

History, Y10, T2b: Conflict and Conquest
Level: Grade 5 (compulsory)

Changes for farming on the Plains, Week 1

Government support	Acts such as the Homestead Act and Timber Culture Act made it much easier to live and farm on the Plains.
Dry farming	A technique which prepared the soil so that it trapped rainwater under the surface, ensuring crops had the water they needed.
Wind pumps	Used the strong Plains winds to draw water from deep underground. All-metal wind pumps were easier to maintain.
Barbed wire	A cheap and effective way for farmers to protect their crops and property.
Mechanisation	Inventions such as steel ploughs and seed drills helped to make farming more efficient and easy.

Changes for the cattle industry, Week 2

Overstocking	By the 1880s, there were too many cattle on the open range, damaging the soil and consuming the grass, alongside falling demand.
The 'Great Die Up', 1886-7	15% of open range herds, weakened by overstocking, died in this harsh winter (temperatures as low as -55 degrees C).
End of the open range	Large herds on the open range were no longer sustainable.
Move to smaller ranches	Smaller herds could be cared for more easily and were easier to guard.
Move to high quality cattle	Instead of producing in bulk, small ranches focused on producing high quality meat to be sold at higher prices.
Fewer cowboys	The end of the open range and the long drives removed the need for large numbers of cowboys.
Changing lives for cowboys	The remaining cowboys had much less adventurous lives, such as mending fences and harvesting hay.

Key events for settlement, Week 3

Exoduster Movement (1879)	Former black slaves, led by Benjamin Singleton and escaping oppression and abuse in the South, decided to move West to settle in Kansas.
Oklahoma Land Rush (1893)	The largest of a series (1889-1895) of 'land rushes', which involved white settlers staking a claim to newly-released land in former Indian Territory

Key events for law and order, Week 3

Lincoln County War (1878)	A conflict for resources between cattle baron John Chisum and settlers and other ranchers who were desperate for land, involving Billy the Kid.
The OK Corral (1881)	Conflict in Tombstone, Arizona between ranchers and rich businessmen led to a gunfight at OK Corral, involving Wyatt Earp and his brothers.
The Johnson County War (1892)	A range war between cattle barons on one side and homesteaders and small ranchers on the other, which demonstrated the corrupt nature of law and order in the West.

Conflict with Plains Indians timeline, Week 5

Conflict over the Black Hills (1874)	The US government tried to buy the Black Hills from the Sioux, but they refused – however, prospectors continued to try to mine there, leading to conflict.
Battle of Little Bighorn (June 1876)	The US Army planned to attack the Sioux to force them back to their reservations. Custer recklessly attacked the Sioux and was killed, leading to American outrage.
Extermination of buffalo (1883)	This forced the Plains Indians to abandon their traditional way of life and live on the reservations.
Dawes Act (1887)	Each Plains Indian family was allotted at 160-acre share of reservation land. All left over land was sold to white settlers.
The Ghost Dance (1890)	A movement which believed that a sacred dance would bring all Plains Indians back to life. The US government anticipated a rebellion.
Wounded Knee Massacre (29 Dec 1890)	A Sioux warrior resisting arrest began to dance, leading to soldiers opening fire on an unarmed Sioux band. 250 were killed, including women and children.
Closure of the Frontier (1890)	The US government declared that frontier was closed – Plains Indians were now considered to be assimilated.

Life on reservations, Week 6

Shrinking reservations	The Plains Indians were forced into accepting smaller reservations.
Removing the powers of chiefs	Tribal councils, set up and influenced by the US government, now controlled the tribes.
Government agents	Bribes of food or medical supplies were used to control tribes.
Education and religion	Children were sent to schools which aimed to 'kill the Indian and save the man' and eradicate their culture.
Living conditions	Starvation, disease, alcoholism and depression were common.

Reasons for lawlessness in the West, Week 4

Poverty	Most people struggled to make a living and turned to crime.
Resources	There was conflict between all of those who wanted to use the land (e.g. ranchers, settlers).
Fear and intimidation	People were afraid to act against powerful gangs – whether criminals or businessmen.
Independent attitudes	Men were expected to sort out their own problems, using violence if necessary. Killing in self-defence was legally accepted.
Geography	Territories were large with lots of places for gangs to hide from justice.
Weak justice system	Governors and law officials were often corrupt or ineffective. Juries were easily influenced by local loyalties.
Problematic lawmen	There was a shortage of reliable sheriffs and marshals – lawmen were often former outlaws.
Vigilantes	Captured criminals were often at real risk of being taken from lawmen and lynched, preventing a fair trial and justice being done.

