The American West
1835-1895

A brief overview of key people, dates and facts about the American West from 1835-1895

Please note- events discussed in the booklet are not detailed enough to be studied without using your class notes. This is meant more as a resource you can use to check your knowledge of dates and people and use as an aid to your understanding.
15 key things to know about the American West

- The American Indians lived on the Plains in the USA. They were forced there in the early 1800s by the rapid growth of America. The Plains lie between the Rocky Mountains in the West and the Mississippi River in the East.
- The Plains were given to the Indians, and in 1832 the US government established the Permanent Indian Frontier. The land was supposed to be protected for life; however the US government also hoped that by pushing the Indians onto the Plains that they would no longer be an irritation to “white society”.
- The American Indians hunted buffalo and used every single part of a buffalo to survive. There were lots of buffalo on the Great Plains and the Plains Indians followed the buffalo, this travelling lifestyle is called a nomadic lifestyle.
• American Indians had a deep respect for buffalo and other animals they depended on. They believed that all nature and the land itself must be treated with respect or the spirits that lived in everything would no longer agree to help the Plains Indians survive.

• Plains Indians believed they could contact the spirit world through vision quests, guided by spirit animals such as hawks or spirit foxes. They danced special rituals like the Sun Dance to enter the spirit world.

• Land was sacred. For the Lakota Sioux the Black Hills of South Dakota was the most sacred of all. Nobody owned land as it was not something that could be bought or sold, but tribes did have hunting areas they used and signed treaties to share hunting areas. Farming was seen by some Plains Indians as being disrespectful to the land.

• American Indian tribes were made up of different bands and these bands worked together and would meet in the summer for a great tribal camp.

• Each tribe was led by many chiefs. These had to men, but they were chosen for their wisdom, leadership, spiritual powers, or their skill as a warrior. Famous chiefs include Red Cloud, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

• As well as bands, American Indians also had warrior brotherhoods. There were several different brotherhoods within a tribe and young men joined these to show their bravery.

• Different tribes would war with each other frequently over land and each tribe would lead raids on other tribes to steal their horses, food and weapons. To minimise the number of dead in raids, ‘counting coups’ were developed. This was where a warrior would injure but not kill another warrior, but would still be able to escape with their horses and food. The Sioux tribe and the Pawnee tribe were sworn enemies.

• From 1830, the US government made a series of Acts to settle problems between white settlers (people who had come to live in America) and the Plains Indians. Their main aims were to keep white settlers and Plains Indians apart and to encourage Plains Indians to be like White settlers.

• In 1849, Gold was discovered in California. This led to huge migration from the East of America to the West. To get to the West, White Settlers had to travel through Plains Indians territory, via the Oregon Trail. This led to disputes and problems for the US government. This led to the signing of the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 which banned Plains Indians from fighting with White Settlers and guaranteed both parties protection from each other.
- White settlers often became farmers, but their life was difficult. Oregon and California had ideal conditions for farmers with mild temperatures and fertile soils. However, by the 1850's settlers had started to settle on the Great Plains. In 1854, the US government created two new territories, Kansas and Nebraska. They were difficult to farm. There was low rainfall, few trees and rivers and large climate extremes. There was also a problem with grasshoppers who would destroy crops. People reported that flying grasshoppers blocked out the sun.

- In the West there were problems with law and order. After the 1849 gold rush people from all over the world were coming to the west coast to find their fortune. Towns and camps were set up overnight and there wasn't enough time to set up law systems. Also, illegal methods of making money were created, such as ‘salting a claim’ where people would scatter a few flakes of gold on a worthless claim and they sell it. There was also prostitutes and people selling alcohol in the camps which led to drunken disputes. Vigilance Committees were set up to deal with the issues with crime. This was usually a committee of around 200 men who would capture criminals and punish them if they were found guilty. These men became known as vigilantes.

