

# Sitting Bull: A Journey into the Heart of a Lakota Sioux Icon



## Sitting Bull by Bill Yenne

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Sitting Bull, also known as Tatanka Iyotake, was a legendary Lakota Sioux leader who played a pivotal role in the American Indian Wars of the 19th century. His name, which means "Slow Buffalo," was given to him as a child due to his large size and slow, deliberate movements. Throughout his life, Sitting Bull emerged as a fearless warrior, a skilled orator, and a visionary spiritual leader for his people.

## Early Life and Initiation into Warriorhood

Sitting Bull was born in 1831 near the Grand River in present-day South Dakota. As a young man, he quickly gained a reputation for his bravery and hunting skills. In 1851, he participated in his first battle against the Crow tribe, where he distinguished himself as a fierce warrior. Over the next few years, Sitting Bull continued to fight against enemy tribes, solidifying his status as a respected leader among the Lakota.



Sitting Bull in his early twenties, around 1855.

### **Leadership and the Treaty of Fort Laramie**

By the late 1850s, Sitting Bull had become a leading voice among the Lakota. He vehemently opposed the encroachment of white settlers onto Lakota lands and advocated for the preservation of traditional Lakota

culture. In 1868, Sitting Bull was one of the signatories to the Treaty of Fort Laramie, which established a large reservation for the Lakota Sioux in present-day South Dakota.

However, the treaty soon came under pressure from gold miners and settlers who were eager to exploit the Black Hills, a sacred area for the Lakota. Sitting Bull and other Lakota leaders refused to cede the Black Hills, leading to increased tensions with the US government.



Sitting Bull signing the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868.

## **The Battle of Little Bighorn**

In 1876, tensions between the Lakota and the US government reached a boiling point. General George Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills, intent on forcing the Lakota onto reservations. Sitting Bull, along with other Lakota leaders such as Crazy Horse and Gall, rallied a large force of warriors to meet Custer's army.

On June 25th, 1876, the Battle of Little Bighorn unfolded near the Little Bighorn River in present-day Montana. In a stunning victory for the Lakota, Custer's army was annihilated, and Custer himself was killed. The battle became a turning point in the American Indian Wars and cemented Sitting Bull's legacy as a legendary warrior.



The Battle of Little Bighorn, June 25th, 1876.

### **Later Years and Persecution**

Following the Battle of Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull and his followers fled to Canada to escape US reprisals. He remained there for several years, returning to the US in 1881 and surrendering to federal authorities. Sitting Bull was convicted of murder and imprisoned for two years.

After his release, Sitting Bull became a popular attraction at Wild West shows, where he shared his experiences and spoke about the plight of the Lakota people. However, he continued to be persecuted by the US government, which saw him as a threat to peace. In 1890, during the Ghost Dance movement, Sitting Bull was arrested and killed by Indian police.



Sitting Bull at a Wild West show, circa 1885.

