

The Wars for the West

Read to Discover

1. What animals did the Plains Indians use, and why were they important?
2. What caused conflicts between American Indians and American settlers in the West, and what were the results of these conflicts?
3. How did the reservation system and the Dawes Act affect American Indians?

Reading Strategy

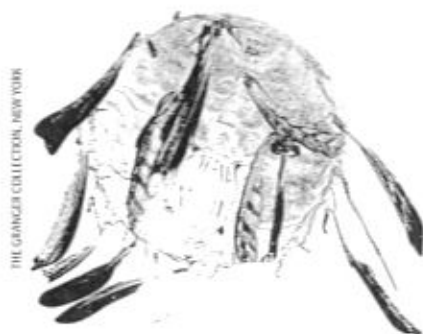
QUESTION THE AUTHOR As you read this section, pause at the end of each subsection and think about what the author is trying to tell you. Why is the author telling you that? How could the author say it more clearly? What would you say instead?

Define

- reservations

Identify

- Treaty of Fort Laramie
- Crazy Horse
- Treaty of Medicine Lodge
- George Armstrong Custer
- Sitting Bull
- Battle of the Little Bighorn
- Ghost Dance
- Massacre at Wounded Knee
- Geronimo
- Sarah Winnemucca
- Dawes General Allotment Act



The Cheyenne used shields like this one in battle.

The Story Continues

Like many Sioux before him, Standing Bear was eager for his first buffalo hunt. “Watch the buffalo closely. . . . They are very quick and powerful,” warned his father. When he got close to the buffalo herd, Standing Bear recalled, “I realized how small I was.” He brought down a buffalo and rode proudly back to camp to give his mother the animal’s skin. Buffalo hunts were important to American Indians’ ways of life on the Great Plains.

The Plains Indians

The Great Plains lie roughly between the 98th meridian and the Rocky Mountains. They stretch north into Canada and south into Texas. Despite their sometimes harsh conditions, the region was home to the Plains Indians. Groups such as the Apache and the Comanche lived in Texas and what is now Oklahoma. The Cheyenne and the Arapaho lived in different parts of the central Plains. The Pawnee lived in Nebraska. To the north were the Sioux, who spread from Minnesota to Montana.

For survival, Plains Indians depended on two animals—the horse and the buffalo. The Spanish brought horses to America in the 1500s. Plains Indians learned to ride horses and used them to follow the buffalo herds. They used the buffalo for food, shelter, and tools. The Plains Indians prospered and by 1850 some 75,000 American Indians were living on the Plains.

Miners and settlers began crossing the Great Plains in the mid-1800s. To protect these travelers, U.S. officials sent agents to negotiate treaties with the Plains Indians. The first major agreement was the **Treaty of Fort Laramie**, signed with northern Plains nations in Wyoming in 1851. Two years later, several southern Plains nations signed a treaty at Fort Atkinson in Nebraska. These treaties accepted Indian claims to much of the Great Plains. They also allowed Americans to build forts and roads and to travel across Indian homelands. The U.S. government promised to pay for any damages to Indian lands.

Sioux moccasins



✓ Reading Check: Analyzing Information What compromise did the United States and American Indians reach to allow miners and settlers to cross Indian lands?



Indian Reservations and Battles to 1890

Interpreting Maps As more and more settlers moved to the West, American Indians were forced to accept treaties that placed them on reservations.

Skills Assessment Human Systems Which present-day state contained the most reservation lands?



Several African American cavalry regiments served in the western U.S. Army. American Indians nicknamed these African American troops, who were known for their courage and discipline, "buffalo soldiers."

War on the Plains

The treaties did not keep the peace for long. Gold was discovered in what is now Colorado in 1858. The news brought thousands of miners, who soon clashed with the Cheyenne and the Arapaho. In 1861 the U.S. government negotiated a new treaty with these Indians. The treaty created **reservations**, areas of former Indian homelands to which the U.S. government restricted the Indians. The government expected them to stay on the reservations, which made hunting buffalo almost impossible.

Many American Indians refused to live on reservations. Some continued to fight, while others shared the view of Cheyenne chief Black Kettle. "It is not my intention or wish to fight the whites," he declared. He did not get his wish. In November 1864, Colorado militia troops attacked Black Kettle's camp on Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado. The soldiers killed about 200 men, women, and children. Black Kettle was among the Cheyenne who escaped the Sand Creek Massacre.

Pioneers and miners continued to cross the Great Plains. Many miners used the Bozeman Trail, which ran from Wyoming to Montana. To protect the miners, the U.S. Army built forts along the trail, which ran through Sioux hunting grounds. Sioux chief Red Cloud responded to the army's actions with war. In late 1866 a chief named **Crazy Horse** and a group of Sioux ambushed 81 cavalry troops, killing them all.