- There was also a lot of racism in the American West. In 1852, a famine in China led to a large increase in the number of Chinese people coming to live in areas like San Francisco. The population had increased from 2,000 in 1851-20,000 in 1852. Many people thought that the Chinese migrants were taking jobs and the US government discriminated against Chinese migrants. There was also a large amount of racism directed at the American Indians.
### Key terms for the American West

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bands</td>
<td>Each tribe had a number of bands that would work together for the protection of the tribe. A band could consist of several hundred people or 20-30.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>Leaders of a tribe. Could be more than one at any time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claims</td>
<td>A legal declaration that someone intends to take control over an area of land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>A meeting between different bands in a tribe. Each band had a chief and these chiefs and band elders made up the council. In some tribes they could declare war or negotiate peace treaties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counting Coups</td>
<td>Special type of fighting in which a warrior would attempt to hit or touch an enemy and get away without being injured or killed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>The USA is a union of states. Each state has its own state government and then there is the federal government: a government over all the states.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontier</td>
<td>The border between two countries, or the border between a ‘civilised’ country and undeveloped areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynching</td>
<td>This occurs when a group of people take the law into their own hands and execute a suspect of a crime, usually by hanging.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Plains</td>
<td>The Plains lie between the Rocky Mts in the West and the Mississippi River in the East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manifest Destiny</td>
<td>The belief that it was God’s will for white people to take possession of the whole of the USA and make it productive and civilised.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass migration</td>
<td>When very large numbers of people migrate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass settlement</td>
<td>When a very large number of people come to live in an area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missionaries</td>
<td>Someone who travels to a place in order to convert its people to their faith.</td>
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<td>Mormon</td>
<td>A religious group.</td>
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<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>Where a man could marry several wives at once</td>
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<td>Posse</td>
<td>A group of men called together by a sheriff or marshal to help him in enforcing the law.</td>
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<td>Prairie</td>
<td>The large areas of flat grasslands, mostly without trees, of the Great Plains region of North America.</td>
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<td>Prospector</td>
<td>Someone who searches for gold or other precious metals, looking for signs of the metals in rocky outcrops or in the silt of streams and river beds.</td>
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<td>Reservation</td>
<td>An area of land for a specific purpose, ‘reserved’ for use by American Indians and managed by the US government.</td>
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<td>Road agents</td>
<td>Gangs of criminals who waited in isolated spots along roads to rob travellers.</td>
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<td>Scalp</td>
<td>The cutting off of the hair and skin from the top of an enemy’s head to keep as a trophy and as a sign of bravery. Both the Plains Indians and White Settlers did this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheriff</td>
<td>An elected law officer with the responsibility of keeping the peace in his area and carrying out orders of a law court, such as issuing warrants, making arrests and delivering prisoners to jail.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Tipis | Tent-like homes of Plains Indians, made of animal hide stretched over wooden poles. The strong flexible pyramid shape meant it could stand up to strong winds.
---|---
Trail | Routes marking out ‘tried and tested’ ways across the West.
Travois | A framework harnessed to a horse or dog on which Plains Indians transported their belongings.
US Marshal | A police officer in charge of a district.
Vigilantes | A group of ordinary citizens who punish suspected lawbreakers themselves instead of relying on the official justice system.
Warrior brotherhoods | A collection of Plains Indians with a specific job. They also taught young men about the tribes beliefs and values as well as fighting skills.
White Settlers | European migrants to America who made up a large proportion of the US citizens settling in the West.

Key people in the American West

Red Cloud

Red Cloud was a chief of the Oglala sub-tribe of the Lakota people of the Sioux nation. He was born in 1822 and became a very important Lakota war leader. He led Red Cloud’s War against White Americans which brought together Sioux and Cheyenne tribes.

Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was a chief of the Hunkpapa sub-tribe of the Lakota Sioux. He was born around 1831. He was an experienced warrior and a famous holy man. He was against the US government peace treaties after Red Cloud’s War. Sitting Bull had a vision of white soldiers ‘as thick as grasshoppers’ falling down into the Lakota Sioux camp, which inspired many Lakota Sioux to fight the US RMY. He was killed by US agency police in 1890.

Crazy Horse

Crazy Horse was a war leader of the Oglala Sioux. He was born around 1842 and was a respected warrior. He was also famous for his ability to enter the spirit world through visions. He followed Sitting Bull and was also against the peace treaty signed after Red Cloud’s War. Led the charge against Custer’s 7th Cavalry at the Battle of Little Bighorn.
Brigham Young

Brigham Young led the Mormon Migration of 1846-7. He believed that God had called on the Mormons to migrate to Salt Lake Valley, south of the Oregon Trail and build a settlement there.

His leadership ensured the safe passage of the Mormons and the successful completion of a Mormon settlement in the Salt Lake Valley.

