Chapter 14: Looking to the West (1860–1900)

Section 1: Moving West
- What conditions lured people to migrate to the West?
- Where did the western settlers come from?
- How did the American frontier shift westward?

I. The Lure of the West
A. When geographers study reasons for major migrations, they look at what they call push-pull factors—events and conditions that either force (push) people to move elsewhere or strongly attract (pull) them to do so. Here are some push-pull factors for moving west.

B. “Push” Factors
1. The Civil War had displaced thousands of farmers, former slaves, and other workers.
2. Eastern farmland was too costly.
3. Failed entrepreneurs sought a second chance in a new location.
4. Ethnic and religious repression caused people to seek the freedom of the West.
5. Outlaws sought refuge.

C. “Pull” Factors
1. The Pacific Railway Acts of 1862 and 1864
2. Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862
3. Land speculators
4. Homestead Act, 1862
5. Legally enforceable property rights

II. Settlers From Far and Wide
A. German-speaking immigrants arrived seeking farmland. They brought the Lutheran religion with its emphasis on hard work and education.
B. Lutherans from Scandinavia settled the northern plains from Iowa to Minnesota to the Dakotas, many pursuing dairy farming.
C. Irish, Italians, European Jews, and Chinese settled in concentrated communities on the West coast. They took jobs in mining and railroad construction that brought them to the American interior.
D. After the Civil War, thousands of African Americans rode or walked westward, often fleeing violence and exploitation.
E. Benjamin “Pap” Singleton led groups of southern blacks on a mass “Exodus,” a trek inspired by the biblical account of the Israelites’ flight from Egypt to a prophesied homeland. Hence, the settlers called themselves Exodusters. Some 50,000 or more Exodusters migrated west.

Section 2: Conflict With Native Americans
- What caused changes in the life of Plains Indians?
- How did government policies and battlefield challenges affect the Indian wars?
- What changes occurred in federal Indian policies by 1900?

I. The Life of the Plains Indians
A. Before the eastern settlers arrived, changes had affected the lives of Native Americans on the Great Plains, the vast grassland between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains.
B. Relations with the French and American fur traders allowed the Plains Indians to trade buffalo hides for guns. Guns made hunting for buffalo easier.
C. The introduction of the horse brought upheaval. Warfare among Indian nations rose to new intensity when waged on horseback.
D. Many Native Americans continued to live as farmers, hunters, and gatherers. Others became nomads, people who travel from place to place following available food sources, instead of settling in one location.
E. The rise of warrior societies led to a decline in village life, as nomadic Native Americans raided more settled groups.
II. Indian Wars and Government Policy

A. Before the Civil War, Native Americans west of the Mississippi continued to inhabit their traditional lands.
B. Settlers’ views of land use contrasted with Native American traditions. Settlers felt justified in taking the land because they would use it more productively. Native Americans viewed them as invaders.
C. Government treaties tried to restrict movement of Native Americans by restricting them to reservations, federal lands set aside for them.
D. Some federal agents negotiated honestly; others did not.
E. Many settlers disregarded the negotiations entirely and stole land, killed buffalo, diverted water supplies, and attacked Indian camps.
F. Acts of violence on both sides set off cycles of revenge.

III. Key Events in the Indian Wars, 1861-1890

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wars / Battles</th>
<th>Native American Nations / Homelands</th>
<th>Key Players</th>
<th>Description / Outcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apache and Navajo Wars</td>
<td>Apache in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado territories; Navajo in New Mexico, Colorado territories</td>
<td>Geronimo, Col. Christopher “Kit” Carson</td>
<td>Carson kills or relocates many Apache to reservations in 1862. Clashes drag on until Geronimo's surrender in 1896. Navajo told to surrender in 1863, but before they can, Carson attacks, killing hundreds, destroying homelands. Navajos moved to New Mexico reservation in 1865.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sand Creek Massacre</td>
<td>Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho, in central plains</td>
<td>Black Kettle, Col. John Chivington</td>
<td>Cheyenne massacres prompt Chivington to kill up to 500 surrendered Cheyenne and Arapaho led by Black Kettle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red River War 1874-1875</td>
<td>Comanche and southern branches of Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Arapaho, in southern plains</td>
<td>Comanche war parties, Gen. William T. Sherman, Lt. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan</td>
<td>Southern plains Indians relocated to Oklahoma Indian Territory under 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge. After buffalo hunters destroy the Indians’ food supply, Comanche warriors race to buffalo grazing areas in Texas panhandle to kill hunters. Sherman and Sheridan defeat warriors and open panhandle to cattle ranching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle of Little Bighorn 1876</td>
<td>Northern plains Sioux in Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana territories</td>
<td>Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, Lt. Col. George A. Custer</td>
<td>U.S. tries to buy gold-rich Black Hills from Sioux. Talks fail. Custer’s 7th Cavalry is sent to round up Sioux, but meets huge enemy force. Custer and some 200 men perish in “Custer’s Last Stand.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle of Wounded Knee 1890</td>
<td>Sioux at Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota</td>
<td>Sitting Bull, U.S. 7th Cavalry</td>
<td>Ghost Dance raises fears of Sioux uprising; Sitting Bull killed in attempted arrest. His followers surrender and camp at Wounded Knee. Shots are fired; some 200 Sioux die.</td>
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IV. Attempts to Change Native American Culture

