

The American West

Section 1



MAIN IDEA

Native Americans fought the movement of settlers westward, but the U.S. military and the persistence of American settlers proved too strong to resist.

Key Terms and People

Sand Creek Massacre killing of 150 Cheyenne women, children, and elderly people

Sitting Bull leader of the Sioux at the Battle of the Little Bighorn

Battle of the Little Bighorn battle between the Sioux and the U.S. Army, which the Sioux won

George Armstrong Custer U.S. Army colonel in charge at the Battle of the Little Bighorn

Wounded Knee Massacre killing of about 300 Sioux men, women, and children

Chief Joseph Nez Percé leader during their forced move from the Pacific Northwest

Americanization changing Native Americans' cultures and traditions

Bureau of Indian Affairs agency that managed Native American reservations

Dawes Act law breaking up reservations into individual plots of land

Section Summary

STAGE SET FOR CONFLICT

Many different Native American nations made up the Plains Indians. The buffalo was their source of food, clothing, shoes, and tepees. They moved from place to place following the buffalo herds. They did not settle down on the land, and they did not believe it could be owned. American settlers wanted to own it.

Until the 1850s the U.S. government simply moved Native Americans farther west. From the 1850s on, the government began taking their lands and sending them to reservations. The goal was to destroy the power of the Plains Indians and allow settlers on their land. One way to do this was to kill the buffalo.

How did the Plains Indians use the buffalo?

Why did the U.S. government want to destroy the buffalo herds?

THE INDIAN WARS

As settlers moved onto the Plains, there were more and more conflicts with the Plains Indians. In 1864 a group of Cheyenne raided nearby ranches. The U.S. Army first got the trust of the Cheyenne, then, in a surprise attack called the **Sand Creek Massacre**,

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killed about 150 Cheyenne women, children, and elderly people. This attack led the Cheyenne and other Native Americans to step up attacks on white settlers.

Thousands of Native Americans led by **Sitting Bull** fought the Army at the **Battle of the Little Bighorn**. The Army commander was **George Armstrong Custer**. He and his troops were killed. The U.S. government became even more determined to put down the Indian threat to settlers.

A Native American religious movement called the Ghost Dance gave hope to its believers. Some whites thought it meant an Indian uprising was coming. The Army went to arrest Sitting Bull, who had joined the movement. Fighting broke out and Sitting Bull was killed. The survivors were led to a camp. There, in the **Wounded Knee Massacre**, Colonel James Forsyth led his soldiers in killing about 300 Sioux men, women, and children.

What did the Ghost Dance give its believers that the U.S. Army might fear? Why?

RESISTANCE ENDS IN THE WEST

In the Pacific Northwest, **Chief Joseph** led the Nez Percé. In 1863 the U.S. government took back most of their reservation land. Some Nez Percé fled to Canada, pursued by the army. Less than 40 miles from the Canadian border, the Nez Percé were forced to surrender. In the Southwest, Apache leader Geronimo led raids along the Arizona-Mexico border until he and his followers were caught a few years later.

Why did the Nez Percé have to leave their reservation in the Pacific Northwest?

LIFE ON THE RESERVATIONS

In order to end the Native American's way of life and beliefs, the government began a policy of **Americanization**. The **Bureau of Indian Affairs** ran the reservations. It sent Native American children to far-away schools where they could only speak English and could not wear traditional clothing. The **Dawes Act** divided reservations into smaller plots. The best lands were sold, and the Native Americans got the poor lands. They could not farm the land because they could not afford the animals and supplies they needed.

Why were Native Americans not successful at farming after the Dawes Act?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Elaborate Prepare a report on reservations today.