**Timeline 1830-1862**

28th May 1830

Indian Removal Act forces American Indians in eastern states to move west of the Mississippi River.

30th June 1834

Indian Trade and Intercourse Act set out the frontier between the US and Indian territory.

May 1846

The Donner Party set off for the West, via the Oregon Trail. They took a short cut and only half of the original 80 survived by eating those who had died.

2nd February 1848

The US victory in the Mexican-American War. This means that the US now have control of large parts of the Western United States including California.

29th February 1851

Indian Appropriations Act funds the moving of American Indians to reservations in modern day Oklahoma.

1854

The US government creates two new territories called Kansas and Nebraska. Designed for White Settlers.

The Mormon Migration 1846-7

A group of Mormons led by Brigham Young, begin their journey to Salt Lake Valley.

April 1849

The Gold Rush begins. 100,000 people left the East to travel to California.

17th September 1851

The Treaty of Fort Laramie is signed. This was designed to end fighting and protect both sides.
The US Civil War

In 1861 a dispute broke out between the Northern ‘Union’ states of America and the Southern ‘Confederate’ states of America. Seven southern states left the union and four more soon joined. There was four years of fighting and 600,000 were killed and 400,000 injured.

The Civil War had a huge impact on the West. During the war, the government passed laws encouraging migration to the west and improving transportation links. They had been unable to do this before the war as the Southern states had objected to the positioning of a railroad and who should be allowed to settle in the West. After the war, many people were eager to move to the west to escape the poor economic and social conditions in the east. The Civil War also led to an increase in lawlessness. Many soldiers left the war and joined ‘outlaw’ gangs that went through different towns committing crimes and terrorising local people.

The Civil War had wide ranging consequences. It led to the outlawing of slavery and many black Americans who
were freed went to the west to start a new life. Railroads had been created, linking the east and the west, leading to a boom in migration to the west. There was growing conflict as railroad companies claimed land that had been used by the Plains Indians and the creation of the railroads led to a decline in the number of buffalo. This increased tension between the Plains Indians and settlers.

**Key acts**

**The Homestead Act 1862**

This was designed to encourage settlement to the West. It made plots of land more affordable for people to buy. Plots of land were 160 acre ‘homesteads’ and it cost just $10 to register a claim to one of these. Anyone could file a claim to the land as long as they were head of a family or over the age of 21 (under 21’s were allowed if they had fought in the war) American Indians could not claim any land. The people filing a claim then had to live on the land and farm it. After five years if the homesteaders had built a house on the land and planted five acres of crops they could pay $30 to own their homestead outright. This was known as ‘proving up’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• By 1876 over six million acres of land had become homesteads.</td>
<td>• Only 13 million acres of claims had been ‘proved up’ by 1884. 60% of homestead claims were never proven up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Parts of the Great Plains were being settled for the first time. Eventually 80 million acres of public land was settled.</td>
<td>• Although 80 million acres had been homesteaded, this was out of a total of 500 million acres of public land. The government granted far more land to the railroads- 300 million acres- and sold the rest of it for higher prices, often to cattle ranchers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It encouraged immigration from Europe. By 1875, more than half of Nebraska’s population of 123,000 were recent immigrants.</td>
<td>• Many more homesteads were created by people buying land from railroad companies and through a form of squatting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Despite the governments intentions to give land to small farmers, rich landowners were able to use it to get more land. Big ranch owners would make all employees file a claim and then hand over their rights to the land.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The Homestead Act allowed people to buy their claim for $1.25 per acre once they had lived their 6 months. As a result, many people filed claims to sell it on at a profit.</td>
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The Timber Culture Act 1873

This act was created to address some of the problems caused by the Homestead Act. The Timber Culture Act allowed a homesteader to claim a further 160 acres if they promised to plant trees on a quarter of the land. It was seen that the initial grant of 160 acres was not enough for farming on the Great Plains. It was thought that planting trees would be beneficial as they would act as wind breaks to slow down the Great Plains winds and to shelter crops from wind damage. Also, settlers could use the timber to create houses and for repairing equipment and it would provide them with fuel.

