

# American West Core Knowledge

## 1. Plains Indians' society

<p><b>Chiefs</b> led Indian society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some tribes had more than 1 chief so they could concentrate on doing different jobs</li><li>• Tribes were divided into bands</li><li>• <i>Red Cloud</i> was a famous Lakota Sioux chief. <i>Sitting Bull</i> and <i>Crazy Horse</i> were also famous Sioux chiefs</li></ul>	<p><b>Women</b> could not be chiefs but could work with council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Polygamy (men having more than one wife) was normal</li><li>• Women were responsible for the tipi and ensuring they had enough to eat</li><li>• Women also helped to turn buffalo hides and meat into products to use or trade</li></ul>
<p><b>The Elderly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Were strongly respected for their advice and wisdom</li><li>• They preserved the history of the tribe by passing down stories and songs.</li><li>• They also helped to raise the children.</li></ul>	<p><b>Warrior Brotherhoods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Were groups of strong and skilled fighters</li><li>• In the Lakota Sioux brotherhoods included the <i>White Horse Riders</i> and the <i>Strong Hearts</i>.</li></ul>

## 2. Plains Indians Beliefs

<p><b>Beliefs about land and property</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Land was seen as sacred (very important) farming the land they felt was disrespectful to the <i>Great Spirit</i>. They felt it would disrupt the spirits of the earth.</li><li>• Indians believed nobody had the right to own land as all of it belonged to the spirits</li></ul>	<p><b>Beliefs about nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indians believe everything had a spirit. They believed people should work with these spirits rather than trying to tame them.</li><li>• They believed ritual dancing, such as the sun dance, could help them enter the spirit world.</li></ul>
<p><b>Beliefs about war</b></p> <p>However, because they could not afford to lose warriors they had several ways to limit the number of fighters killed or injured in battle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Raids were strategic - the aim was to get what you needed and then leave.</li><li>- Only some warriors would go on each raid, leaving some to protect the tribe</li><li>- Warriors could show bravery by NOT killing one another, but instead touching or stealing a horse from an enemy warrior - this was called counting coup.</li></ul>	

## 3. Indian Survival on the Plains

## **Nomadic Lifestyle**

- Plains Indians moved around, following the buffalo and escaping the harshest weather
- In the warmer months they lived in tipis made of around 10-20 buffalo skins

## **Importance of horses**

- Transport
- Hunting and warfare
- They counted their wealth by the number of horses they owned
- Helped them to live a NOMADIC lifestyle

## **Importance of buffalo**

- Plains Indians organised their life around the buffalo.
- Buffalo hide could be made into clothes, covers or tipis. In this way the buffalo provided coverings to keep them warm and was also used to make their homes.
- Dried buffalo dung was fuel
- Buffalo sinews were used as bow strings.

## **4. Early Government policies**

### **Permanent Indian Frontier' (1834)**

- Indian Territory was west of the Mississippi river. The divide between Indian was known as The 'Permanent Indian Frontier'.
- White settlers were banned from living on this land, and from trading guns or alcohol with Indians.
- These laws were policed by the US Army who were also supposed to prevent violence between Indians or between Indians and white settlers.

### **The Indian Appropriations Act (1851)**

- This provided money to pay for moving Indians in Indian territory onto reservations instead.
- Hunting lands were allocated to some reservations, so the Indians could continue to hunt buffalo and other animals.
- It allowed the government to move Indians away from land that the white people wanted to use.
- They also reduced the land available for hunting which the government hoped would encourage the Indians to take up farming and to live like white Americans.

## **Fort Laramie Treaty (1851)**

### **Causes**

Growing tension between settlers and Indians.