A. Many people believed that Native Americans needed to give up their traditions and culture, learn English, become Christians, adopt white dress and customs, and support themselves by farming and trades.
B. This policy is called assimilation, the process by which one society becomes a part of another, more dominant society by adopting its culture.
C. In 1887 the Dawes Act divided reservation land into individual plots. Each family headed by a man received 160 acres.
D. Many Native Americans did not believe in the concept of individual property, nor did they want to farm the land. For some, the practices of farming went against their notion of ecology. Some had no experience in agriculture.
E. Between 1887 and 1932, some two thirds of this land became white owned.

V. The Opening of Indian Territory

A. Fifty five Indian nations were forced into Indian Territory, the largest unsettled farmland in the United States.
B. During the 1880s, squatters overran the land, and Congress agreed to buy out the Indian claims to the region.
C. On April 22, 1889, tens of thousands of homesteaders lined up at the territory’s borders to stake claims on the land.
D. By sundown, settlers called boomers had staked claims on almost 2 million acres.
E. Many boomers discovered that some of the best lands had been grabbed by sooners, people who had sneaked past the government officials earlier to mark their claims.
F. Under continued pressure from settlers, Congress created Oklahoma Territory in 1890. In the following years, the remainder of Indian Territory was open to settlement.
Section 3: Mining, Ranching, and Farming

- How did mining spread in the West?
- What caused the western cattle boom?
- What was life like for a cowboy on the Chisholm Trail?
- How did settlers overcome barriers in farming the Plains?

I. The Spread of Western Mining (Map)

II. Early Mining and Mining Towns

A. At first, miners searched for metal in surface soil or in streambeds. The simplest tool was a shallow pan in which the miner scooped dirt and water, and then swished it around. Lighter particles washed over the edge while the gold stayed in the bottom of the pan.

B. A technique called placer mining used this method on a larger scale. Miners shoveled loose dirt into boxes and then ran water over the dirt to separate it from the gold or silver particles.

III. The Cattle Boom

A. Mexicans taught Americans cattle ranching. The Americans adopted Mexican ranching equipment, and dress and began raising Texas longhorn cattle.

B. Before the Civil War, pork had been Americans’ meat of choice. But then cookbooks snubbed pork as “unwholesome” and the nation went on a beef binge.

C. Beef shipments became less expensive with the invention of refrigerated railroad cars.

D. Destruction of the buffalo made more room for cattle ranching.

E. Abilene, Kansas, became the first “cow town,” a town built specifically for receiving cattle.

IV. A Cowboy’s Life: Cattle Drive on the Chisholm Trail

A. Cowboys herded thousands of cattle to railway centers on the long drive.

B. The Chisholm Trail was one of several trails that linked grazing land in Texas with cow towns to the north.

C. Cowboy life was hard. The men were up at 3:30 in the morning and were in the saddle up to 18 hours a day. They had to be constantly alert in case of a stampede.

D. The leading cause of death was being dragged by a horse. Diseases such as tuberculosis also killed many cowboys.

V. Farming the Plains

A. For most homesteaders— those who farmed claims under the Homestead Act— life was difficult.

B. Most homesteaders built either a dugout or a soddie for homes. A soddie was a structure with the walls and roof made from strips of grass with the thick roots and earth attached.

C. There was backbreaking labor, bugs that ravaged the fields, money troubles, falling crop prices and rising farm debt. Many homesteaders failed and headed back east. Settlers had to rely on each other, raising houses and barns together, sewing quilts and husking corn.
VI. New Technology Eases Farm Labor

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<tr>
<th>Mechanized Reaper</th>
<th>Reduced labor force needed for harvest. Allows farmers to maintain larger farms.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barbed Wire</td>
<td>Keeps cattle from trampling crops and uses a minimal amount of lumber, which was scarce on the plains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry Farming</td>
<td>Allows cultivation of arid land by using drought-resistant crops and various techniques to minimize evaporation.</td>
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<td>Steel Plow</td>
<td>Allows farmers to cut through dense, root-choked sod.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrow</td>
<td>Smooths and levels ground for planting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steel Windmill</td>
<td>Powers irrigation systems and pumps up ground water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hybridization</td>
<td>Cross-breeding of crop plants, which allows greater yields and uniformity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved Communication</td>
<td>Keeps cattle from trampling crops and uses a minimal amount of lumber, which was scarce on the plains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grain Drill</td>
<td>Array of multiple drills used to carve small trenches in the ground and feed seed into the soil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonanza Farm</td>
<td>Farms controlled by large businesses, managed by professionals, raised massive quantities of a single cash crop.</td>
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VII. Frontier Myths

A. The Wild West: Some elements of the frontier myths were true. Yet, many wild towns of the West calmed down fairly quickly or disappeared.