Consequences

- 16 million acres had been claimed under this Act by 1878, adding 50% more land to that claimed under the Homestead Act.
- The majority of claims were in Plains areas like Nebraska, Dakota and Kansas.
- Most of the trees died because there was not enough water for them.
- People also exploited loopholes in the Act to claim land they had no intention of settling, after waiting a few years for the value of the land to increase they would then sell it on for a higher price.

The Pacific Railroad Act 1862

This provided the incentive for a railway to be built that linked states in the North East, like Chicago, with the West. This promoted migration as it boosted the sale of land to settlers and enabled the industrial centres of the North to connect with the agricultural centres in the West.

The government selected a route that went from Sacramento in California, to Omaha, Nebraska and from there it would link up with already existing railway lines. The government employed two companies to build the railway- Union Pacific and Central Pacific. Union Pacific would begin building in Omaha and move westwards and Central Pacific would begin building in Sacramento and move eastwards. They would then meet in the middle. To provide more incentives for the companies to undertake this difficult and expensive mission the US government committed to:

- Extinguishing any rights Plains Indians might have to land along the route.
- Loaned each company $16,000 for every mile of track laid.
- Granted each company large sections of public land along the railroad for them to sell.

The railroad companies also used marketing to encourage settlement in the West. They laid on special trips to show possible buyers the attractions of the area, organised loans to help people buy the land and sent successful settlers on tours to recruit more customers. By 1880, the railroad companies had settled 200 million acres in the West. They were more influential than the Homestead Act in encouraging settlement because they had more land and because people wanted to settle near the railroads.
The Indian Appropriations Act 1871

This act declared that Plains Indians would no longer be recognised ‘as an independent nation, tribe or power with whom the United States may contract by treaty.’ While previously agreed treaties would be honoured, this Act did make it easier for the US government to take land from Plains Indians and give it to settlers.
10 key facts about the development of the Cattle Industry

1. Before the Civil War Texas cowboys herded their cows on long drives across the South to New Orleans and up through Missouri to towns like Sedalia and St Louis.

2. Texas ranchers were devastated by a disease called ‘Texas Fever’ this was almost always fatal and was highly contagious. As a result, areas like Kansas passed laws banning Texan cattle drives through their state. This meant that Texans were looking for alternative routes for their cattle.

3. After the Civil War, there was a large demand for beef in Northern cities such as Chicago. A cow was worth $40 in Chicago where industrial meat packing had been developed and cows could be turned into food quickly and cheaply. In the South demand slowed. There were large economic problems and people simply could not afford beef. This meant that ranchers needed to find a new route to supply the North with meat.

4. Joseph McCoy was the first livestock trader to use the newly made railroad to transport his cattle to Chicago. He understood that Abilene in Kansas would be the ideal point to do this and moved his herd through a grassland trail called the Chisolm Trail. He purchased 450 acres of land and built a stockyard in Abilene where cows could be kept safely and negotiated with the Kansas Pacific Railroad for a depot to be but on a side track where he could load the cows. He also spent money marketing his new venture encouraging cattlemen to use the Chisolm Trail for their cows. It was a massive success and by the end of 1867, 35,000 cattle had been driven through the trail to Abilene. Abilene expanded rapidly and became the first ‘cow town’ in the USA.

5. The Goodnight-Loving Trail was also established in 1866. This was brought about by the idea to sell cattle directly to new population centres in the West. Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving would travel through hostile Comanche Indian territory to reach Fort Sumner, where they could sell the cattle on. Goodnight was so successful that he was able to expand his ranch to one million acres in 1876.

6. In 1861, John Iliff bought a herd of cheap cattle for $500. They were exhausted after a long drive over the plains and could not be sold for their beef. In the same year there had been a gold rush in Colorado, at the Western edge of the Plains. This meant that there was large migration to this area and a large demand for beef. Iliff spotted an opportunity. If he could fatten his herd using the plains grass he would be able to sell his beef to this mining community and would not have to transport it very far. In 1866 he
bought land for a ranch near Denver and built up a huge herd of cattle. He used the Homestead Act to get more land and sold beef to mining communities and teams building the railroad. This system of raising cattle on the plains became known as open range ranching.

7. The long drives from Texas did continue, however, ranching on the plains boomed. Throughout the 1870’s the cattle industry was seen as a good way to make money as the costs were low and profits were high. Investors poured money into the business and the industry was soon dominated by a few rich cattle barons, who used investment to buy up large areas of plains land to make into ranches. They had a lot of influence and even controlled local politics.

