SETTLING THE GREAT PLAINS
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to

- Explain the rapid settlement of the Great Plains due to homesteading.
- Describe how early settlers survived on the plains and transformed them into profitable farm land.
ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How did westward migration after the Civil War affect the United States?
**SHORT RESPONSE:**

- **Describe how mining and ranching transformed the West.** *Cite specific examples/evidence to support your answer.*

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GROWTH OF THE MINING INDUSTRY
BOOMTOWNS:

What encourages the settling of the West?

MINING

- Minerals were in demand – the nation was changing from farming to industry
- Railroads increased to connect mines and factories

The Rise of Boomtowns

- Henry Comstock – prospector staked a claim in Virginia City, Nevada (1859)
- Sold his claim for a small amount (a few thousand dollars)
- The Comstock Lode = the blue-grey clay was actually SILVER!!!
- This was a millions of dollars find!
- People flooded Virginia City!
- Population boomed to over 30,000 in a few months.
- 1864: Nevada becomes the 36th US State.
WHAT WAS A BOOMTOWN LIKE?

Boomtowns can be rowdy!
- Prospectors fought over claims
- Thieves were a constant threat

Who enforced “law and order” in Boomtowns? Vigilance Committees
- Self-appointed volunteers
- Exacted punishment as a committee
- Most people obeyed the laws

What would happen when the mines ran dry?
- Some towns became “ghost” towns
- Some towns survived

California Gold Rush advertisement

San Francisco, 1851
How did mining impact statehood?

What states were popular destinations in the mining boom?

- Colorado, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Arizona, Nevada and California

Colorado: Gold Rush & Lead

- Gold rush starts in Colorado at Pike’s Peak.
- “Pike’s Peak or Bust” = miners arrived from all over (increasing the population)
- Miners in these regions would pan for gold — most went “bust”
- Gold in Colorado was mostly underground (and difficult to get)
- Lead deposits found at Leadville, Colorado begin the railroad boom through the Rocky Mountains.
AMERICA: THE STORY OF US
THE GOLD RUSH
How are minerals extracted?

- **Placer Mines**: shallow mines where prospectors get surface deposits of ore
  - Picks, shovels and pans are used in placer mining.
- **Sluice Mines**: diverts the river current and uses the panning method
- **Hydraulic Mines**: remove earth and process this for minerals
  - These mines use high pressure water to cut into hills and mountains.
Who else arrived in the WEST?
- Cattle ranchers: Texas Longhorn (a breed of cattle descended from Spanish cattle)
- Longhorn cattle thrive even in a harsh climate

How did the Civil War change the West? Railroads
- Before the Civil War, railroads were scarce in the West.
- Ranchers would not be able to get their cattle to markets in the East.
- To feed the massive armies of the Union and the Confederacy, ranchers needed to raise LOTs of beef cattle.
- As railroads move westward, ranchers could settle on vast lands and raise larger herds.

How did the ranchers get the cattle to market? Long Drives
- Ranchers would move the cattle to a rail hub to sell to markets in the East.
- Sedalia, Missouri and Abilene Kansas were popular rail stations.
What caused the end to the Open Range?

- Sheep herding and farming began to impact cattle lands
- Fencing of open lands prevented ranchers from freely feeding cattle and moving them across vast territory.

What invention supported the end of the Open Range?

- Barbed wire: fencing that would block the cattle trails

What else impacted ranching?

- Prices dropped after the Civil War ended
- Extreme weather conditions (especially harsh winters) impacted the plains
WHAT WAS THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR?
How did the expansion into the Southwest change the people?

- The Spanish mission system (collapsed in the early 1800s)
- Haciendas: elite landholdings with large amounts of land encouraged ranching.
- Gold was found in California in 1849 (just after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo)
- California’s population grew significantly.

What about the status of the people who already lived in this region?

- Many Hispanic families lost status – replaced by those moving into the state
- English ranchers and Hispanic peoples often clashed over lands and rights.
**SHORT RESPONSE:**

*Describe how mining and ranching transformed the West. Cite specific examples/evidence to support your answer.*

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