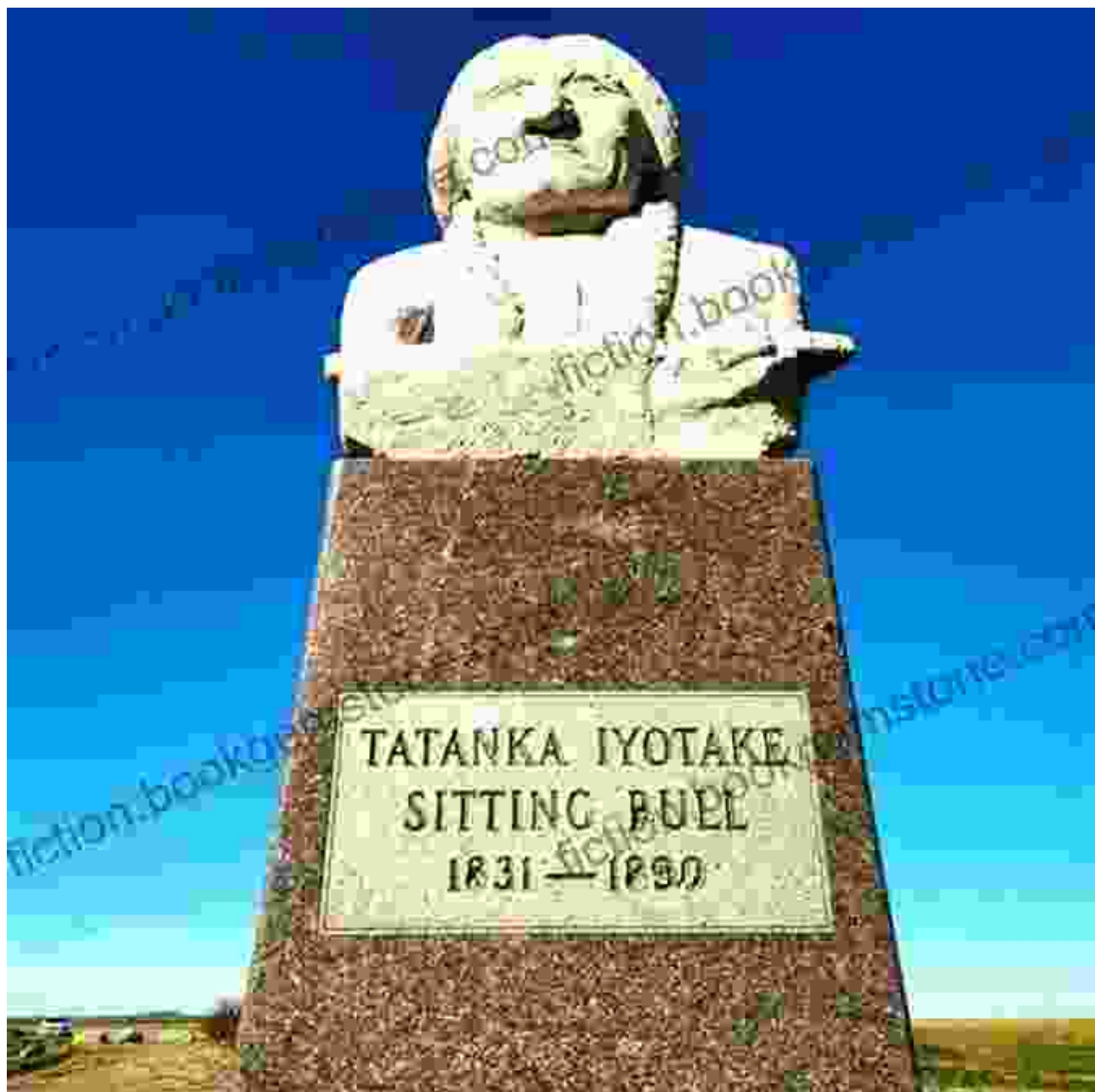
### **Legacy and Historical Impact**

Sitting Bull's legacy is complex and multifaceted. He is remembered as a fierce warrior who fought against the encroachment of white settlers and



defended the rights of his people. He was also a skilled orator and a visionary spiritual leader who inspired his followers to resist oppression.

Sitting Bull's death marked a turning point in the American Indian Wars. It symbolized the defeat of Native American resistance and the beginning of a new era of assimilation and subjugation. However, Sitting Bull's spirit and his message of resistance continue to inspire Native American activists and advocates to this day.



The Sitting Bull memorial in Mobridge, South Dakota.

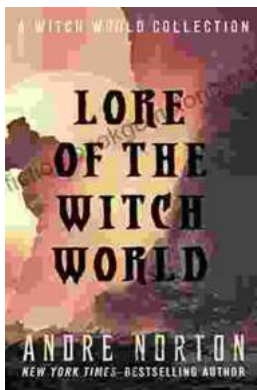
Sitting Bull remains one of the most iconic and enigmatic figures in American history. His life and legacy embody the struggles and triumphs of the Lakota Sioux people, and his spirit continues to inspire generations of Native Americans and non-Natives alike. By delving into the life and times of Sitting Bull, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of American history and the enduring legacy of its indigenous peoples.



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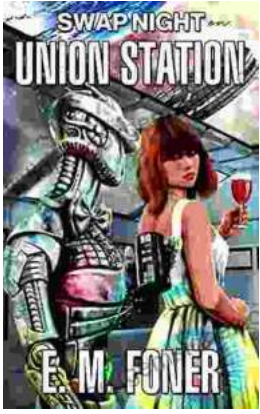
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