The Closing of the Western Frontier
Darrell Duncan
Merrol Hyde Magnet School

Essential Questions
1. What national issues emerged in the process of closing the western frontier?
2. Why does the West hold such an important place in the American imagination?
3. In what ways is the West romanticized in American culture?

Railroad Construction

“The Big Four” Railroad Magnates
- Charles Crocker
- Collis Huntington
- Mark Hopkins
- Leland Stanford
Promontory, Utah

May 10, 1869 at Promontory, Utah
- "The Wedding of the Rails"
- Central Pacific and Union Pacific

Promontory Point, UT
(May 10, 1869)

Homestead Act

- Homestead Act was a law developed in 1862 by Congress to promote settlement of the Great Plains.
- Age 21 and the head of the family could have 160 acres of land if they improved it in five years
- Could buy it for a small amount of $$$
- The US Government encouraged westward expansion and the Homestead Act allowed thousands of settlers to move west and start new lives.

Population Changes in the West, 1850 to 1900
Population Changes in the West, 1850 to 1900

Homestead No. 1

Town of

Homestead

Daneville, K. T., January 3, 1858.

I, Samuel Freeman, of Dane County, in the State of Illinois, do hereby apply to the Register of the Land Office for a Donation of a homestead privilege under the act of Congress approved May 24, 1862, and wish to locate the same in the Second Township, Sec. 37, Range No. C, North of the 36th Parallel, on the South half of Sec. 16, T. 47 S., R. 17 W., in Dane County, State of Wisconsin, being an area of 160 acres, more or less, having its south line on the west line of Sec. 37, having its north line on the south line of Sec. 16, having its east line on the north line of Sec. 15, and having its west line on the west line of Sec. 17.

Daneville, K. T., January 3, 1858.

Samuel Freeman

Land Office at

New Berlin, K. T., January 3, 1858.

I, Richard W. Morris, Register of the Land Office at New Berlin, do hereby certify that this above application is for a homestead of the character of the one which the applicant already settled to his satisfaction under the Homestead Act of 1862, and that there is no prior valid adverse Right to the Same.

Richard W. Morris

Register

Homestead

Land Office at

New Berlin, K. T., January 30, 1868.

Certificate

Applicant

Joseph Craft & Samuel Freeman

It is hereby certified that the person or persons to whom the above application is for a homestead and described in the following certificate is entitled to the same under the provisions of the act of Congress entitled "An Act to provide homesteads for actual settlers on the public domain," approved March 3, 1862.

Joseph Craft

Samuel Freeman

New Berlin, K. T., January 30, 1868.

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Joseph Craft

Samuel Freeman

New Berlin, K. T., January 30, 1868.
the cowboys
Black Cowboys

100,000 Exodusters leave the South and get involved with the ranching industry in Texas and Oklahoma.
The Traditional View of the West

Colt .45 Revolver and the Winchester Repeating Rifle

God didn’t make men equal. Colonel Colt did!

“The weapons which won the West”
Legendary Gunslingers & Train Robbers

Jesse James
Billy the Kid

Dodge City Peace Commission, 1890

the MINERS

Mining Centers: 1900
Prospecting

Anaconda Copper Mining Co. (MT)

Mining ("Boom") Towns—Now Ghost Towns

Calico, CA

The Cattlemen & the Sheep herders
Barbed Wire

Joseph Glidden

LIFE ON THE GREAT PLAINS

- **Barbed wire fence** was a lifesaver because of the lack of wood in the dry plains of America.
- **Barbed wire** also solved the problems between farmers and ranchers.

The Range Wars

Sheep Herders — Cattle Ranchers

Minority groups in the West
Regional Population Distribution by Race: 1900

- Whites of native parentage: 49.1%
- African Americans: 35.4%
- Chinese and Japanese birth or parentage: 15.5%

Regional Population Distribution by Race: 1900

- American Indians (N = 340,298)
- 10.8%
- Chinese and Japanese birth or parentage (N = 114,777)
- 4.1%

Black "Exoduster" Homesteaders

All Colored People
That Want to
Go to Kansas.
On September 5th, 1877,
Can do so for $5.00

African Americans Going West, 1850–1890

The Buffalo Soldiers on the Great Plains

A Romantic View
The Buffalo Soldiers & the Indian Wars

The “Chinese Question”
- Exclusion Act (1882)
  - Oriental Exclusion Act
  - Chinese Exclusion Act

The Tong Wars: 1850s–1920s
Began in San Francisco in 1875.

