



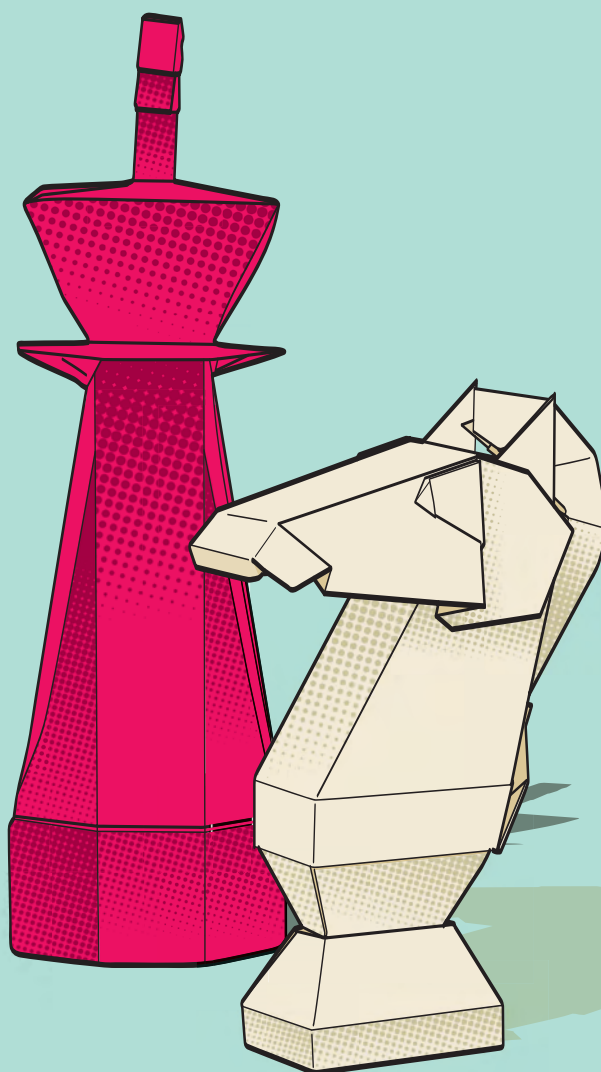
Pearson
Revise

Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)

History

**The American West,
c1835–c1895**

Revision Guide & Workbook + App



Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)

History

**The American West,
c1835–c1895****Revision Guide & Workbook + App****Series Consultant: Harry Smith****Author: Rob Bircher**

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A small bit of small print

Pearson Edexcel publishes Sample Assessment

Material and the Specification on its website.

This is the official content and this book should be used in conjunction with it. The questions in

Now try this have been written to help you

practise every topic in the book. Remember:

the real exam questions may not look like this.

Plains Indians: social and tribal structures

Many different social and tribal structures made up the peoples known as the Plains Indians. Most tribes were divided into bands, each with a chief and a council. Examples of Plains Indians tribes include the Sioux, Cheyenne and Blackfoot.

1 Bands

Most people in a band were related to each other. Bands were led by chiefs and had councils of advisers. Council members agreed everything the band did. The survival and protection of the band as a whole was seen as more important than the individuals within it.

2 Chiefs

Chiefs were chosen because of their wisdom and skills as warriors/hunters. They were rarely chiefs for life. Chiefs and councils decided where their bands would go and what should happen to those who broke with customs and traditions. But they did not have to be obeyed.

3 Tribes

Bands in the same tribe supported each other during crises. Tribal meetings of all the bands were held each year to arrange marriages, trade horses and discuss issues. Chiefs and elders formed the tribal councils that advised tribal chiefs. Some tribes (e.g. the Sioux) were part of larger groups called nations.

4 Warrior societies

The best warriors from each band formed its warrior society. Members of the warrior societies supervised hunting and protected their bands from attack. All short raids and wars were led by the warrior society and the band's council would always consult them before they made decisions.

Chiefs and leadership

Plains Indian society did not view leadership in the same way as white American society did.

- No decision could be made until everyone at the council had agreed to it.
- The rest of the tribe or band did not have to obey the decision.
- Chiefs and elders were often guided by the spirit world through visions.



Chief Sitting Bull

Consequences: The US government thought that if a chief signed a treaty, all his tribe should obey the terms of the treaty, but this was not how Plains Indian society worked. For example, chief Red Cloud signed a treaty in 1868, but many Lakota Sioux bands followed chief Sitting Bull, who opposed it.

Band roles

A band saw every member as being equally important to its survival.

- Men (braves) hunted and fought enemies. Women (squaws) made clothing, fed the family and looked after their tipi.
- Everyone looked after children, who were taught the skills of their parents.
- Elders were respected for their wisdom but were left behind to die if their weakness threatened the survival of a band.

Consequences: Traditionally, Plains Indians children were taught by many different band members, and so when the US government tried to break Indian society up into family units, or when Indian children were moved to schools far away from their tribe, it meant Indian children did not learn all the skills and traditions of their people. This had an impact on Plains Indian ways of life.

Now try this

Explain the difference between bands and tribes.

Plains Indians: survival on the Plains

The Great Plains was a very tough environment: very dry, with very hot summers and extremely cold winters. Plains Indians depended on each other, the land and animals to survive. Plains Indians relied on horses to hunt, and the buffalo was considered the most important animal for hunting.

The importance of buffalo and horses

The Indians needed buffalo and horses to survive. Buffalo lived on the Plains. Horses had been introduced by Spanish invaders. The Indians bred and traded (or even stole) them.

Catching buffalo was quicker and easier on horseback.

Every part of a buffalo (except its heart, which was left on the Plain) was used for food, clothing and equipment.

The Indians believed a buffalo's heart gave new life to a herd.

Women and children cut up the buffalo meat. It was eaten raw or cooked. Some was stored for winter (known as jerky).



Indians could not live on the Plains without horses because they would not survive.

Wealth and status were measured by how many horses an Indian or tribe had.

Horses were used in war.

Horses carried the Indians and their belongings on their journey to find buffalo.

Some Plains Indians were nomads. They ate wild fruits and plants but did not settle long enough to grow crops.

Nomadic lifestyle

Most Plains Indians followed the buffalo migrations through the summer and autumn. They had a nomadic (travelling) lifestyle in these months.

- Tipis, made of wooden poles and covered in buffalo hide, were ideal for Plains life: their coned shape protected them against strong winds, flaps provided ventilation in the summer heat and they could be taken down and packed away in minutes.
- In winter, the bands moved to sheltered valleys where they lived in wooden lodges, insulated with thick layers of soil.

Consequences: Nomadic tribes found it very difficult to live permanently on reservations because they were used to travelling and hunting freely.

Bands and survival

Bands were designed for survival on the Plains. They changed size depending on the amount of food available. When food became scarce, bands would split up and spread out so that there was more chance of everyone getting enough to eat.

Consequences: Food was scarce on the Plains, so bands often moved outside their tribe's traditional hunting grounds and into areas controlled by other tribes. Sometimes this was done by treaty with other tribes. Sometimes it caused conflict.

Plains Indians constantly raided other tribes for food, horses and people. These raids were part of the way in which the tribes survived on the Plains.

Now try this

Explain **two** ways in which horses were important to Plains Indians.

Plains Indians: beliefs

Plains Indians' beliefs about nature and property, and their attitudes to war, had significant consequences for the relationship between Indians and white Americans.

