVE-TAKING WAS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE** The French and Indian War's violence and brutality **undermined**, and ultimately destroyed, native peoples' ability to **resist** the **expansion** of Anglo-American **settlement**. The war's violence and brutality, moreover, encouraged whites—particularly those on the frontier—to hate Indians with **undiscriminating fury**. **B. CAPTIVE-TAKING WAS NECESSARY FOR INDIAN SURVIVIAL** "As much as half the population of any given [Indian] village or band died within days or weeks of an epidemic's appearance…. The only way to maintain population levels in the face of such **devastation** was for the survivors to undertake raiding expeditions...to take women and children from enemy groups as captives. They...could be adopted into the raiders' families as replacements for lost members, or...**enslaved** as substitutes for missing workers." 4. Evaluate whether Indians should or should not have taken white settlers as captives. Use examples from the text.	1. Why did the Iroquois take prisoners? 2. How did white colonists react to Indians taking prisoners? 3. What were the benefits for Indians in taking white prisoners?