8. Life on the long drive could be difficult for cowboys. Driving cattle along the Chisholm trail could take between two-three months and up to six months for the Goodnight-Loving trail. There could be stampedes because cows were easily spooked and there were challenges with navigating the trails and rivers with cattle. They worked in outfits with trail bosses and were employed by owners of the herd. They slept in the open and would not be paid until the cows had been loaded onto the railway carriages. They would then need to find work until they could go on cattle drives the next spring.

9. Life on a ranch was different. During the winter, cattle would travel freely. Many cowboys lost their jobs in the winter as there was not much work to be done. The work began in spring when ranchers would have to round up the cows and prepare them for their journey. This was physical work and many cowboys only did this in their early 20s. When ranches sprang up in the Plains more problems were created. The winters were more intense and often cowboys were employed throughout the winter to ensure there were trails cows could use and that they had access to water and grass.

10. There was a large amount of conflict between ranchers and homesteaders. Ranchers relied on government land for their ranches and were unhappy when this was bought up by homesteaders. This often resulted in ranchers using underhand tactics to gain control of lands for their ranches.
Key people

Joseph McCoy

Joseph McCoy was a Chicago livestock trader. He was able to take advantage of the boom in the beef industry after the Civil War to establish a cattle drive route through the Chisholm Trail to Abilene in Kansas. He then established Abilene as the first ‘cow town’ and organised for cows to be transported to Abilene along this trail and from there used the railways to transport cattle to Chicago. He spent a great deal marketing his strategy which was very popular.

Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving

Established the Goodnight-Loving trail through hostile America Indian territory to Fort Sumner. This allowed them to benefit from the boom in demand for beef from new population centres in the West. They were able to sell cattle 800 cattle for $12,000, nearly four times as much as in Texas.

John Iliff

John Iliff pioneered the technique of open range ranching. He discovered that, thanks in a large part to the Colorado Gold Rush creating a huge demand for beef, his cows could survive on the Great Plains, cutting out the need for long drives from Texas to the North and West. In 1866 he bought land near Denver and by 1870 had built up a large herd of 26,000 cattle. He was Denver’s first millionaire and in 1872 he won a contract to provide beef to a reservation of 7,000 Sioux Indians.

Ely S Parker

Ely S Parker was appointed as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He was an American Indian and it was hoped that he would ensure that the new policy of putting American Indians on reservations would be a success. The US government put forward a budget of $2 million to ensure that Plains Indians were properly cared for, however, any American Indian who refused to be placed in a reservation was treated as an enemy.

Instead of improving the situation for Plains Indians, Parker made the situation worse. He argued for further government change claiming that Plains Indians should be treated as ‘helpless’ and ‘ignorant’ and thus the government should decide what is best for them. These ideas were then put into law with the 1871 Indian Appropriations Act which stated that Plains Indians would no longer be treated as an independent nation and should be forced to follow US policy. This led to great tension.
Key events in the relationship between Plains Indians and White Settlers

Why did the Indians and the Americans hate each other?

- The US government believed in Manifest Destiny, that whites should own all of America
- Ranchers grazed their cattle on the land where the buffalo used to graze - many buffalo were wiped out because of the lack of food
- The US government usually supported the white settlers in any conflict with the Indians
- Miners were digging for gold in land that was owned by the Indians
- The homesteaders took a lot of land away from the Indian tribes - the government gave them this land
- The US government tried to destroy the Indian culture by forcing them onto reservations and making them reliant upon handouts
- The US army were often brought in to help the white settlers in conflicts with the Indians

Little Crow

Little Crow was a chief of a band of the Dakota Sioux from an area in Minnesota. In 1851, Dakota Sioux bands, including Little Crow’s band signed a treaty agreeing to move to two reservations. However, this did not go to plan and by 1858 The Dakota Sioux were forced to sign away half of their reservation land. Little Crow used the cover of the Civil War to launch an attack US Agency buildings. They then attacked towns and slaughtered many people including women and children, leading to mass outrage.

Many of the tribe fled to Dakota. However Little Crow was found and scalped.