Beliefs about nature

Plains Indians believed that:

- everything in nature had a spirit and that these spirits could help humans or harm them
- humans were a part of nature and should work with the spirits of nature, rather than try to tame and control nature
- they could contact the spirit world through visions and special ritual dances.



A Mandan Indian dance for successful buffalo hunting.

Beliefs about land and property

- Plains Indians tribes had sacred areas. For the Lakota Sioux, the Black Hills, Paha Sapa, were sacred because this was where the Lakota believed their tribe originally came from.
- Indian families sometimes had their own garden plots, but generally no one owned land. For Plains Indians, land was not any one's property, and not something that one person could buy and keep just for him or herself.

Consequences: White settlers had very different views about property from Plains Indians, which led to tension and conflict.



The Black Hills of South Dakota: the most sacred place of the Lakota Sioux.

Attitudes to war

- Plains Indian society was full of conflict, but Indians had developed ways to avoid too much killing because young men were essential to each tribe's survival.
- The highest respect and prestige was given to warriors, usually young men, for counting coup: landing a blow on an enemy and getting away without being injured.
- Indian war parties would also run away if a fight turned against them.



Any blow struck against an enemy counted as a coup.

Consequences: The US Army found it difficult to fight an enemy that ran away rather than fought to the last man. They had to develop new techniques against Indian warfare.

Now try this

Why was it important for Plains Indians to minimise the numbers of warriors killed in conflicts?

US government policy and the Plains Indians

The US government was keen to expand the USA westwards, but also believed it had to keep Indians and white Americans separate to avoid conflict.

Key events, 1830–1851

Timeline

- **1830** Indian Removal Act forces Indians in eastern states to move west of the Mississippi River.
- **1834** Indian Trade and Intercourse Act sets out the frontier between the USA and Indian Territory.
- **1848** US victory in the Mexican–American War.
- **1851** Indian Appropriations Act: money allocated for setting up Indian **reservations** in modern day Oklahoma.

The US government forced 46 000 eastern Indians to give up their lands in return for new lands **west of the Mississippi River**. Whites then thought this land was worthless – the ‘Great American Desert’.

A **permanent Indian frontier** divided Indian Territory from the eastern states. Forts guarded the frontier to stop whites crossing over to settle in Indian Territory.

The situation changed when the USA gained new territories in the West. Instead of being on the western edge, Indian Territory was now sandwiched in the middle of the USA.

Government support for western expansion

- The government needed US citizens to go and live in its new territories in the West.
- This meant that people needed to be able to travel (on trails) across Indian lands.
- The US Army forced Indians to move away from trails in case Indians attacked travellers migrating from east to west.

Consequences: US policy started to change. The ‘permanent’ Indian frontier still marked the boundary with Indian lands, but now whites were allowed to cross the frontier.

The Indian Appropriation Act, 1851

By the 1850s, white Americans wanted to use parts of the lands in the West that had been given to Indians. Reservations were the solution. The government paid Indians to give up lands that whites wanted and move to smaller areas.

The Indian Appropriation Act paid for moving Indians in Indian Territory onto reservations. As well as keeping whites and Indians apart, the government hoped that reservations would help Indians learn to farm and live like white Americans. On reservations, white people could teach Indians about new ways of living. Reservations could become a way of controlling where Indians went and what they did.

Now try this

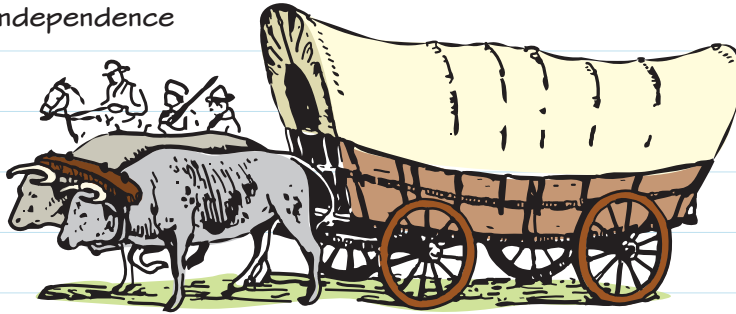
Why did the US government want Plains Indians to move to reservations?

Why move west?

You need to know the factors that encouraged migration to the West.

Pull factors for moving west

- 👍 Freedom and independence
- 👍 Fertile land
- 👍 Space
- 👍 Oregon Trail
- 👍 Gold



Push factors for moving west

- 👎 Collapse of wheat prices
- 👎 Overpopulation
- 👎 Persecution
- 👎 Unemployment

Timeline

Moving west

1825

Explorer Jedediah Smith shares discovery of the South Pass through the Rocky Mountains.

1836

The first migrants to travel the Oregon Trail by wagon reach their destination.

1837

Financial crisis causes economic depression: people lose savings, wages are cut and unemployment increases. Wheat prices fall; many farmers face ruin.

1841 Government-funded expedition maps the Oregon Trail and publishes guide book for migrants.

1846

Governor of Illinois tells Mormons to leave the state.

1848 Gold is discovered in California.

1858–59

Gold is discovered in the Rocky Mountains.

1874 Gold is discovered in the Black Hills (Dakota).

Financial panic in east USA

Boom years in the 1830s came to an end in 1837 with a financial crisis and a collapse in the price of cotton. Banks ran out of money, people lost their savings, businesses closed and many people lost their jobs. Unemployment reached 25% in some areas.

Farming crisis in the mid-west of the USA

In 1837, corn prices collapsed, leaving farmers facing ruin. This was not helped by overcrowding in this fertile farming region, in particular along the Mississippi valley. These were push factors for farmers to travel west.

Manifest Destiny

The US government needed to populate their territory in the West to defend it from foreign powers. This aim was reflected in the concept of Manifest Destiny: that it was God's will that white Americans should settle over all of America. White Americans at the time simply accepted that Manifest Destiny was right and natural.

The key skill to develop for your period studies exam is being able to use what you know about the American West to explain **consequences** or **importance**, or in a narrative account.

Now try this

Explain **one** way in which government support was important in encouraging migration to the West in the 1830s and 1840s.

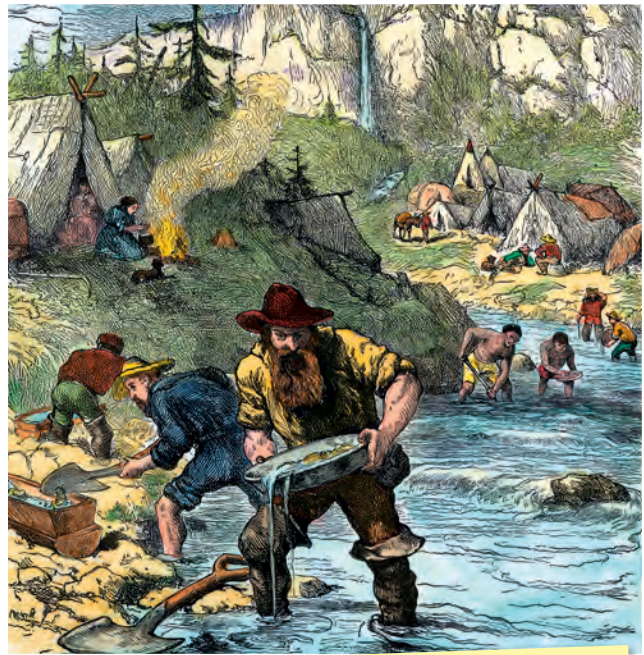
The Gold Rush of 1849

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 led to a huge increase in migration to the West, and also had significant consequences for law and order, settlement, farming and for the Plains Indians.

