

Reading Homework

Weapons and Warriors



How is it possible that small groups of white settlers, most of whom were not trained fighters and many of whom had women and children to protect, were able to defeat groups of highly skilled Indian warriors in battles?

The answer is not that the whites were better warriors, but that strength and courage were not enough to defeat the enormous technological advantage the whites had with their weapons. Indians fought with bows and arrows, tomahawks, and knives, which could certainly kill. But the weapons the whites had were simply more deadly. At first the advantage was not so enormous. You saw the muskets used by the whites in *Drums Along The Mohawk*. These were essentially weapons like the weapons the Portuguese brought to Tanegashima. They were not very powerful, had a short-range, and were quite inaccurate. They were also very slow to load.



The biggest effect they had was to make a huge noise which certainly scared the Indians...at first.



The first revolver was patented in 1835, but it was after the American Civil War that new and better repeating rifles and revolvers appeared. In 1872 The Colt Single Action Army (S.A.A.) was released and became the handgun of choice in the West.

The next year the Winchester company released its Winchester '73 rifle.



A white settler armed with these weapons could easily kill a dozen Indian warriors before they were even close enough to him to use their weapons.