Black Kettle

In the Treaty of Fort Wise (1861) Arapaho and Cheyenne Chiefs (including Black Kettle) moved onto reservations in east Colorado. But many young warriors in brotherhoods known as ‘Dog Soldiers’ rejected the treaty and remained on their old lands. After three years of raids, Black Kettle, government officials and army commanders reached an agreement. Believing he was under army protection, Black Kettle set up a camp at Sand Creek. However, the Territory’s Governor John Evans, was determined to kill and destroy the American Indians and appointed Colonel Chivington to do this. On 29th November 1864, Chivington led 700 cavalry troops on a dawn raid of Black Kettle’s camp. Chivington claimed his troops had fought a tremendous battle against 1,000 warriors. This was not true. The camp had surrendered and Chivington and his men still massacred 130 men, women and children.

Black Kettle escaped and carried news of the massacre to other tribes and the Dog Soldiers attacked forts and killed many white settlers.

Black Kettle died in 1868 in another massacre of Plains Indians by US troops.
Thousands of buffalo hunters invaded the Plains - by 1885 there were only 200 buffalo left on the Plains. In 1840 there were an estimated 13 million

Indian children were taken from their families and sent to boarding schools where they were taught life in the "white man's world". If parents tried to stop their children from going their rations were stopped

The railroads divided up the Plains and invited more settlers onto the Plains. They also helped supply the army and facilitate its fast deployments and movements

The Indian Wars

- Permanent Indian Frontier 1840 - all land given to the Indians
- 1848 gold rush
- First Fort Laramie treaty 1851
- 1857 gold rush
- Fort Lyon treaty 1861
- Little Crow's war 1862 - revolt by Santee Sioux against bad conditions on reservations
- Cheyenne Uprising 1863 - revolts against conditions on reservations. Wagon trains attacked for food
- Sand Creek Massacre 1864 - at least 163 killed of which at least 110 were women and children - US army attacked despite white flag being raised
- Red Cloud's war 1867 - Sioux attacked travellers on the Bozeman trail and forced withdrawal of army
- The Second Fort Laramie treaty 1868 - us government abandon Bozeman trail, Sioux given permanent reservation in Dakota
- The winter campaign of 1868
- Sheridan and Custer attack Black Kettle's winter camp - the Battle of Washita this was exactly the same as the events at Sand Creek
- Gold in Dakota - 1874
- The Battle of Little Big Horn 1876
- Defeat of Custer and the 7th cavalry
- The Dawes Act 1887 - divides land into 160 acre allotments, some of these given to Indians. Now they were forced to learn to farm - completely destroys way of life
- 1890 Wounded Knee - End of the Indians' wars and they are finally defeated.

Why did the Indians lose?

- The US army were greater in number than the Indians, especially in major battles
- The Indians did not work together as a collective unit - some tribes actually joined forces with the US army against their "common enemy"
- The US army changed and manipulated their tactics - they fought during the night and the morning and even mounted campaigns in the depths of winter when the Indians were not expecting it
- The Indians kept attempting to sort things out peacefully through treaties but were then left open to attack when the treaties were not honoured
- The Indians were less well armed than the US army and were unable to replace their losses in the same manner as the army.
- The Indians were never able to fight long campaigns - they had their families to look after and feed - their whole way of life depended on the males.

**Key words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abilene</td>
<td>The first cow town in Nebraska. This was developed thanks to the work of John McCoy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cattle Baron</td>
<td>A large ranch owner who is supported by investments to have a large ranch with a lot of influence</td>
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<td>Cattle Trails</td>
<td>Routes used for driving cattle: these needed to have easy access to grass and water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chisolm Trail</td>
<td>A route used for cattle drives from Texas to Nebraska.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>A war between two different sections of the same country.</td>
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<td>Cow Town</td>
<td>A town that was created due to the transport of beef.</td>
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<td>Deserters</td>
<td>Soldiers who run away from the army. Deserting was a criminal offence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodnight-Loving Trail</td>
<td>A route used for cattle drives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homesteaders</td>
<td>People who bought up public land to use for farming in the West.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long drives</td>
<td>Herding cattle over long distances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat Packing</td>
<td>Slaughtering, processing and packing of meat for distribution around the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Range</td>
<td>A large area of unfenced land over which livestock roamed freely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarantine</td>
<td>Keeping animals that might be diseased away from other animals to stop the spread of disease.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranch</td>
<td>A large farm for breeding and keeping cattle, rather than for crops.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rustling</td>
<td>Stealing livestock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squatting</td>
<td>Settling land without any legal right to do this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Fever</td>
<td>A disease in cows that was often fatal and contagious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaqueros</td>
<td>Mexican horse riding cattle herders.</td>
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Timeline 1860-1876