Who were the Gold Rush migrants?

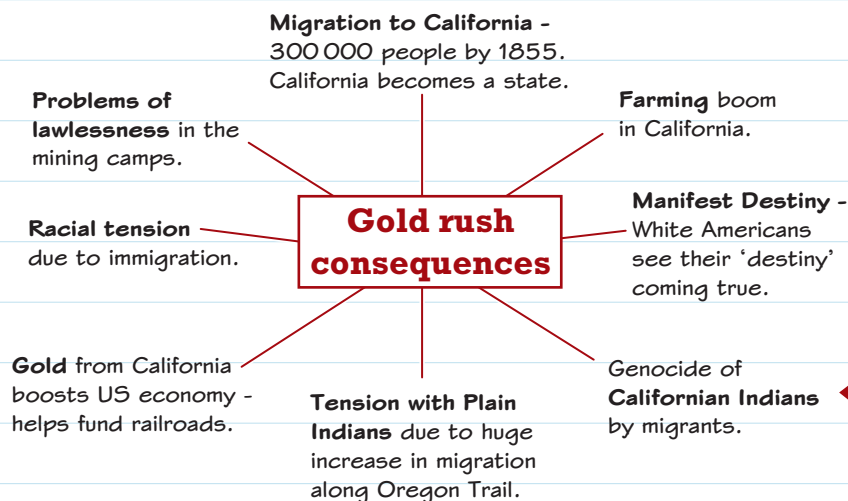
From 1849, hundreds of thousands travelled to California, hoping to find gold.

- Between 1836 and 1846 the total number of migrants using the Trail was 5000. From 1849, tens of thousands used the Trail in the hope of finding gold in the West.
- Thousands more came by ship, from all over the world, to San Francisco. A famine in China led to 20 000 Chinese people migrating to California in 1852.
- Most migrants did not find gold.
- Professional miners with the equipment and expertise to mine underground (where most of the gold was) took over through the 1850s.



Prospectors were people who looked for gold on the surface, especially in streams and river beds.

Consequences of the Gold Rush



Genocide is the deliberate killing of large numbers of people, usually because of their ethnicity. This definition fits the treatment of Californian Indians by white migrants.

Now try this

Using the diagram above to help you, explain **one** way in which the Gold Rush of 1849 was important for the development of the West.

You could focus on **one** of the following:

- The importance of the Gold Rush for the settlement of the West.
- The importance of the Gold Rush for relationships between whites and Indians.
- The importance of the Gold Rush for problems of law and order.

The Oregon Trail and the Donner Party

Those who migrated west had different experiences. There were set processes for following the Oregon Trail, to help protect migrants. The disasters of the Donner Party migration show what could happen when those processes were not followed.

The journey west

The journey west began at Independence, Missouri. Here, wagon trains (usually made up of 20 wagons or more) gathered for the trip, which took eight to nine months.

The Oregon Trail was 3200 km long – or 3800 km for those using it to go on to California.

Migrants needed to complete the journey before winter or risk getting stuck in the mountains.

Crossing the Great Plains was made dangerous by: sandstorms, quicksand, extreme heat, storms, disease, stampeding buffalo, hostile Indians and a lack of supplies.



Migrants began the Trail in April when there would be enough grass for their animals.

Migrants needed to take enough food for the entire journey: a lot of salt pork!

Early migrants used explorers or Indians as guides; later ones relied on pamphlets.

Each trail crossed two mountain ranges: the Rockies, and either the Blue Mountains or the Sierra Nevada. They were steep, there was little to hunt, and the weather could be bad. Wagons were hauled across using chains, ropes and pulleys. Injuries were common.

The Donner Party

The Donner Party, led by Jacob and George Donner, left Missouri for California in May 1846 with 60 wagons and 300 people.

- This wagon train was well equipped but had more women, elderly people and children than normal.
- At Fort Bridger, a smaller group of about 80 people tried to take a 'short cut' (they were using a leaflet for guidance).
- Four wagons broke, 300 cattle died and one man killed another.
- They arrived late in the Sierra Nevada and were trapped by heavy snow.
- A group, sent for help, took 32 days to reach Johnson's Ranch.
- To survive, both groups ate their dead. Rescue parties found them in January 1847.



A 19th century woodcut of the stranded Donner party.

Now try this

Write a narrative account of the Donner Party migration, analysing why things went so badly wrong for the 'short cut' group.

Turn to pages 36–37 to find out more about writing narrative accounts.

The Mormon migration

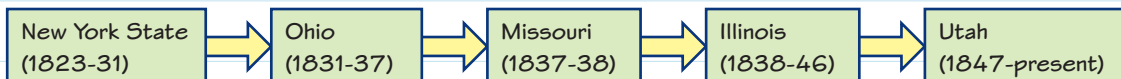
The experience of the Mormon migration of 1846–47 shows how one group of migrants was able to deal with the challenges of migration through detailed organisation, religious motivation and hard work.

Joseph Smith

Smith founded the Church of Latter-Day Saints – whose followers are known as Mormons. His persuasive public speaking meant numbers grew to several hundred by 1830. He taught Mormons to obey him because he said his decisions were inspired by God. He was murdered in Illinois in 1844.



Moving from state to state



Journey to the Great Salt Lake

When Smith died, Brigham Young became leader. In 1846, the Mormons' persecution in Illinois forced him and 1500 others to find land that no one else wanted – near the Great Salt Lake. To make the journey, he:

- split everyone into groups, each with a leader
- gave everyone a specific role
- taught them how to form their wagons into a circle for safety
- insisted on discipline and regular rest.

His was the first of many Mormon wagon trains to make the 2250 km journey.

Comparing the Donner Party and the Mormon migration

In 1847, Young led an advance party along the route taken by some of the Donner Party in 1846. However, while the Donner Party group had trusted in a pamphlet, Young had carefully researched the route in advance. While the Donners ran out of food, Young's party had enough food for a year. While the Donner Party had many older and young people, Young's advance group of 150 was specially chosen with the skills to pick out the best route, improve the trail and mark out water sources and grass for the animals. All this prepared the way for the next wagon train of 1500 Mormons. Between 1847 and 1869, 70 000 Mormons followed the 'Mormon Trail'.

Why were the Mormons successful in Utah?

Their religious faith encouraged them to work very hard and prevented them giving up in the face of terrible hardship.

Brigham Young was in control and made good decisions.

The Mormon Church owned all land, water and timber, which were allocated to families. Towns ran efficiently.



Salt Lake City

They dug irrigation ditches which meant farm land had enough water.

A Perpetual Emigration Fund provided the resources to help thousands of Mormons to emigrate to Utah.

Young organised settlers so that each new town had the right mix of skills to survive and prosper.

