

Section 8

The West

STANDARD V: The student will understand the concepts and developments of the late 19th to the early 20th centuries.

OBJECTIVE 1: Identify and evaluate the events that led to the settlement of the West.

ELIGIBLE CONTENT QUESTIONS (THIS IS THE STUFF YOU MUST KNOW!)

What are the events that lead to the closing of the frontier and the transition from an agrarian society to an industrial nation during the 1800s.

- Indian tribes

Examples: new states, U.S. Army and Indian conflicts, buffalo annihilation, and geographic impact

- Settlement of the Midwest/immigrant movement

Examples: steel plow, windmill, revolver, barbed wire, and railroad

- Changing role of the American farmers

Examples: early mechanization of agriculture, farmers' grievances, American agrarian rebellion, Populist Movement, and Alabama farmers

Terms and Concepts for

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bumper crop	This is an unusually abundant harvest.
Cheyenne Indians	These buffalo-hunting Plains Indians originally lived in what is now Colorado and Wyoming.
communal living	This is a life-style typical of many Native-American tribes where members of the tribe worked for the common good and much property was held (owned) in common.
Comstock Lode	This was a large quantity of silver ore discovered in Nevada by Henry Comstock in 1859.
cow town	This is a term describing a town located near a railroad where cattle were loaded onto cattle cars for shipment to market.
Credit Mobilier	This was a railroad-construction company created to enable company insiders to make illegal profits from the construction of the transcontinental railroad.
Custer's Last Stand (1876)	This is the name given to the Battle of Little Bighorn where Colonel Custer and 264 of his men were killed by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors.
Dawes Act (1887)	This was a law which sought to "Americanize" Indians by offering them up to 160 acres of reservation land if they would abandon their tribal way of life.
Exodusters	These were blacks who migrated west after the Civil War to take advantage of free land offered by the Homestead Act.
Free Silver Movement	This was an effort by westerners during the late 1800s to convince the government to buy and then coin unlimited amounts of silver.
Ghost Dance	This was a religious ceremony performed by Plains Indians during the late 1800s.
Granger laws	These were laws passed by state governments that helped farmers by regulating certain businesses such as railroads and elevator (grain storage) companies.
Great Plains	This is a large area of flat, grass-covered land lying east of the Rocky Mountains and west of the Mississippi.
Greenback Party	This was a political movement following the Civil War which urged the government to expand the money supply by printing greenbacks (paper money not backed by silver or gold).

Homestead Act (1862)	This was a law that granted up to 160 acres of land to settlers who agreed to live on the land for five years.
Indian reservation	This was an area of land set aside for Indian tribes.
Interstate Commerce Act (1887)	This was a law that granted the federal government the power to regulate railroads that passed through more than one state.
long drive	This was the driving of cattle from the open range to cow towns located along western railroads.
"Munn v. Illinois" (1877)	This was a case in which the Supreme Court ruled that state governments had the right to regulate railroads and other businesses that affect the public.
nomads	These are people who have no permanent home but rather wander from place to place in search of food or pasture for their animals. (For example, many Plains Indians were nomads who followed buffalo herds.)
open range	This is an open area of public land on which cattle grazed.
Pony Express	This was a system, organized in 1860, of carrying mail across the western U.S. by men on horseback.
Populist Party	This was a political party, formed by farmers and union members in 1892, which favored political reforms and government regulation of certain industries.
Prairie	This is a relatively flat, grass-covered area of land.
Sand Creek Massacre (1861)	This was the massacre of several hundred Cheyenne Indians, most of them women and children, in the Colorado Territory by U.S. troops under the command of Colonel Chivington.
Sioux Indians	These were Buffalo-hunting Indians who once roamed an area now occupied by the states of Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.
sod buster	This was a name given to farmers on the Plains because they often had to cut open the thick prairie sod with axes before they could plow it.
sod house	This as a home built from blocks of prairie sod because other building supplies, such as wood, were scarce on the Great Plains.
subsistence farmer	This was a person who, instead of raising crops for sale, produces only enough for his or her own needs.
thresher	This is a machine that separates seeds (grain) from the rest of the plant.

vigilante

This is a person, who instead of waiting for government to arrest and prosecute a suspected wrongdoer, takes the law into his or her own hands.

Wounded Knee, Battle of (1890)

This was a battle (some say massacre) which crushed the final organized resistance by Indians. A vastly superior force of U.S. soldiers slaughtered nearly 300 Sioux men, women, and children.

Timeline for

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- 1804 - Under order of President Thomas Jefferson, the Lewis and Clark Expedition depart from St. Louis, Mo., on May 14, to chart a course to the Pacific Ocean.
- 1841 - First emigrant wagon train for California. Forty-seven people leave Independence, Mo., on May 1, and reach California on November 4.
- 1842 - Settlement of Oregon begins via the Oregon Trail.
- 1847 - After violent clashes with settlers over polygamy, Mormons leave Nauvoo, Ill., and head for the West under Brigham Young. They eventually settle at Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1848 - Gold discovered January 24 in California. In February, Mexico ceded claims to Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and portions of Colorado. U.S. pays Mexico \$15 million.
- 1849 - 80,000 prospectors emigrate to California to follow the gold boom.
- 1859 - First commercially productive oil well drilled near Titusville, Pa. by Edwin Drake on August 27; led to expansion of oil fields in the southwest territories.
- 1861 - First transcontinental telegraph line completed October 24.
- 1862 - Homestead Act was approved on May 20, grants free family farms to settlers.
- 1867 - The Grange was organized December 4 to protect farmers interests.
- 1869 - Transcontinental railroad completed; golden spike driven at Promontory, Utah, May 10, marking the junction of Central Pacific and Union Pacific railways.

California Gold Rush Chronology 1846 - 1849

Quite extensive information about this important era - a magnet for westward expansion - presented by the Museum of the City of San Francisco. Many links to other sources.