### **Why was the treaty important:**

- Indian Tribes would not fight among themselves
- Indians would allow migrants, railroad workers, and the US army to travel freely in their lands

- Tribes would pay compensation if any member broke the treaty
- The government would protect Indians from migrants and settlers
- Tribes would be paid \$50,000 per year

### **Consequences of the treaty**

- The treaty was a step towards confining tribes on reservations
- They became reliant on government handouts.
- It gave white migrants the right to move and settle in the West.
- Many Indians did not agree to or follow the treaty

## **5. Westward Migration**

### **Reasons for migration**

**Economic:** 1937 Economic crisis. People moved west to find work.

**Gold: 1848-9** gold was discovered in California. Many people hoped to become rich by mining gold

**Manifest Destiny:** this was the belief that God wanted Americans to populate the entire continent and so migrants were doing His will

**Freedom:** Persecuted religious groups, including the Mormons wanted more freedom and independence

### **Importance of the Pacific Railroad Act**

- The railroad led to a huge increase in Westward migration as they made it faster, safer, and less isolating.
- It allowed people to trade and get supplies easily
- The railroad companies also put a lot of effort into encouraging migration
- It disrupted the Native Americans nomadic way of life

### **The Oregon Trail**

The sea-route to Oregon was very expensive. The first land pass, the Oregon Trail, was publicised in 1825

In 1841 the US government provided \$30,000 for an expedition to map the Oregon Trail and publish reports that would help migrants

By 1869 400,000 people had migrated along the Oregon Trail

### **The Civil War**

#### **Consequences**

Many former soldiers migrated to the west, this caused problems for law and order

Some freed slaves travelled to the West hoping for a better life. Traditional racist attitudes meant that many white settlers were unhappy to have African Americans living freely alongside them. This caused tension

During the war, the US government was able to pass 2 very important laws which had previously been blocked by opposition from the southern states:

-**The Homestead Act (May 1862):** aimed at settlement the west with individual farms owned and worked by free men and women

-**The Pacific Railroad Act (July 1862):** aimed at developing connections between the new lands of the west and the northern industrial cities

**The Homestead Act** aimed to encourage settlement in the West by ordinary and poorer families by making land affordable

### What the law introduced

- Families could claim **160 acre 'homesteads'**. This was meant to be enough land to support a family. **This cost just \$10**
- Once someone had lived on a homestead for **5 years**, built a house, and planted 5 acres of crops they could **'prove up'**

### Consequences

- By 1876 over 6 million acres of land had become homesteads
- Eventually 80 million acres would be
- However, 60% were never 'proved up'
- Not successful: 300million were granted to railroad companies and rest sold at higher prices mostly to cattle ranchers

## Problems farming on the Plains

**Low Rainfall** There were also frequent droughts. This made it too dry to grow many crops or to keep animals alive

**Few Trees** The land was too dry for many trees to grow. This meant that there was not enough wood to build houses or fences, or to burn to heat homes and cook with

**Climate Extremes** The Plains had very hot summers and very cold winters. Hailstorms, thunderstorms were also common. All of these extremes made living on the plains uncomfortable and dangerous

## Solving farmers' problems

**New inventions** The Wind pump could draw water from wells up to 30 feet deep

**Barbed wire** in 1874 meant that farmers could build cheap, effective fences to protect crops

The Sulky Plough was strong enough to pull up tough prairie grasses

**Dry farming** an experimental technique used to trap water in the soil

**The Timber Culture Act (1873)** allowed homesteaders to claim an additional 160 acres of land as long as they used one quarter of it to plant trees. By 1878 16million acres had been claimed

## 6. Early law and order problems

### Reasons for lawlessness

- New migrant towns had little formal law enforcement
- Violence was used to solve problems
- It was not illegal to shoot someone in self defence, including as part of a fight
- The racial and social diversity of the west led to many conflicts

**Crimes** Some of the most common crimes were:

-Bank Robbery (the James-Younger gang)

-Claim Jumping (stealing land where there might be gold or silver to mine)

-Horse Stealing

-Racial attacks

-Shootings (between 1866 and 1900, 20,000 people died due to shootings)