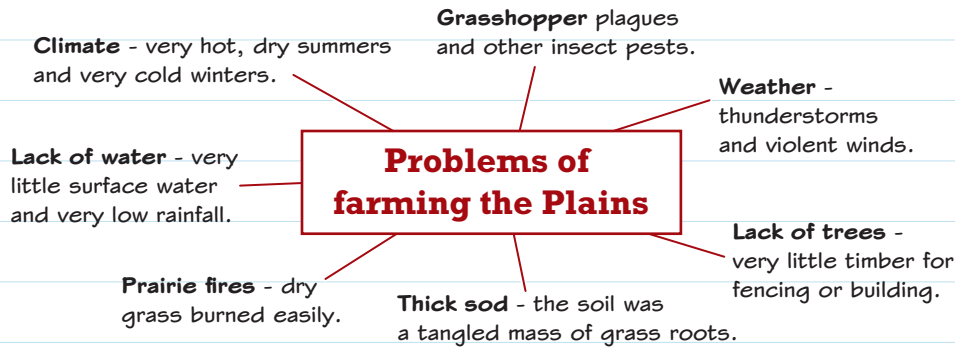
Now try this

Identify **six** key events in the Mormon migration and connect them with sentences beginning like this:

As a result... Because... One consequence of this was that... This led to...

Problems of farming the Plains

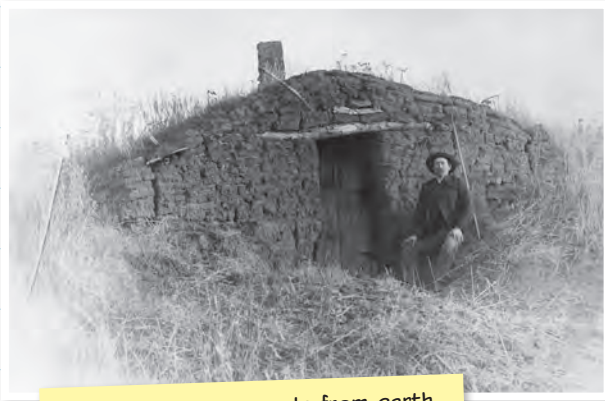
Settlers found many different problems in farming new lands in the West, but farming on the Plains was particularly challenging.



Dealing with a lack of timber

Due to a lack of trees to build with, settlers lived in caves and sod houses made from earth.

- The thick walls and roof were good insulation in winter.
- The earth walls and roof were fireproof, giving protection from prairie fires.
- However, sod houses were impossible to keep clean and were full of insects.



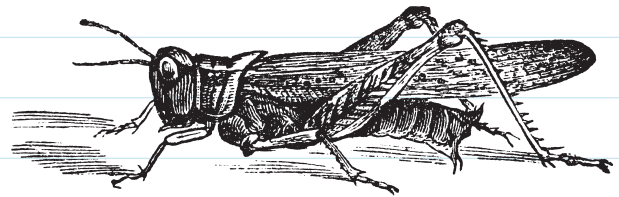
Sod houses were made from earth.

The lack of wood for fencing meant that settlers had to pay large amounts of money to import timber to fence their claims. This made homesteading expensive until 1874, when barbed wire was introduced as a cheap alternative to wooden fences.

A tough environment

The conditions for farming on the Plains were quite different from conditions in the East.

- Crops that did well in the East shrivelled up and died from lack of water, or were eaten by insect infestations, such as grasshopper swarms.



A Rocky Mountain grasshopper.

- Ploughs that worked in the East broke when farmers tried to use them to plough through the thick sod of the Plains.
- At first, settlers had to dig up the sod with spades, which was backbreaking work.

In California and Oregon, on the West coast, conditions for farming were much better. By the 1850s, Californian farmers were growing so much wheat they began exporting it worldwide.

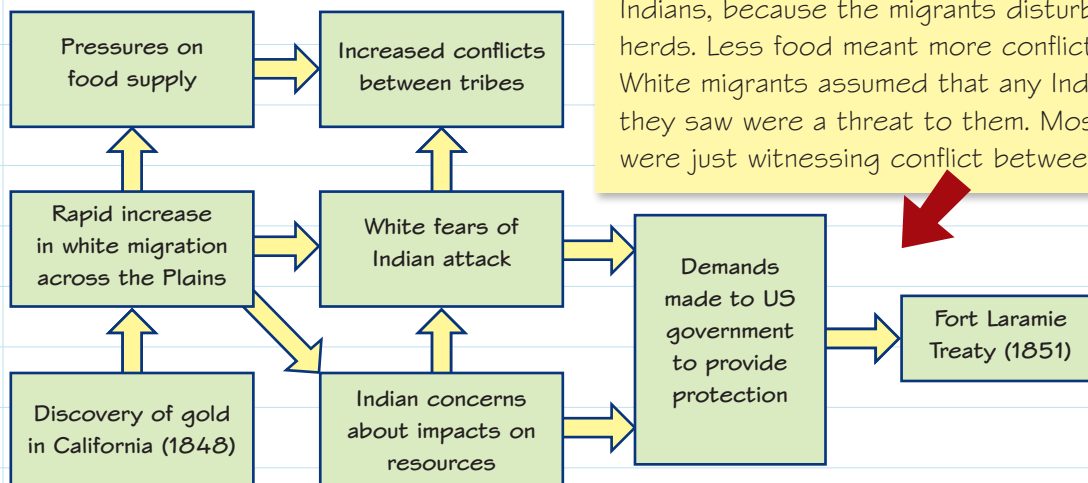
Now try this

Explain why settlers on the Plains built houses out of sods or lived in caves.

The Fort Laramie Treaty, 1851

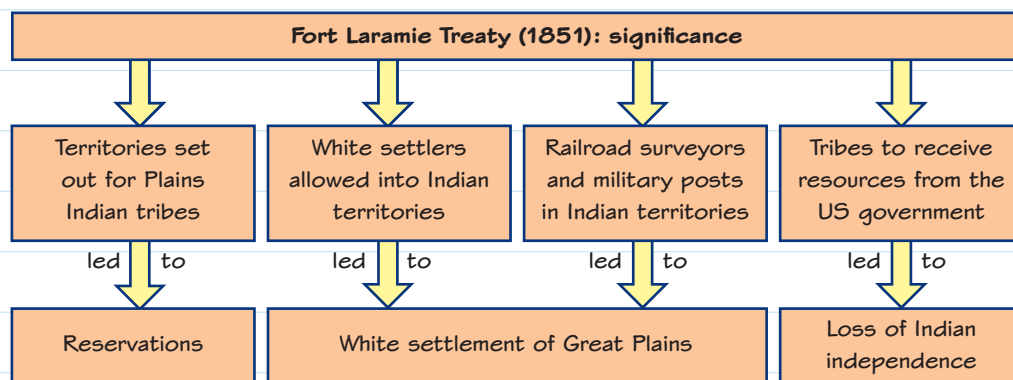
As the numbers of migrants using the Oregon Trail to cross Indian lands grew, tensions increased between white settlers and Plains Indians. Migrants demanded Army protection, which led to the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851.

Reasons for tension between settlers and Plains Indians



The huge increase in migrants along the Oregon Trail increased pressures on food supplies for Plains Indians, because the migrants disturbed the buffalo herds. Less food meant more conflicts between tribes. White migrants assumed that any Indian war parties they saw were a threat to them. Mostly, though, they were just witnessing conflict between tribes.

The significance of the Fort Laramie Treaty (1851)



The Plains Indians tribes involved in the Treaty agreed to its terms in return for an annuity (yearly payment) of \$50 000. This annuity became a lever for the US government to use against the Indians, and had the consequence of starting to encourage dependence of some Plains Indians on the government for food, resulting in a loss of Indian independence.

In the Fort Laramie Treaty, the US government prioritised the needs of white settlers over the previous commitments it had made about Indian lands in the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834. White settlement in the West increased because the Treaty allowed for safe passage of white settlers along the Oregon Trail. It also meant there was no longer a permanent Indian frontier between the eastern states of the USA and the Plains Indians. These changes meant that there could be reservations in the future.

