The West: 1865-1900
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Theme #1:

After the Civil War, whites overcame the Plains Indians’ fierce resistance and settled the Great West, bringing to a close the long frontier phase of American history.
Theme #2:

The completion of the transcontinental railroad in the West created a significant pattern of western settlement into three frontiers: farming, cattle and mining.
I. The “Great West”

Intro:

Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893)

A. Location: Great Plains in the east to California desert in the west

B. Flood of whites to the West after the Civil War
C. Inhabited by Plains Indians
   1. Sioux and Comanche
   2. Apache and Navajo
   3. Nez Perce and Shoshoni

D. By 1890, the entire area was carved into states (except 4 territories)
   1. One of most rapid settlements of such a vast area in human history
   2. Westward movement spurred by Homestead Act and the transcontinental railroad
E. Amerindians stood in the way of expansion

F. African Americans

1. 18% of California population by 1890

2. Many involved in fur trade of the 1820s and 1840s

3. 500,000 lived west of Mississippi River

4. "Exodusters" after 1877

5. 25% of cowboys
II. Americans v. Native Americans

A. Plains Amerindians:
   1. Horses
   2. Buffalo hunting
      a. Saw Indians as independent nations and as wards of the state
      b. Indians victimized by corrupt U.S. officials
      c. Pressure of white settlers
      d. Treaties frequently violated
      e. Concentration policy began in 1851
f. “Relocation” in the 1860s
   • Treaty of Ft. Laramie (1868)
   • Other tribes sent to Oklahoma territory
   • Bureau of Indian affairs

e. Concentration policy began in 1851

4. Indians surrendered ancestral lands to be left alone
Major Conflicts between Native Americans and Whites in the West
B. Indian Wars

1. Violence peaked between 1868 and 1890

a. Civil War veterans
   • 20% of western soldiers were black: Buffalo Regiment

b. Plains Indians were expert fighters with modern weapons
2. **Sand Creek Massacre, 1864**
   (Chivington Massacre)
   - **150 Cheyenne and Arapaho**
   - killed by U.S. Army (mostly women, children, and elderly)
3. **Sioux Wars of 1876-77**

A. **Gold miners rushed to Black Hills of South Dakota in 1875**

B. **Sitting Bull** attacked U.S. forces after Ft. Laramie Treaty was violated

C. **U.S. forces pursued the Sioux**

- **Led by General George Armstrong Custer**
D. Battle of Little Big Horn, 1876

1. **Crazy Horse** destroyed Custer’s forces (264 men)

E. **Sitting Bull** eventually surrendered to U.S. forces after having fled to Canada
4. **Nez Perce**

A. **Chief Joseph**

B. Nez Perce ceded much land in 1855 in return for large reservation in Oregon and Idaho

- Later forced to cede even more land

C. 1877, U.S. gov’t ordered removal of Nez Perce from Oregon

D. War ensued

E. Flight to Canada

F. Sent to Kansas & later, Oklahoma
5. Apache

A. **Cochise** led a -9-year guerilla war against U.S. forces

B. **Geronimo** later led Apache in Arizona and New Mexico

C. Apache pursued by U.S. Army into Mexico and eventually surrendered

D. Some Apache became successful farmers in Oklahoma
6. **Battle of Wounded Knee** (1890)
   a. **Last major clash between U.S. Army and American Indians**
   b. **Army sent to stop the Ghost Dance**
   c. **300 Sioux killed; 60 U.S. troops**
C. Results of Indian Wars
1. By 1890, virtually all Indian tribes forced on reservations
2. Mass killing of buffalo effectively destroyed the Plains Indians
A mountain of buffalo skulls waiting to be ground into fertilizer.
3. Railroads transported troops, farmers, cattlemen, sheepherders and settlers
D. Reformers sought to help the Native Americans

1. Helen Hunt Jackson: *A Century of Dishonor* (1881)
   a. Chronicaled gov’t abuses and deceit of Indians
   b. Inspired assimilationist movement
2. **Dawes Severalty Act of 1887**

A. **Reflected forced-civilization views of reformers**

B. **Provisions**

- Dissolved many tribes as legal entities
- Wiped out tribal ownership of land
- Set up individual Indian family heads with an allotment of 160 acres
- In return, Indians were expected to assimilate to American culture
C. **Results**

- **Accelerated destruction of traditional Indian culture**
  - Army-style boarding schools established to assimilate Indian children

- **2/3 of remaining Indian lands were lost**

- **Policy remained intact until the New Deal during the Great Depression**

D. **Indians received full citizenship in 1924**
Indian Reservations in America, 1892
WHERE NATIVE AMERICANS LIVE TODAY

III. Impact of the Transcontinental Railroad on the West

A. Three Western Frontiers
   1. Mining
   2. Ranching
   3. Ranching

B. Towns sprang up along railroad routes
IV. The Mining Frontier

A. Mining areas were the first to be settled in the West
- Copper, lead, quartz, zinc (in addition to gold and silver)
G. **Significance of mining**

1. Attracted population and wealth to the “Wild West”
2. Helped finance the Civil War
3. Facilitated the building of railroads
4. Intensified conflict between whites and Indians
5. Introduced the silver issue into American politics
6. Added to American folklore and literature
V. Ranching frontier: cattle raising

A. Transcontinental railroad facilitated transportation of meat to eastern cities

B. Challenges

1. **Barbed-wire fences**
2. Extreme weather
VI. Farming

A. Homestead Act of 1862

B. Results

1. 500,000 families moved West after 1865
2. Up to 2/3 ultimately failed
3. Most land owned by corporations or promoters
4. Federal trend of free land lasted until the 1930s
C. Development of Farming

1. Special plows worked black sod
2. Railroads
3. Improved irrigation
4. Tougher strains of wheat
5. Flour milling
5. Barbed wire
Northern Great Plains

Family in front of their sod home with a wooden lean-to, early 1900s
Pioneer family dressed up for an itinerant photographer, early 1900s
VII. End of the Frontier

A. Phenomenal growth in the West between 1870s and 1890s

B. Oklahoma Land Rush (April 22, 1889)

1. U.S. gov’t made Creek and Seminole land available for white

2. “Boomers” and “Sooners” claimed 2 million acres in one day
3. Became a territory by end of 1889
4. Became a state in 1907

Oklahoma Land Rush, April 22, 1889
C. 1890 Census revealed a frontier line no longer existed
D. “Safety Valve” thesis
VIII. Large-Scale Farming and the Mechanization of Agriculture

A. Agricultural revolution in Mississippi River region after Civil War

1. Heavy investment in machinery
   a. Steam power
   b. Twine-binder and the "combine"
2. Large-scale farmers concentrated on a single crop (e.g. wheat and corn)

3. Large-scale commercial agriculture run by entrepreneurial capitalists of the New South, spread beyond the plantations into white small farming regions
B. Farmers experienced wrenching changes

1. **Crop-lien system** was basis of southern agriculture

2. Some small-scale farmers, unskilled in business, blamed banks and railroads

3. **Gave rise to Populist movement of victimized farmers**
C. Economic challenges for farmers

1. Deflated currency and low food prices

2. Natural disasters

3. Gov’t-added woes
   a. Overvalued land meant higher taxes
   b. Protective tariffs

4. Agricultural-related trusts gouged farmers

5. Farmers lacked political power; poorly organized