African American & Chinese Populations: 1880–1900

Life on the Great Plains
• Settlers adapted to the difficult lifestyle of living on the Great Plains.
• Newer advancements in agricultural technology helped settle the Plains.
Frontier Settlements: 1870-1890

Homesteads From Public Lands

1887 Land Promotion Poster for the Dakota Territories

What is the Message of this Picture?

The Realty--A Pioneer’s Sod House, SD

Rain Follows the Plow!
Steel Plow

Allowed farmers to cut through dense, root-choked sod.

Mechanized Reaper

Reduced labor force needed for harvest. Allows farmers to maintain larger farms.

Steel Windmill

Powers irrigation systems and pumps up ground water.

Newlands Reclamation Act (1902)

Francis Newlands
**Indian Conflict**
- Differences in land ownership
  - Railroad
  - Settlers trespassing on Indian Land
  - Discovery of gold
  - Slaughter of the buffalo
  - Broken treaties

**U.S. Indian Policy**
- Negotiate treaties to sell land to US
- Americanization or assimilation
  - Adopt Christianity
  - White education
- Individual land ownership
  - Adopt agriculture
- Take away food source to force to Reservations = tracks of land

- 1871 to 1875, the US supported the extermination of 11 million buffalo.

- End of the Buffalo
  - In an attempt to force the Plains Indians to become "more American", the government sponsored the slaughter of the buffalo, which the Plains Indians depended on.

  Examples:
  - Buffalo population in 1860: approximately 13 million
  - Buffalo population in 1900: approximately 400

  Buffalo skulls, mid-1870s, waiting to be ground into fertilizer.
Hide yard with 40,000 buffalo hides
Dodge City, Kansas, 1878

Tribes of the Great Plains
- Sioux
- Cheyenne
- Crow
- Arapaho
- Kiowa

Treaty of Ft. Laramie (1851)

Colonel John Chivington
Kill and scalp all, big and little!
Sandy Creek, CO
Massacre
November 29, 1864
Capt. William J. Fetterman

80 soldiers massacred
December 21, 1866

Gold Found in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory!
1874

U.S. Indian Policy

Gold!  
- Gold discovered in the Black Hills.  
- Govt. tries to purchase the land, but the Sioux refuse.  
- Gold fever and miners refuse to respect Sioux land.....  
  - Conflict erupts!
Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse

- Sitting Bull (Sioux) and Crazy Horse (Cheyenne) were two chiefs who refused to sign the treaty.
- They defiantly left the reservation.
- "One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk"

Little Big Horn River, Montana - 1876

- George Armstrong Custer was sent to force the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho back to their reservations.
- He was in command of the 7th Calvary.
- June 26, 1876

The Battle of Little Big Horn 1876

- He was heavily outnumbered and trapped.
- Custer & all 220 of his men died.
- "Custer's Last Stand" outraged Americans and led to gov't. retribution.
- The Sioux and Cheyenne were crushed within a year.
Helen Hunt Jackson (1830-1885), activist for Native American rights and author of *A Century of Dishonor* was published in 1881.

Jackson also began work on a book condemning the government’s Indian policy and its record of broken treaties.

When Jackson sent a copy to every member of Congress with the following admonition printed in red on the cover: “Look upon your hands: they are stained with the blood of your relations.” To her disappointment, the book had little impact.
Dawes Act of 1887

- Quicker Americanization
  - Assimilate, mainstreamed and absorbed into US society
  - Adopt Christianity and White education
  - Individual land ownership
- Abandon tribe, culture and become farmers
- Male claimed 160 acres of land
- Children would be sent to Indian schools
- Farm land for 25 years.
- 1924 gain citizenship and right to vote
- Failed policy
  - Indian resistance and corruption

Dawes Severalty Act (1887): Assimilation Policy

Native American Schools

In an attempt to make Native Americans “live as white men”, special schools were set up by the U.S. government for Native Americans.

Apache children on arrival at the Carlisle Indian School (Pennsylvania) wearing traditional clothing.

The same Apache children four months later.

Cheyenne woman named Woxie Haury in ceremonial dress...

...and in wedding portrait with husband.

Indian Assimilation Attempts

- Native American children were taken to off-reservation Indian schools where they would be taught white man’s ways.