Now try this

Use the diagram above on the significance of the Fort Laramie Treaty (1851) to explain **two** consequences of the Treaty.

Lawlessness!

Lawlessness did not mean that there were no laws in the West, but that law enforcement was stretched too thin to make sure the law was being obeyed and that law-breakers were punished.



The main cause of lawlessness was such rapid rises in population that existing law enforcement could not cope.

Common issues

- Mining camps were usually isolated in the mountains, a long way from the reach of the law.
- Mining camps were almost all-male, and violence was fuelled by alcohol, bad luck at card games and fights over women.
- Prejudice against Chinese immigrants and other racism increased crime.
- Outlaws and conmen targeted miners who did make money, and swindled those who failed to strike it lucky.
- New crimes: claim jumping was when one man took over a promising claim made by someone else. Miners' courts were sometimes set up to help settle claims.

San Francisco gangs

- San Francisco's population grew rapidly with the Gold Rush: by 1849, it had grown from a small town of 1000 people to a population of 25 000.
- Very few prospectors found gold, and San Francisco quickly filled with unemployed, disappointed migrants.
- As more Chinese immigrants came to the city, racial tensions increased.
- By 1851, gangs had formed and were out of control in San Francisco. The few local policemen were unable to cope (and the gangs bribed many of them). Murder, violence and theft were commonplace.
- With no effective law enforcement available, citizens of San Francisco set up a vigilance committee to control the gang violence of 1851. The idea of vigilance committees spread to mining camps.



A famine in China led to a huge increase in Chinese immigration to San Francisco: 20 000 came in 1852. Chinese people were banned from working new claims, but even when their hard work meant they found gold overlooked by whites, whites would often steal it from them. Courts actively discriminated against Chinese people.

Key terms

- ✓ **Vigilance committee (vigilantes)** – a group of ordinary citizens that decides to punish suspected lawbreakers itself, instead of relying on the official justice system (usually because that system is inadequate).

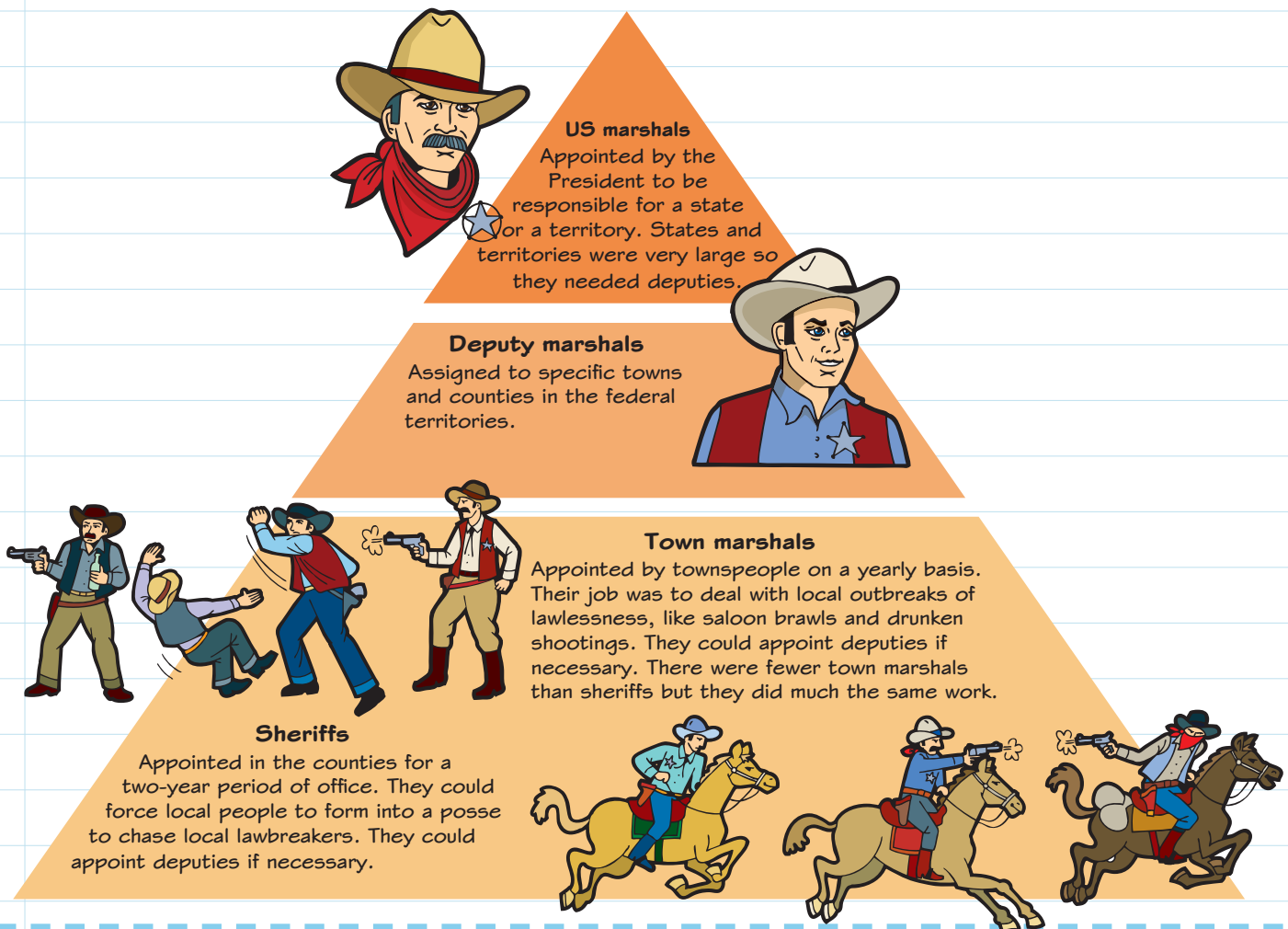
- ✓ **Miners' courts** – miners set up their own courts to settle disputes over claims. The camp usually selected a respected older miner to be the judge.

Now try this

Identify **two** ways in which local communities in the West tried to tackle lawlessness.

Sheriffs and marshals

The federal government (government of the whole USA) tried to tackle lawlessness in the West, but there were many problems to overcome.



Federal control of law and order

- When a territory reached a population of 60 000, it could become a state with its own state legal system.
- Until it became a state, the federal government was in charge of the territory.
- The federal government decided on the laws for the territory and appointed a governor, three judges for court cases and a federal marshal (US marshal) for law enforcement.
- Once a territory had a population of 5000, communities could elect a sheriff. Sheriffs carried out law enforcement for a county.

Federal law and order problems

- Geography: territories were huge areas with scattered settlements. It would be days before news of trouble reached the US marshal, then days before any response could be made.
- The federal government did not spend much money on law enforcement, and law officers were poorly paid. This made corruption (e.g. taking bribes) much more likely.
- Sheriffs were mainly chosen for their ability to keep the peace (stop fights). They had no legal training and often their decisions were not very fair. This led to resentments.
- Settlers often disliked federal government and wanted nothing to do with its laws.