B. 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.

The End of the Frontier

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.

Turner’s Frontier Thesis

In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the frontier had played a key role in forming the American character. The Turner Thesis, as his view came to be called, stated that frontier life created Americans who were socially mobile, ready for adventure, bent on individual self-improvement, and committed to democracy.

Myths in Literature, Shows, and Song

The Wild West remains fixed in popular culture and continues to influence how Americans think about themselves. Many stereotypes—exaggerated or oversimplified descriptions of reality, and frontier myths persist today despite our deeper understanding of the history of the American West.
Section 4: Populism

- Why did farmers complain about the federal post-Civil War economic policies?
- How did the government respond to organized protests by farmers?
- What were the Populists' key goals?
- What was the main point of William Jennings Bryan’s Cross of Gold speech?
- What was the legacy of Populism?

I. The Farmers’ Complaint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmers and Tariffs</th>
<th>Tariffs helped farmers by protecting them against competition from farm imports. But, they also hurt farmers because they raised the prices of manufactured goods, such as farm machinery, and kept foreigners from earning U.S. money with which to buy American crops.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Money Issue</td>
<td>Farmers wanted an increase in the money supply, the amount of money in the national economy. As a result, the value of every dollar drops, leading to a widespread rise in prices, or inflation. This trend would benefit people who borrow money (farmers), but it would not be good for money lenders (banks). A decrease in the money supply would cause deflation. Monetary policy, the federal government’s plan for the makeup and quantity of the nation’s money supply, thus emerged as a major political issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Bugs</td>
<td>Before 1873 U.S. currency was on a bimetallic standard, consisting of gold and silver. Then Congress put the currency on a gold standard which decreased the money supply. “Gold bugs” (big lenders) were pleased.</td>
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II. Silverites

A. The Bland-Allison Act of 1878

1. The move to a gold standard enraged the “silverites,” mostly silver-mining interest and western farmers. Silverites called for free silver, the unlimited coining of silver dollars to increase the money supply.
2. Required the federal government to purchase and coin more silver, thereby increasing the money supply and causing inflation.
3. Vetoed by President Hayes because he opposed the inflation that it would cause.
4. Congress overrode the veto.
5. The Treasury Department refused to buy more than the minimum amount of silver required by the act. The act had limited effect.

B. Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890

1. Increased the amount of silver that the government was required to purchase every month
2. The law required the Treasury to buy the silver with notes that could be redeemed for either silver or gold.
3. Many people turned in their silver Treasury notes for gold dollars, thus depleting the gold reserves.
4. In 1893, President Cleveland repealed the Silver Purchase Act.

III. Organizing Farmer Protests

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Grange</th>
<th>Organized in 1867 in response to farmers’ isolation, it helped farmers form cooperatives which bought goods in large quantities at lower prices. The Grange also pressured government to regulate businesses on which farmers depended.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Alliance</td>
<td>Another powerful political group, the Farmers’ Alliance called actions that many farmers could support. The alliances won support for women’s rights. The African Americans worked through a separate but parallel “Colored Farmers’ Alliance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Response</td>
<td>In 1887 President Cleveland signed the Interstate Commerce Act. It regulated prices that railroads charged to move freight between states. It also set up the Interstate Commerce Commission to enforce laws.</td>
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</table>
IV. The Populists

A. The Farmers’ Alliances formed a new political party, The People’s Party or the Populists. Their platform called for

1. An increased circulation of money
2. Unlimited minting of silver
3. A progressive income tax which would put a greater financial burden on the wealthy industrialists and a lesser one on farmers.
4. Government-owned communications and transportation systems
5. An eight-hour work day

B. The Populists sought to unite African American and white farmers.

C. The Populist candidate for President, William Jennings Bryan, won most of the western and southern states but lost the election. However, populist ideas lived on. In the decades ahead, reformers known as Progressives applied populist ideas to urban and industrial problems.

V. Bryan’s “Cross of Gold”

A. Populist presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, a former silverite Congressman, faced off against moderate Republican William McKinley.

B. During the 1896 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Bryan closed the debate over party platform with his Cross of Gold speech.

C. Using images from the Bible, he stood with his head bowed and arms outstretched and cried out:

1. “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!”

D. So impressive was his speech that both Democrats and Populists nominated him for President.