### Attempts at solving law and order problems

- The US government would appoint a governor, judges, and a US marshal for each territory to make all the decisions

- **Sheriffs** were locally elected and were usually chosen for their ability to fight
- **Mining camps** would write down their own rules and enforce them internally
- **Vigilance Committees** were gangs who would hunt down and punish suspected criminals

## 7. Changes to Indians' lives

### **The impact of the railroads**

- Land grants took land away from the tribes and reduced grazing for buffalo
- Settlers and railwaymen built fences blocking buffalo movements and disrupting hunts
- Most significantly, railroads enabled the extermination of the buffalo by hunters

### **The impact of the Cattle Industry**

- Cattle and buffalo had the same diet: grass. Therefore, as cattle increased, buffalo numbers declined
- As buffalo became hard to find, some Indians went to work in the cattle industry
- This was much more of a settled way of life, which took Indians away from their traditional lifestyles

### **The impact of gold prospecting**

- Gold prospectors had murdered Indians as well as forcibly removing tribes,
- Men from all over the world brought new diseases that devastated Indian populations.
- Gold prospecting was the main reason for the Fort Laramie treaty of 1851, to protect migrants using the Oregon trail

### **The Growth of Reservations**

As more white Americans moved to the Plains, Indians were forced into reservations. Promised protection and government support, many resisted fiercely being forced onto reservations

### **Importance of reservations**

- The government hoped reservations would force Indians to act more like white Americans.
- Reservations were usually on poor quality land making farming nearly impossible and leaving Indians reliant on government hand-outs
- Bureau of Indian Affairs agents in control of reservations were often corrupt

### **The importance of President Grant's Peace Policy (1868)**

- Replacing corrupt reservation agents with religious men, especially Quakers, whom it was felt would be more fair
- Appointing Ely Parker, an Indian as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He believed that Indians should be treated as "helpless wards" with no right to make their own decisions as this would force the government to care for them. The Indian Appropriations Act (1871) followed this idea and had a devastating impact
- Putting forward a budget of \$2million to help Indians on reservations

## 8. Conflict with the Plains Indians

## Little Crow's War (1862) - After Fort Laramie, 600 white people killed

### Events

- Little Crow was a chief of a band of the Dakota Sioux. In 1851, they moved to reservations in return for money from the US government
- The government did not pay the money, claiming debts to traders had to be paid off first
- The reservation was too small and the land too poor so they were **starving**
- Indian warriors took food and provisions from the warehouses and burnt the buildings. They then attacked settlers' towns and army forts
- **600 white people were killed, including women and children**

### Consequences

- As US troops arrived, **Little Crow and his followers fled**. 400 Dakota warriors were caught and put on trial, and most were sentenced to death
- 38 men were killed
- They were **moved to the Crow Creek Reservations many starved to death**

## The Sand Creek Massacre (1864)

### Causes

- In 1858 **gold was discovered in Colorado**. White settlers' put pressure on the government to **move the Indians to reservations**
- **This led to conflict between the Plains Indians and white settlers**
- The Indians put up a white flag to surrender, but the **US soldiers massacred over 130 men, women, and children**. They scalped their victims and took these to display in local saloons

### Consequences

- The leader (Black Kettle) escaped and **told other tribes about the massacre damaging further their trust in white Americans and leading to further violence**
- In 1865 they were given a large reservation and generous payments to the survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre
- However, in 1876 the US government backed out of the deal and moved the Indians to a far smaller reservation

## Red Cloud's War (1866-68)

### Events

- In 1862 **gold was discovered** in Montana. Prospectors used a short cut crossing Lakota hunting land called the **Bozeman Trail**, it broke the Fort Laramie Treaty (1851).
- **Red Cloud believed they had been forced into either fighting or starving. He chose to fight**
- **In December 1866, the Sioux led Captain Fetterman and 80 soldiers into a trap near Fort Phil Kearny**. The soldiers knew that the Lakota often used ambushes but still fell for it, they were killed