1861
Iliff buys a herd of cows and fattens them on the Plains in Colorado.

1862
The Homestead Act is passed.

1862
Sand Creek Massacre

1866-8
Red Cloud’s War

1867
McCoy establishes the first cow town, Abilene, Kansas.

1868
The Second Fort Laramie Treaty is signed.

1870
Iliff’s ranch extends to 16,000 acres of open range

1861-1865
US Civil War

1862
Little Crow’s War

1862
The Pacific Railroad Act is passed

1866
Goodnight and Loving drive cattle to Fort Sumner, New Mexico.

1866
‘Fetterman’s trap’ in Red Cloud’s War.

1868
Goodnight-Loving Trail extended to Cheyenne, Wyoming

1869
Completion of Pacific Railroad

1871
Indian Appropriation Act passed

1867-72
A total of three million cattle driven along the Chisholm Trail to Abilene.
Key Topic 3: Conflicts and conquest 1876-1895

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Key events 1876-1895

1. **The ‘Great Die Up’** marked the decline in the cattle ranching industry. During the 1880’s there was a fall in demand for beef, this coupled with a drought that caused pastures to wither and the overstocking of beef meant that large ranchers were losing money. The winter of 1886-7 made the situation worse, with temperatures as low as -55 degrees. Ranchers struggled to patrol their vast areas of land to check on the cattle and many starved. Smaller ranchers did better as they could more easily control their herd and protect it from the elements. However, after 1887, ranchers concentrated more on high quality meat and controlled breeding so open range cattle farming declined.

2. **The Exoduster Movement (1876)** This was where a large number of African Americans moved from the Southern states to areas like Kansas to escape discrimination and jobs as sharecroppers, which amounted to little more than slavery. They were able to use the Homestead Act to gain land in Kansas. By the end of 1879 40,000 African Americans had set off to the west. However, the migration often was not as positive as African Americans had hoped. Many were still victims of discrimination and were given the least profitable land to farm.
3. **The Oklahoma Land Rush**  
(1893) This was where a large section of American Indian territory was opened up to white settlement. After the 1887 Dawes Act, changed tribal land ownership so that individual people owned land instead of tribes, many American Indians were conned out of their land. In 1889, the US government decided to open up the middle section of the Indian Territory to white settlement and divided it up into 160-acre settlements. People then rushed in to claim the land. The largest land rush was in 1893 where eight million acres were opened up to settlement.

4. **The Johnson County War**  
(1892) was brought about due to tensions between large ranchers and homesteaders and small ranchers. The small ranchers disliked the influence large ranchers had over politics in the towns. The small ranchers set up their own association to round up cattle and hoped to rustle cattle off the richer large cattle ranchers. In response the Wyoming Stock Growers Association (WSGA) who represented the large cattle ranchers planned a full-scale invasion of Johnson County to kill 70 men. Despite being well-funded and well-armed, the ‘invaders’ of Johnson County had to be rescued by the US army. They were put on trial, but ultimately charges were dropped. The cattle ranchers were able to use their money and influence to ensure they were successful.

5. **The Battle of Little Big Horn (1876)** This was brought about through conflict over the Black Hills. This area was controlled by Plains Indians; however, prospectors had found gold. The US government offered to buy the Black Hills from the Sioux for $6 million. This was rejected and as a result, Sioux raids on prospectors in the Black Hills were taken by the government as a breach of the Fort Laramie Treaty. Sioux leaders felt the government had failed to protect them and left the reservations in protest. In December 1875, the government ordered them back onto their reservations. Deep snow made this impossible and by the spring of 1876, more than 7,000 Sioux were outside of their reservations. **The US army planned an attack on the Sioux to force them back to their reservations. General Custer recklessly led 200 men in Little Bighorn valley.** Greatly outnumbered, Custer and his men were killed. **This however,**
6. **The Wounded Knee Massacre**  
*(1890)* Government imposed cuts on rations within reservations had led to a feeling of despair for many American Indians. They came to believe in a ‘Ghost Dance’, this was a vision claiming that if Plain’s Indians rejected white ways of life and danced a sacred dance, the Great Spirit would then bring all the dead Plain’s Indians back to life. A great flood would carry away the white people and the land would belong to the Plain’s Indians again. This idea spread rapidly and the US government felt threatened and that they should control the situation. A Sioux warrior resisted being disarmed and others began to dance. A shot was fired and the 7th Cavalry opened fire and in 10 minutes had killed 250 Sioux, many of which were women and children.