Now try this

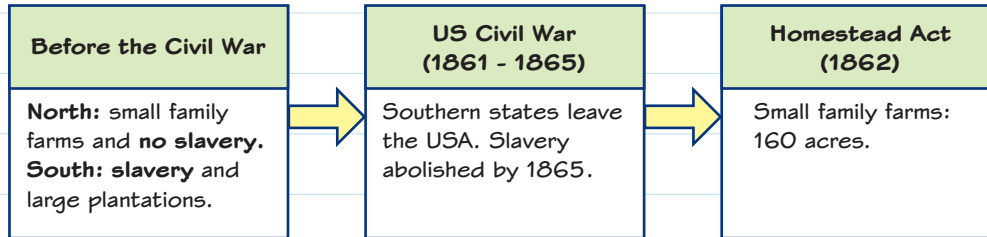
Identify **two** ways in which the federal government tried to bring law and order to the West.

‘Identify’ means you state the point: no need to describe or explain.

The Homestead Act, 1862

The Civil War was significant because it changed America and led to a new wave of settlement in the West. Post-war reconstruction was important. One consequence of the American Civil War was the Homestead Act of 1862. This provided incentives for people to take up unclaimed land in the West and build a new life there.

Before the American Civil War, the southern states blocked plans to give away family-sized farm plots in the West: they wanted to promote large plantation farms worked by slaves. When the southern states split from the USA (up until 1865), the Homestead Act could be passed into law.



Could YOU be a homesteader?

Are you the head of a family or single and over 21 years of age?

(Women and former slaves ARE included – but no Indians and Confederate soldiers.)

Are you single and under 21 but fought for the victorious US Army in the Civil War?

Do you have \$10 to pay to file your claim?

Then 160 acres of land is yours to claim.

Work the land for five years and it becomes your property for a further payment of \$30.

Aims of the Homestead Act

The US government wanted to encourage the settlement of the West by individual family farmers. It did not want rich landowners buying up all the land in the West. That is why:

- the land was available very cheaply
- most American citizens (or would-be American citizens) could file a claim for land
- homesteaders had to be able to prove they had lived on the land and improved it
- homesteaders weren't allowed more than one claim.

Homestead Act (1862): consequences

Over **6 million acres** of federal land was homesteaded by **1876**.

80 million acres was homesteaded by the end of the Act (1930s).

The promise of free land was an important pull factor for **immigration** to the USA.

Significant in encouraging white settlement of the **Plains**: especially **Nebraska**: half all settled land in Nebraska was homesteaded.

Limitations

- There was a high dropout in homesteading: 60 per cent of claims were never 'proved up', often because of problems farming the Plains. The plots were too small for the dry Plains environment.

- The government gave 300 million acres to railroad companies, who sold it to settlers. This was more influential than the Homestead Act in settling the West.
- Despite the government's aims, rich landowners found lots of ways to buy up land using the Homestead Act.

Now try this

Explain **one** way in which the American Civil War was important in the settlement of the West.

The First Transcontinental Railroad, 1869

The Pacific Railroad Act (1862) provided the incentives for private companies to build the first transcontinental railroad (1869).

Railroads would enable troops to be moved around to control Indian uprisings.

Railroads would allow all Americans to keep in touch, creating national unity.

Railroads would help to fulfil white Americans' Manifest Destiny by making it easier to migrate and secure more areas of the country.

Why did the US government need railroads to connect the east and west coasts?



Railroads would let federal law officers reach new settlements that were having problems with law and order.

Railroads would promote the settlement of the West.

Railroads would transport goods to ports in Oregon and California, which were well positioned to trade with the Far East.

The Pacific Railroad Act (1862)

The southern states had blocked the proposed route of the first transcontinental railroad (Omaha to Sacramento) because it benefited the North, not the South. So, the Pacific Railroad Act could not be passed until the southern states temporarily left the Union in 1861.

The Pacific Railroad Act granted the enormous job of building the first transcontinental railroad to two companies: the **Union Pacific** and the **Central Pacific**.

Government support

There was massive federal financial support for the First Transcontinental Railroad:

- \$61 million in loans (\$16 000 for every mile of track laid; \$48 000 per mile in the mountains)
- 45 million acres of free land for the railroad companies to sell to settlers.

The government also agreed treaties with Plains Indians along the route to move them away to new reservations.



The First Transcontinental Railroad was completed at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869.

How did railroads

promote settlement?

By 1880, the railroad companies had settled 200 million acres in the West.

- 👍 Railroad companies sold plots of land along their routes and set up towns at railheads.
- 👍 Railroad 'Bureaus of Immigration' sent agents to Europe to persuade immigrants to 'come West' and buy their land.
- 👍 The railroad companies used effective marketing to sell the idea of settling in the West.

Now try this

As part of the reconstruction that followed the Civil War, railroads were developed across America. Identify **three** impacts that railroads had on the development of the Plains.

Homesteaders: finding solutions

The period 1862–76 saw the development of different technological solutions to some of the problems of farming the Plains, as well as different farming methods. However, many of these solutions did not become widespread in the Plains until the 1880s and 1890s.

Problems	Explanation	Solutions
Lack of timber (not many trees on the Plains)	There was nothing to build houses with.	People built sod houses made from blocks of earth.
	There was nothing to make fences to contain cattle and protect crops from animals.	In 1874, Joseph Glidden invented barbed wire, which was quick and cheap to erect.
	There was nothing to use for cooking and heating.	Women collected dried buffalo and cattle dung, which was used for fuel.
Lack of water	There was low rainfall and few rivers and lakes.	Drills were developed to find underground water, then wind pumps built to bring it to the surface.
Hard, arid land (crops wouldn't grow)	Ploughs often broke going through deep-rooted grass.	Mass-produced and stronger machinery from eastern factories helped cultivate land more easily.
	Low rainfall prevented growth of crops like maize and wheat, which farmers were used to growing back east.	New techniques like dry farming (which conserved rainwater) were used. Migrants from Russia used Turkey Red wheat, which thrived on the Plains.
Natural disasters (prairie fires and pests destroyed crops)	Pests, such as grasshoppers, could destroy a whole season's crop. Fire spread quickly and burned everything.	There were no solutions. Homesteaders could be bankrupted by such disasters.
Land holdings were too small	The 160 acres allocated in the Homestead Act could not support the average family.	The Timber Culture Act 1873 let homesteaders have another 160 acres if they promised to plant trees on half of it. The Desert Land Act 1877 let settlers buy 640 acres of desert land cheaply.
Disease and lack of medical care (people were often ill)	Sod houses were hard to keep clean and had no sanitation.	Women cared for the sick, using their own remedies. As communities grew, doctors arrived.
Lack of education	Most homesteads were too far from towns with schools.	Women taught the young. As communities grew, single female teachers arrived and schools developed.
Isolation	Life was lonely and tough on the Plains.	Railroads improved travel and brought much-needed supplies to homesteaders. Communities worked together to build schools and churches. Women homesteaders formed valuable social networks.

Now try this

Explain how the Timber Culture Act (1873) aimed to reduce the problems of farming the Plains.

More problems for law and order

The Civil War and the railroads added to pressures on law and order in the West.

The impact of the Civil War



Wounded Civil War soldiers: the war made it difficult for many to fit back into 'regular' society.

The American Civil War had a significant impact on lawlessness in the West because:

- young men from the defeated southern states often resented the victorious US government and its laws
- large numbers of young men had been traumatised by the experience of the war and found it hard to fit in to 'regular' society
- the war devastated the South's economy, leaving many without jobs.

The impact of the railroads

The new towns created by the railroads in the West were known as 'Hell on Wheels'.