Jacobus Franciscus "Jim" Thorpe (Wa-Tho-Huk) (28 May 1888 – 28 March 1953)

- was an American athlete. Considered one of the most versatile athletes in modern sports, he won Olympic gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon, played American football collegiately and professionally, and also played professional baseball and basketball. He subsequently lost his Olympic titles when it was found he was paid for playing two seasons of minor league baseball before competing in the games.
- Thorpe was a multi-racial, part Native American Indian and part ancestral European American.
- Thorpe was named the greatest athlete of the first half of the twentieth century by the Associated Press (AP) in 1950. He ranked third on the AP list of athletes of the century in 1999. After his professional sports career ended, Thorpe lived in abject poverty. He worked several odd jobs, struggled with alcoholism, and lived out the last years of his life in failing health.
- In 1983, thirty years after his death, his Olympic medals were restored.
The Ghost Dance Movement -1890

- Paiute medicine man Wovoka promised the return of the buffalo and Indian way of life.
- The religion prophesied the end of the westward expansion of whites and a return of Indian land.
- The ritual lasted five successive days, being danced each night and on the last night continued until morning.
- Hypnotic trances and shaking accompanied this ceremony, which was supposed to be repeated every six weeks.

Telegram to Washington, D.C.
Nov. 15, 1890

"Indians are dancing in the snow and are wild and crazy. I have fully informed you that the employees and the government property at this agency have no protection and are at the mercy of the Ghost Dancers. ... We need protection and we need it now...nothing [short] of 1000 troops will stop this dancing."

Dr. Daniel F. Royer, Agent, Pine Ridge Agency
Indian warriors fighting against the US wore Ghost Shirts which were to stop the penetration of American soldiers bullets... It gave them supernatural powers as was believed... 

The Ghost Dance Movement - 1890

- Ghost Dance movement spread to Sitting Bull and the Sioux
- They religiously danced even after they were told to stop by reservation authorities.
- Military went to arrest Sitting Bull, where he was killed.
- Many Sioux followers left the reservation and became hostile.

Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec. 1890

- 7th Calvary rounded up starving and freezing Sioux and took them to Wounded Knee camp.
  - They attempted to confiscate all weapons.

Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec. 1890

- Violence erupted, 300 Indians and 25 whites lay dead.
- This is the last of the Indian conflicts.

Battle of Wounded Knee – Dec. 1890

- The dead of Big Foot's people were buried in a mass grave. The still frozen stiff bodies were dumped unceremoniously into the hole.
- The United States handed out over twenty Congressional Medals of Honor to soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry who had participated in the battle.

Chief Joseph, Nez Perce

- Refused to recognize the authority of a 2nd treaty with the US Government reducing his tribal land.
- Refusing to go to the reservation, he led his tribe on a 1,400 march trying to get to Canada. Trying to meet up with Sitting Bull.
- Eventually surrendered.
- In 3 months, the band of about 700, 200 of whom were warriors, fought 2,000 U.S. soldiers in 4 major battles and skirmishes.
I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass 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 of them 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.

"the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise... [they] fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines, and field fortifications."

General William Tecumseh Sherman

• The Wild West: Some elements of the frontier myths were true.

• Yet, many wild towns of the West calmed down fairly quickly or disappeared.

• By the 1880s, the frontier had many churches and a variety of social groups.

• Major theatrical productions toured growing western cities.
  • The East had come West.
“Buffalo Bill” Cody & Sitting Bull

Legendary Female Western Characters

Calamity Jane

Annie Oakley

The Fall of the Cowboy
Frederick Remington

what were the long-term effects of the westward experience?

Destruction of the Buffalo Herds

Yellowstone National Park

The near extinction of the buffalo.

First national park established in 1872.
National Parks

Conservation Movement

Sierra Club

Mt. Rushmore: Black Hills, SD

Korczak Ziolkowski, Sculptor

Crazy Horse Monument

His vision of the finished memorial.

John Muir

With President Theodore Roosevelt

Founded in 1892

Crazy Horse Monument: Black Hills, SD
With Indians on the reservation by 1890, the United States Census Bureau announced the official end of the frontier.

- The population in the West had become dense, and the days of free western land had come to an end.
- In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the frontier had played a key role in forming the American character.
- The Turner Thesis, stated that frontier life created Americans who were socially mobile, ready for adventure, bent on individual self-improvement, committed to democracy and able to withstand difficult times to accomplish the American Dream…

"RUGGED INDIVIDUALIST"

The frontier created the American character of one who was self-sufficient, persistent and able to withstand difficult times to accomplish the American Dream…