### Consequence - The Second Fort Laramie Treaty (1868)

As a consequence of Red Cloud's success, the US government agreed to abandon the forts and close the Bozeman Trail. Most Indian tribes agreed to move to a reservation in Dakota

## The Battle of Little Bighorn (1874)

### Causes

- The Sioux rejected the offer to buy Black Hills for \$6 million or pay \$400,000 a year to mine there and attacks on both sides continued
- In 1876 the US army planned to force the Sioux back to reservations. General Custer found the Little Bighorn camp and with 200 soldiers decided to attack, disobeying orders to wait for reinforcements
- Sitting Bull got the Sioux women and children to safety while Crazy Horse led a counter-attack. Custer and all his men were killed

### Consequences

- The Indians were now seen as a real threat
- The Indians were forced onto reservations. They were now completely reliant on the government for food and shelter
- The Government cancelled previous treaties and confined the Indians to smaller and poorer quality reservations
- All effective Indian resistance to the loss of land was over

## The Wounded Knee Massacre

### Causes

- By the end of the 1880s the Plains Indians offered little resistance
- An Indian claimed to have vision that if Indians danced a sacred dance the Great Spirit would carry away the white people in a great flood and the land would belong to the Plains Indians again - The Ghost Dance spread rapidly
- At Wounded Knee Creek, one Sioux warrior resisted being disarmed and others began to dance. In response the US army opened fire. In ten minutes 250 Sioux were dead, half of them women and children

### Consequences

- Public opinion generally supported the massacre. The soldiers who took part were publicly praised. White settlers had feared the Ghost Dance would lead to an uprising and were glad it was over
- Many white settlers felt that if the Indians could not be controlled they should be killed and saw the massacre as revenge after the Battle of Little Bighorn
- In 1890 the US census office announced that the Indian Frontier was over and that all land within the USA was now under government control

## 9. The Dawes Act

Each Indian family was allocated 160 acres, (80 acres for single Indians and 40 acres for orphans under 18). If Indians took up this land and moved off the reservations they could become US citizens. Any reservation land that was left over was then sold to whites

### Consequences

- By 1890 Indians had lost half of the land they had held in 1887 to whites. Many Indians found it impossible to make a living farming on the Plains
- The Dawes act made life even more difficult for the Plains Indians. By 1890 the US government declared the Indian Frontier a thing of the past
- It ended the nomadic way of life
- It ended the power of the tribes and the influence of chiefs

## The extermination of the Buffalo

## **Events**

By 1883 the once more than 25 million buffalo were gone. The US government promoted the killing of buffalo as a way to control the Indians by forcing them to change their way of life and move to reservations

## **Consequences**

- The loss of the Buffalo ended the Plains Indians' way of life. They had to take up farming and cattle ranching to survive
- Indians became dependent on the government for food handouts
- The government used the withdrawing of these to control and punish the Indians, leading to widespread starvation

## **Oklahoma Land Rush**

In 1889 the government decided to open up large areas of Indian Territory for white settlement.

- The land was divided into 160 acres sections to be sold through a 'Land Rush'
- In the first land rush in 1889 2 million acres were claimed, in 1893 8 million acres
- By this point no land was left on which Indians could live a traditional lifestyle

## **Consequences**

- It encouraged migration West as the land was cheap, it was new start, it was part of Manifest Destiny
- This led to the Indians being repeatedly moved and seriously limited the land available for them. Indians had to assimilate into white society and give up on their traditional way of life.