William Tecumseh Sherman, the famous Civil War general, was in charge of the western armies. He threatened the "extermination [of the Sioux] men, women, and children." The army had little success in this effort, however, and asked Red Cloud to negotiate. Red Cloud responded, "When we see the soldiers moving away and the forts abandoned, then I will come down and talk." In 1868 the U.S. Army closed the Bozeman Trail and abandoned the forts along it. Many Sioux then moved to the Black Hills Reservation in Dakota Territory.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government was also asking southern Plains Indians to move off their lands. In the 1867 **Treaty of Medicine Lodge**, most of these peoples agreed to live on reservations. However, many of them did not want to give up their hunting grounds. Fighting soon broke out between the Comanche and the Texans. The U.S. Army and the Texas Rangers were unable to defeat the Comanche forces in battle. So U.S. forces cut off the Comanche's access to food. The Comanche could not survive under these conditions. In 1875 Quanah Parker, the last of the Comanche war leaders, surrendered.

✓ **Reading Check: Summarizing** What was the federal policy toward Plains Indians in the 1860s and 1870s?

The U.S. War with the Sioux

As fighting on the southern Plains ended, new trouble was starting to the north. In 1874 Lieutenant Colonel **George Armstrong Custer**'s soldiers found gold in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory. The U.S. government responded by insisting that the Sioux sell their reservation land in the Black Hills. **Sitting Bull**, a Sioux leader, protested these new demands.



“What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken? Not one. What treaty that the white man ever made with us have they kept? Not one.”

—Sitting Bull, quoted in *Touch the Earth*, by T. C. McLuhan

Other Sioux leaders listened to Sitting Bull and refused to give up the Black Hills. Fighting soon broke out between the U.S. Army and the Sioux.

Custer, a Civil War veteran, was in command of the U.S. Army 7th Cavalry. On June 25, 1876, his scouts found a Sioux camp along the Little Bighorn River in Montana. Leading 264 of his soldiers, Custer raced ahead without waiting for any backup forces. The Battle of the Little Bighorn followed. Sioux forces, led by Crazy Horse, surrounded Custer and his troops. Sitting Bull's cousin Pte-San-Waste-Win described the fighting. “The soldiers fired many shots, but the Sioux shot straight and the soldiers fell dead. When we came to the hill . . . Long Hair [Custer] lay dead among the rest.” Newspapers called the battle “Custer's Last Stand.”

The **Battle of the Little Bighorn** was the worst defeat the U.S. Army had suffered in the West. It was also the Sioux's last major victory. In late 1877 Crazy Horse was killed in prison after surrendering to the U.S. Army.

Analyzing Primary Sources

Identifying Points of View

Why did Sitting Bull not trust the U.S. government?

Interpreting the Visual Record

The Battle of the Little Bighorn The 7th Cavalry suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of Sioux forces at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. What advantages does the illustration show each side having?



"I Will Fight No More Forever"

Chief Joseph

Chief Joseph led the Nez Percé from 1871 to 1877. He gave the following speech to the U.S. Army officers who took him prisoner on October 5, 1877. Chief Joseph died in 1904.

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. . . . The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes and no. **He who led on the young men¹** is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

¹He who led on the young men: Joseph's brother, Alokut

Understanding What You Read

Literature and History Why has Chief Joseph chosen to "fight no more forever"?



Ghost Dance shirt

Sitting Bull fled to Canada with a few of his followers. With two of their most important leaders gone, the northern Plains Indians soon surrendered.

In 1881 Sitting Bull and his Sioux followers returned from Canada. They had run out of food during the hard winter. "I wish it to be remembered," Sitting Bull said, "that I was the last man of my tribe to surrender my rifle." He joined most of the Sioux on Standing Rock Reservation in Dakota Territory.

Wovoka, a Paiute Indian, began a religious movement known as the **Ghost Dance**. He predicted the arrival of a paradise for American Indians. Indians who performed the dance believed that it would lead to a new life free from suffering. In this paradise, the buffalo herds would return, and the settlers would disappear. When the Ghost Dance spread across the Plains, U.S. officials feared it would lead to a Sioux uprising. While following orders to arrest Sitting Bull, reservation police killed the Sioux leader in 1890. In response, many Sioux left the reservations. Later that year, the U.S. Army found a camp of Sioux near Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. When the two groups faced one another, a shot rang out. The U.S. troops began firing and killed about 150 Indians. Known as the

Massacre at Wounded Knee, this attack was the last major event of more than 25 years of war on the Great Plains.

- ✓ **Reading Check: Sequencing** List the conflicts between the Great Plains Indians and U.S. forces in the order that they occurred.

Indians in the Southwest and Far West

Far from the Great Plains, other American Indians resisted being moved to reservations. The Navajo lived in what became Arizona and New Mexico. In 1863 when the U.S. government ordered them to settle on a reservation, the Navajo refused. In response, Kit Carson, a former scout, led U.S. troops in raids on the Navajo's fields, homes, and livestock.