7. **Buffalo extinction** - by 1883 much of the buffalo on the great Plains had been hunted into extinction. Many white settlers had killed the buffalo in large numbers to use their hide in industrial production. This had a massive impact on American Indians, who found their traditional form of living had been disrupted. They were forced onto reservations and no longer had any animals to hunt. Instead they were forced into learning how to farm and some were able to gain cows. However, many were unable to adapt to this lifestyle and became dependant on the US government for food. This mean that the US government could use food as a way of getting what they wanted from the Plains Indians.

8. **The Dawes Act (1887)** This allotted each Plains Indian Family with a 160 acre share of reservation land. Their aims were to break up the power of the tribes by making them act individually and also to assimilate them into US society. If they took up their land then they could leave the reservations and become US citizens. The result was that many Plain’s Indians struggled to make farming on their land work and were often forced to sell their land for very little money.
Key People

**Billy the Kid (1859-81)**

Billy the Kid grew up in mining camps in New Mexico and was very poor. When he was 14 or 15 he got into trouble for stealing butter. More thefts followed as he engaged in cattle rustling and horse stealing. Billy was involved in the Lincoln County War and when this was over he swore to kill everyone responsible for the death of his friend. This led to a lot of violence and in the end he was shot dead. However, although Billy the Kid was a notorious murderer he was seen by some as exciting and romantic. Newspapers and novels retold his story.

**Wyatt Earp**

Wyatt Earp was a notorious lawman who worked in Tombstone, Arizona with his brothers. His main aim was to stop the spread of lawlessness in this area, however, he had a very violent approach. He got into fights with cowboys and his brother was shot. This led Wyatt to shooting two men claiming they were responsible for his brother’s death. Many then felt that Wyatt had become a murderer with no respect for the law and he was forced to leave Tombstone.

**General Custer**

General Custer was a US Cavalry officer who had served with distinction in the US Civil War. In June 1876, Custer, then US Army commander of the 7th Cavalry, led 200 of his men into the Little Bighorn Valley where they were spotted by Sioux scouts. This was part of a battle for control of the Black Hills. Crazy Horse led an attack on the men and all 200 of them were killed. This was known as Custer’s Last Stand.

Key terms

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<th>Assimilate</th>
<th>To become like something else: for the Plains Indians, it meant becoming US citizens and rejecting all of their cultural beliefs and way of life.</th>
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<td>Corral</td>
<td>An enclosure for cattle or horses.</td>
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<td>Overstocked</td>
<td>The situation where too many livestock are relying on the same area of pasture. The grass gets eaten up, the soil may start to erode and animals can weaken as a result of hunger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharecropping</td>
<td>When a landowner allows a tenant to use some of their land in return for a share of the crops they grow.</td>
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Timeline of events 1876-1895

1876
The Battle of Little Bighorn

1877
Crazy Horse surrenders to the US Army and is killed.
Billy the Kid shoots Frank Cahill in self-defence; his first killing.

1878
Billy the Kid involved in the Lincoln County War, New Mexico

1879
The Carlisle Indian School founded in Pennsylvania.

1880
An estimated 40,000 African Americans begin to migrate to Kansas from southern states.

1881
The last big cattle drive to Dodge City takes place.

1882
Billy the Kid shot and killed

1883
Morgan Earp shot and killed.

1884
Sitting Bull and his followers surrender to the US Army

1885
Gunfight at the OK Corral, Tombstone, Arizona.

1886-1887
The Northern Pacific Railroad is completed.

1887
All Plains Indians are resettled onto reservations.

1888
The Dawes Act divides tribal lands into individual and family plots.

1889
50,000 homesteaders join the first land rush in central Indian Territory.

1890
Sitting Bull killed during an attempt to arrest him.

1892
Chief Big Foot and his followers killed by the US at the Wounded Knee Massacre.

1893
The Johnson County War

1894
Oklahoma Land Rush