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Level: Grade 9 (optional)

Impact of the Battle of Little Bighorn

Public perception	Plains Indians were now seen as a serious threat to the US army. Huge pressure on the government to crush Plains Indian resistance.
Government policy	Plains Indians were now expected to assimilate or die.
Reservations	Plains Indians were forced back on to their reservations, completely dependent on the US government for food and shelter
Invalidating treaties	All previous agreements could be ignored. The Sioux lost access to the Black Hills and were moved to smaller reservations.
Demilitarised	The Sioux's weapons and horses were taken and they had to live under military rule.
End of resistance	Crazy Horse's death in 1877 after Little Big Horn was then end to Plains Indian resistance to their loss of land.

Wyatt Earp and his brothers: key events

Becomes lawman (1874)	Arrested for violence, but then helped the deputy marshal restore order in Wichita. Later became marshal in Dodge City until 1879.
Tombstone (1879)	Hired as deputy sheriff to bring order to the town after conflict between rich businessmen and ranchers.
Increasing lawlessness (1881)	The Earps clashed with the ranching families (Clantons and McLaurys), leading to further violence.
OK Corral Gunfight (Oct 1881)	In a gunfight near Tombstone, the Earps killed three ranchers. The townspeople turned against the Earps.
Tombstone feuds (1882)	The cowboys and the Earps continued to feud. Two Earps were shot and the remainder were forced to flee the town.

Impact of Exoduster Movement

Increased diversity	By 1800 there were 43,107 black Americans in Kansas, settling on the Great Plains.
Struggle to survive	The black Americans ended up on land which was very difficult to farm and needed government help.
Kansas government	To support the struggling migrants, they set up an association to help them and provided temporary state funding to get them started.
Racist opposition	White Americans opposed the Exodusters, believing that the government should not help them.
End of the movement	The reality of life in Kansas filtered back to the southern states and black migrants tended to head to other states instead.

Significance of Billy the Kid

Powerless people	The poor, ethnic minorities, small homesteaders and ranchers liked the way he stood up the powerful businessmen.
Cattle wars	Most of his involvement in violence was as a hired gun in wars between cattle barons.
Corrupt justice	The legal system in many parts of the West was too weak and corrupt to deal with Billy and his gang.

How the Mormons succeeded in Salt Lake Valley

Leadership	The Mormons believed that Brigham Young was God's prophet and obeyed him completely. Everyone worked together for the good of the community.
Irrigation	The Mormons built channels which brought fresh water to the city.
Organisation	New settlements were planned and each one was designed to produce particular products. Each of these was led by a Church leader with supreme authority.
Spread of settlements	New settlements spread into other areas and sent their goods back home.

Hunting and Extermination of the Buffalo - facts

Before 1870	Before the 1870s, buffalo had been hunted for their warm coats, which were made into clothing.
1871 onwards	In 1871, it was discovered that buffalo hides could be used to process US factory machine belts, making the hides very desirable.
Waste	Plains Indians used every part of the buffalo – hunters simply took the skin and discarded the rest.
South herd	Between 1872-74, professional buffalo hunters killed around four and a half million animals, compared to one million killed by Plains Indians.
North herd	Protected by the Great Sioux Reservation until 1876. By 1883, the northern herd was gone.
Pressure on buffalo	Repeated droughts in the 1840s and diseases brought by cows and horses had left the buffalo herds vulnerable to extermination.

Exterminating buffalo – government policy

Reservations	Without buffalo, Plains Indians could not survive outside the reservations.
Assimilation	Without their main food source, Plains Indians were forced to farm and assimilate with white settlers.
Railroads	Areas without buffalo made it easier to build railroads.
Ranching	Removing buffalo from the Plains made it easier for cattle ranchers.

Significance of the Dawes Act, 1887

Plains Indians	Aimed to encourage individualism and break up the tribal units, start to farm and become American citizens.
White settlers	By 1890, Plains Indians had lost half of the lands they had in 1887 to white settlers. Plains Indians that failed to farm successfully would also sell their land to white settlers.
US Government	It was much cheaper for the US government to provide the Plains Indians with smaller patches of land than to continue to pay for the reservation system. It also enabled them to finally close the Indian Frontier.