- They often grew very quickly and had no local law enforcement.
- Some were 'cow towns', where cowboys, who had just been paid after weeks driving cattle, enjoyed drinking, dancing and fighting.
- 'Hell on Wheels' towns were notorious for gambling, heavy drinking and prostitution.
- Trains replaced stagecoaches for transporting valuables. This made them a target for train robbers.



A crowd greets the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad to Kansas City in this movie still.



The Pinkertons were a private detective company. Banks, railroad and stagecoach companies employed Pinkerton detectives to track down robbers and thieves, as well as to provide general advice and protection.

Tackling lawlessness

The railroads and the electric telegraph improved communication between law officers, leading to an overall increase in federal government influence. However, new settlements were still mainly left to deal with lawlessness themselves, by electing sheriffs and town marshals.

- Cow towns often passed laws banning firearms.
- Sheriffs and marshals enforced these laws by force of personality (and often with their fists).
- Gangs of outlaws were sometimes too powerful to control and intimidated whole communities into supporting them.

Now try this

- 1 What does the importance of the Pinkertons suggest about lawlessness in the West?
- 2 Name **one** positive impact that the railroads had for law and order in the West.

Cattle trails and cow towns

The growth in the cattle industry after the Civil War occurred as railroads provided a way to move cattle worth \$5 a head in Texas to the industrial cities of the North, which would pay \$40 a head.

Quarantine laws block Texan cattle from Missouri (1855) and Kansas (1859).	Civil War - Texans fight for Confederacy. Cattle herds run wild: 5 million cows by 1865.	Beef in high demand in northern towns and cities. Drives to Sedalia blocked because of Texas fever .	Railroad reaches Abilene , Kansas. Joseph McCoy sets up first cow town. 35 000 cows driven to Abilene.	'Beef bonanza' - investors pile in to cattle industry from around the world. Rise of the cattle barons .
1855	1861-1865	1861-1865	1867	1870s

Farmers in Missouri and Kansas, where cows had no immunity to Texas fever, blocked the long drives to Sedalia and St Louis. Texas cattle were kept out of **quarantine zones**: the settled areas of Missouri and Kansas.

Texan cattlemen were desperate to find a way to get their cattle north and east to make big profits.

The long drives from Texas to the east had been happening since the 1830s. The big development was the railroad extending west.

Abilene, the first cow town

As the railroad moved further west, it created new **railheads** outside the quarantine zones. Joseph McCoy was the first to see the potential of Abilene, but it took work to make it a success, such as:

- building stockyards and hotels in Abilene
- building a new railroad spur for loading the cattle onto railroad trucks
- extending the Chisholm Trail up to Abilene, agreeing passage through Indian Territory
- promoting the new route in Texas – McCoy spent \$5000 on marketing.

The Goodnight-Loving Trail

- Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving realised there was another market for Texan cattle: new settlements in the West.
- The first trail, in 1866, was to Fort Sumner where the government had failed to get enough supplies for Navajo Indian reservations. 800 cattle sold for \$12 000, which was four times the price of cattle in Texas.
- In 1868, Goodnight's trail extended up to Colorado (booming mining towns) and Wyoming, to the Union Pacific Railroad.
- Goodnight's success meant other cattlemen started to drive cattle to Wyoming, and Wyoming's cattle ranches began to grow.

Significance: Recognised new markets in West. Helped grow Wyoming cattle industry.

John Iliff and Plains ranching

- Iliff saw opportunities to sell meat to booming mining towns in Colorado.
- Denver, Colorado, was not on the railroad until 1870 and it was difficult to get supplies there – either over the Rockies or across the Plains.
- Iliff saw the opportunity to raise cattle on the Plains and began ranching near Denver in 1866.
- By 1870 he had a herd of 26 000 cattle on the Plains, on a ranch stretching over 16 000 acres.
- Iliff became Denver's first millionaire by selling his beef to miners, Indian reservations and railroad worker gangs.

Significance: First to raise cattle on the Plains. The start of ranching on the **open range** of the Great Plains.

Now try this

McCoy, Iliff and Goodnight were cattle barons. Explain why cattle barons were important in the growth of the cattle industry.

Cattle barons were rich, powerful men who controlled the cattle industry.

Changing roles for cowboys

Cowboys were often tough loners who worked hard and had a wild lifestyle.

What they wore

The hat (Stetson) gave protection from the sun, rain and cold.

The bandana, pulled over the nose and mouth, gave protection from dust when driving cattle.

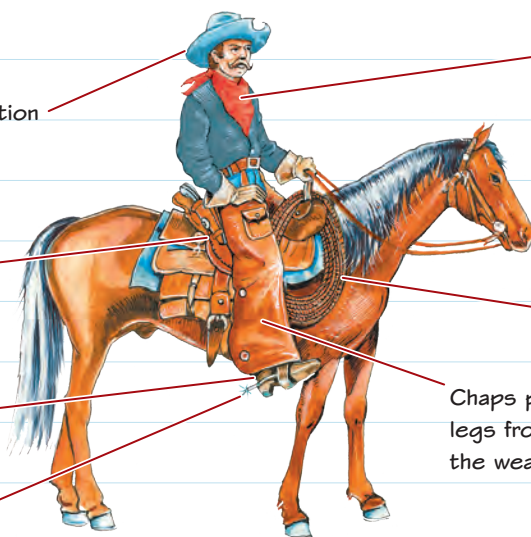
A saddle was a cowboy's most important possession.

A lariat or lasso was used to catch cattle.

High-heeled boots meant their feet couldn't slip through stirrups.

Chaps protected cowboys' legs from vegetation and the weather.

Spurs were worn at all times.



Who were they?

Cowboys were mostly young single men. They were black American, Indian, Spanish and Mexican as well as white American. Many were former soldiers or drifters. Some were criminals on the run.

What were they like?

Cowboys were tough, hard-working and often hard-drinking. On long trails they could ride for between 12 and 24 hours a day in all weathers. Cowboys on the same cattle drive often worked miles apart, so life could be lonely.

A changing role

Cowboys on trails	Cowboys on ranches
Work was seasonal, from spring round-up to the long drive in the autumn.	Work was year-round and full-time, but fewer were needed.
Work included rounding up, branding and driving cattle hundreds of miles. They also looked out for sick and injured cattle. They started fast, then slowed to about 20 km a day for grazing.	Work included rounding up, branding and driving to market, but over much smaller distances. They also checked ranch boundaries, mended fences and looked out for sick and injured cattle.
Dangers included stampeding cattle, wild animals, crossing rivers and quicksand, rustlers, hostile Indians and extreme weather.	Dangers were fewer than on trails, but rustlers, wild animals and Indian attacks were still threats.
They slept in the open air and cooked on campfires.	They slept in bunkhouses and used cookhouses.
In their free time, cowboys might visit saloons and brothels in cow towns.	Drinking, gambling, guns and knives were banned. Many struggled to adapt to this lifestyle.

Now try this

List reasons why the role of cowboys changed between 1862 and 1876.

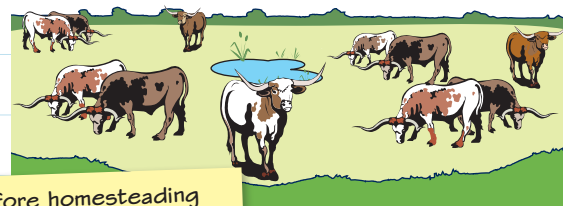
Ranchers vs homesteaders

As the development of the Plains increased, so too did rivalry over how the Plains were to be used. Ranchers needed a lot of public land, which homesteaders wanted to claim for themselves.