## 10. Growth of the Cattle industry

### Origins of the Cattle Industry

- In 1836 Texas became independent from Mexico and the Texans took over the cattle industry there. Cows were sold for meat, fat, and leather and were very valuable.
- The cattle industry was severely disrupted by the Civil War (1861-5) but remained an important part of the Southern Economy throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Growth after the Civil War

- After the civil war ended in 1865 the southern states had no money but a lot of cattle (5million). The northern states however had lots of money but no beef.
- Southern cattle farmers could therefore make a lot of money selling cows in the north east, for example in Chicago where in 1865 each cow was worth \$40

<p><b>Joseph McCoy - Abilene</b> In 1867 Joseph McCoy turned Abilene, Kansas, into one of the most important cow towns.</p> <p>He purchased 450 acres of land to build stockyards, negotiated with the Kansas Pacific Railroad for a depot to be built where 100 railway cars could be loaded.</p> <p>McCoy spent \$55,000 advertising Abilene. By the end of 1867 35,000 cattle had been through Abilene. Three million were between 1867 and 1872.</p>	<p><b>John Iliff</b> Iliff bought a herd of cattle for \$500 in 1861, a very cheap price because they were exhausted from travelling across the Plains and were too thin to sell for beef.</p> <p>Iliff fattened his herd up on the Plains, something that had not been done before, and then sold them on for a good price.</p> <p>By 1870 he had 26,000 cattle and his ranch covered 16,000 acres. He became Denver's first millionaire: selling beef to the mining towns, to the teams building the Union Pacific railroad and to the government for Indian reservations.</p>
<p><b>Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving</b> Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving found a new way to make money by selling cattle directly to western settlers and Plains Indians.</p> <p>The route they used from 1866 was called the Goodnight-Loving trail. Goodnight and Loving with 18 cowboys, drove 2000 cattle through hostile Comanche Indian territory.</p> <p>By 1878, Goodnight was so successful that his ranch had expanded to one million acres.</p>	<p><b>The Cattle Barons - The 'Open Range'</b> Through the 1870s, the cattle industry was seen as a sure way to make money: costs were low while profits were high.</p> <p>The best way to make a lot of money was to have very large ranches and enormous herds of cattle. The consequence was that a few men, backed by rich investors, came to dominate the cattle industry.</p> <p>They were called the cattle barons because of their wealth and power. Cattle barons controlled local politics as well as almost all the land.</p>

## The end of the Open Range

## **Causes**

Overstocking (more cattle was being produced than were needed) led to falling prices of cattle and so falling profits for cattlemen. It also led to faster soil erosion making problems such as the drought in 1883 far worse.

In the winter of 1886-7 temperatures fell to -55°C. At least 15% of open range herds died in what is called *The Great Die Up*. This led to financial ruin for many cattlemen.

## **Consequences**

- After 1887 open range farming (where herds roamed freely over huge areas) was finished.
- Smaller ranches led to fewer, but higher quality, cattle being produced using breeds such as Herefords.
- There was much less demand for cowboys. Many found completely new careers. Those that worked in the cattle industry still became ranch hands.
- They lived far less adventurous lives doing things like branding and dehorning cattle, mending fences, inspecting grass, harvesting hay to feed the cattle, and caring for horses and calves.

# **11. The Mormon Migration, 1846-1847**

**Brigham Young** becomes leader in 1845 after the death of Joseph Smith. He believed that the Mormons could never live in peace and so they decided to move to the Great Salt Lake

**Preparation to go to Salt Lake Valley 1845-6.** To move 16,000 Mormons across the Great Plains took a lot of planning. They had to build wagons and buy food and equipment

**Winter Quarters.** At the Missouri river thousands of cabins were built for all the families as they arrived for shelter from the winter. They were successful and thousands crossed the Plains to the Winter Quarters. The winter was still harsh and several hundred died from lack of food and disease

**Trailblazers.** They took a route away from the Oregon Trail to the north to avoid possible conflicts with other travellers. The trailblazers planted crops and even built a ferry for other Mormons to follow after

**Salt Lake Valley.** By the end of 1847 about 2000 Mormons had reached Salt Lake Valley. Young returned to the Winter Quarters to organise those making the journey the following year. The trail became known as the Mormon Trail