When the Navajo ran out of food and shelter, they started surrendering to the U.S. Army. In 1864 the army led Navajo captives on the Long Walk. This 300-mile march took the Navajo across the desert to a reservation at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. Along the way, hundreds of Navajo died. At Bosque Redondo the Navajo suffered harsh conditions. In 1868 they negotiated for a new reservation located in Arizona and New Mexico.

The U.S. government had promised to let the peaceful Nez Percé keep their homelands in northeastern Oregon. Within a few years, however, settlers asked the government to remove them. The government ordered the Nez Percé to a reservation in what is now Idaho. Nez Percé leader Chief Joseph reluctantly agreed to move. Before leaving, a few angry Nez Percé killed some local settlers. Fearing that U.S. forces would fight back, the Nez Percé fled. The U.S. Army chased this band of about 700 Indians across what are now Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. Although outnumbered, the band defeated or avoided the army for weeks before trying to escape to Canada. Less than 40 miles from the border, U.S. troops overtook and surrounded the Nez Percé. Chief Joseph surrendered on October 5, 1877. The U.S. government sent the Nez Percé to a reservation in what is now Oklahoma.

By the 1880s most American Indians had stopped fighting. The Apache of the Southwest, however, continued to battle the U.S. Army. The Apache were raiders, known for their ability to survive in the desert. In the 1870s the U.S. Army gathered some Apache on a reservation in San Carlos, Arizona. One Apache called the reservation “nothing but cactus, rattlesnakes, heat, rocks, and insects.”

A Chiricahua Apache named **Geronimo** and his small band of raiders left the reservation and avoided capture until 1884. The following year Geronimo escaped again. When the U.S. Army caught him, he broke free once more on the way to the reservation. “I feared treachery [dishonesty],” he said. This time the army sent 5,000 soldiers and 500 Apache scouts to capture Geronimo and 24 of his followers. Finally, in September 1886, he surrendered, ending the Apache armed resistance. The U.S. government sent Geronimo and many Chiricahua Apache to Florida as prisoners of war.

✓ **Reading Check: Identifying Cause and Effect** What led to some of the conflicts that took place between American settlers and American Indians in the 1800s, and what were the results of these conflicts?

Policy and Protest

By the 1870s many American Indian peoples were living on reservations. Indian leaders spoke out against the reservation system. They complained that government agents stole food and money meant for Indians. In addition, reservation land was usually not useful for farming or buffalo hunting. As a result, many Indians were starving.



BIOGRAPHY

Geronimo

(1829–1909)

Many Apache found it difficult to get along with Geronimo. He had grown bitter after Mexican soldiers killed his mother, wife, and children. Despite this bitterness, other Apache admired Geronimo for his intelligence and his ability to handle difficult situations.

Geronimo led his own band of troops. He was captured several times, but usually managed to escape. Geronimo finally surrendered to U.S. troops in 1886. His courage and determination to remain free made Geronimo a legend. Why was Geronimo admired by other Apache?



Sarah Winnemucca went to Washington, D.C., to ask for reforms for American Indians.

In the late 1870s a Paiute Indian named Sarah Winnemucca became one of the first American Indians to call for reforms. She gave lectures on the problems of the reservation system and eventually pleaded her case in Washington, D.C. After listening to her, “many people were moved to tears,” according to one spectator. Writer Helen Hunt Jackson also pushed for reform. In 1881 she published *A Century of Dishonor*. This book criticized the federal government’s treatment of Indians. Jackson wrote that “it makes little difference where one opens the record of the history of the Indians; every page and every year has its dark stain.” The popularity of her writings helped spread the reform message.

Many reformers believed that American Indians would be better off if they adopted the ways of white people. The Dawes General Allotment Act, passed by Congress in 1887, reflected this view. It tried to lessen the traditional influences on Indian society by making land ownership private rather than shared. Reservation lands were to be divided into 160-acre plots for families and 80 acres for single adults. The act also promised U.S. citizenship to American Indians.

After breaking up reservation land, the government sold the acreage that remained. As a result, Indians lost much of the land that they occupied before the Dawes Act. Reformers had hoped the Dawes Act would help American Indians. Instead, it resulted in the loss of about two thirds of their land. As enforced, the Dawes Act also did not lead to citizenship for many American Indians. Overall, the new policy failed to improve Indians’ lives.

- ✓ **Reading Check: Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** How did reformers who fought for American Indian rights influence Indians’ lives?

Section 1 Review

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Practice
Online

keyword: SA5 HP21

- 1 Define and explain:
 - reservations
- 2 Identify and explain:
 - Treaty of Fort Laramie
 - Crazy Horse
 - Treaty of Medicine Lodge
 - George Armstrong Custer
- 3 Identifying Cause and Effect Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to list the causes and effects of conflicts between the United States and American Indians in the West.
- 4 Finding the Main Idea
 - a. Why were the horse and the buffalo important to the lives of Plains Indians?
 - b. Why do you think the Ghost Dance was important to American Indians on the Great Plains?
- 5 Writing and Critical Thinking