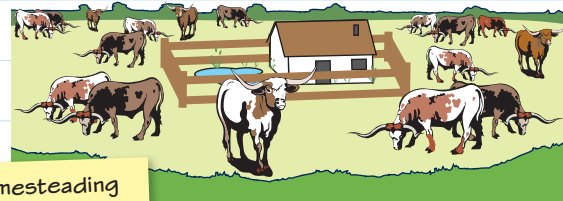
Ranching's reliance on public land

Open-range ranching needed a lot of land in order that large herds of cattle could roam around and have enough to eat. Federal law said everyone could pasture livestock on public land for free, and that is what the ranchers did. They divided up the open range between ranches and only bought a few plots here and there.

The problems came when homesteaders began filing claims to turn 160-acre plots of public land into homesteads.



Before homesteading

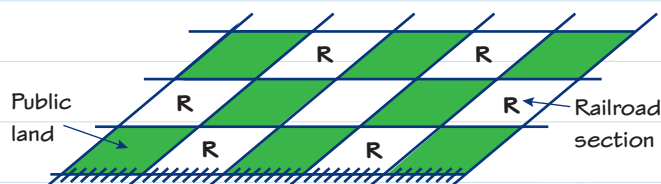


After homesteading

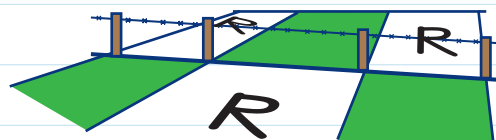
Blocking the homesteaders

Ranchers used different tactics to block homesteaders from taking up claims to 'their' public land. Three of these were:

- 1 Filing homestead claims themselves to all the parts of the range that homesteaders might be interested in.
- 2 Buying and fencing just enough land to block off access to other plots.
- 3 Taking homesteaders to court over rights to the land, knowing that homesteaders were too poor to pay court fees.



Railroad companies and public land were mixed in checkerboard sections.



Ranchers bought railroad sections and fenced them to block access to public lands.

Fences make bad neighbours

As farming spread across the Plains, farmers and ranchers argued over fencing.

- Farmers said ranchers should fence their land to stop cattle roaming onto crops.
- Ranchers said their cattle had a right to roam; that fencing was the farmers' responsibility, and they should not harm their cattle.
- Arguments over fencing ended up in state court cases. Outside the courts, tension between ranchers and homesteaders was common. Sometimes this turned into open conflict.



Rivalry between cattlemen and sheep farmers led to range wars. Both sides relied on public land for grazing. Cattlemen used wire to fence off pasture, but sheep farmers cut the wire. Cattlemen led raids, killing hundreds of sheep.

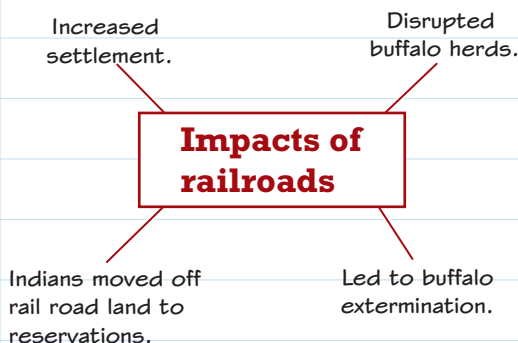
Now try this

Explain why **one** consequence of the Homestead Act was conflict between ranchers and farmers.

Impacts on the Plains Indians

The expansion of the railroad, the growing cattle industry and gold prospecting all increased the pressures on Plains Indians' traditional way of life. The resources they depended on, which were already depleted, were shrinking as white America expanded from the east, west and south.

The impacts of railroads

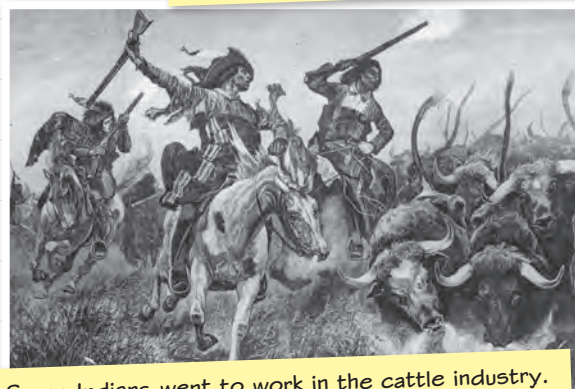


- Railroads disrupted the buffalo migrations through settled areas because of the noise of the trains and the fencing of railroad tracks. Railroads also contributed to the extermination of the buffalo.
- Railroads were funded by land grants that the railroad companies sold to settlers. Railroads encouraged settlement of the Plains.
- Railroads and reservations: the government persuaded tribes to give up lands along railroad routes and move to reservations.

Find out more about the extermination of the buffalo on page 30.

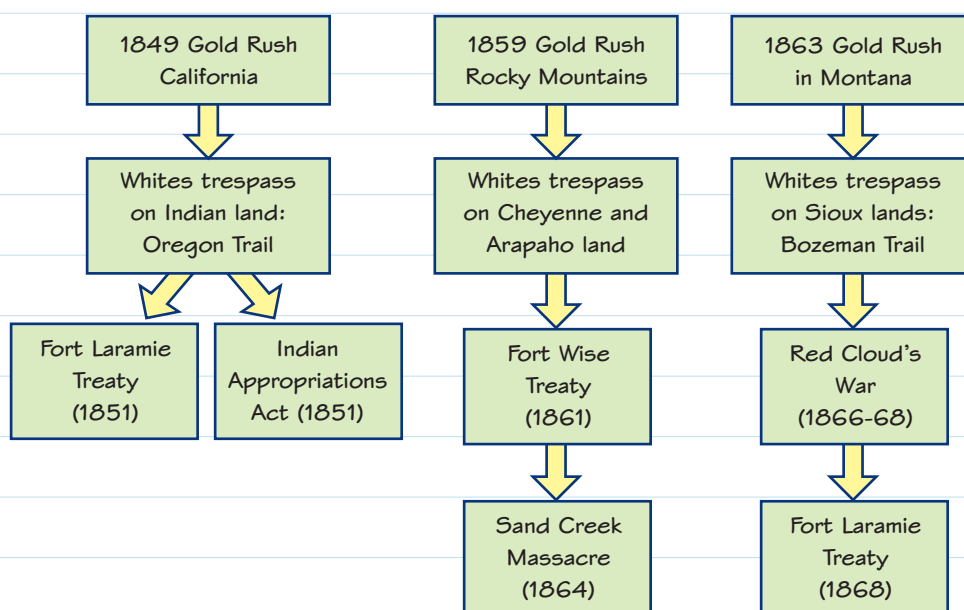
Impacts of the cattle industry

- Cattle and buffalo competed for the same grass, so, as cattle numbers increased, buffalo herds were put under pressure. The number of cattle in the West increased from 130 000, in 1860, to 4.5 million, in 1880.
- Cattle trails often crossed Indian lands. In Indian Territory, the tribes allowed this in return for a fee, but in the southwest the Comanche did not allow it and attacked cowboys, leading to tensions and US Army retaliation attacks.



Some Indians went to work in the cattle industry. Buffalo hunting skills were similar to skills for herding cattle on horseback.

Impacts of gold prospecting for the Plains Indians



Now try this

Use the diagram above to explain the impacts of gold prospecting for the Plains Indians.