CHAPTER 17

THE WEST: EXPLOITING AN EMPIRE

SUMMARY
After the Civil War, Americans, who believed expansion was their “manifest destiny,” began moving westward across the continent, subduing the Native Americans through various means, creating a North American empire.

Beyond the Frontier
Prior to the Civil War, the march of White settlement paused at the margin of the semiarid Great Plains, a region seared by hot winds in the summer and buffeted by blizzards and hailstorms in the winter, presenting a temporary obstacle to further migration.

Crushing the Native Americans
Because they were seen as an additional obstacle to further White migration, the Native Americans were pushed from their lands and forced to radically change their cultures by the end of the century. Those who did not peacefully acquiesce were beaten into submission.

Life of the Plains Indians
After they acquired the Spanish horse, the Plains Indians abandoned their former agricultural lifestyle in favor of a strong, unique culture based upon nomadic hunting of the buffalo. Though the Plains Indians generally existed in tribes of thousands people, they lived in smaller bands of several hundred. Within Plains’ culture, men and women existed in relative egalitarianism as the occupations of both were necessary for group survival.

“As Long as Waters Run”: Searching for an Indian Policy
Earlier in the century, the Great Plains, known as the Great American Desert, was considered by the United States government as unusable for Whites and was given to the Native Americans as “one big reservation.” But with the discovery of gold in the West, the federal government began a policy of concentration, restricting tribes to specific, limited reservations. This new policy led to conflicts and violence among Native American groups and with Whites.

Final Battles on the Plains
From 1867 to 1890, the federal government fought a number of tribes in brutal military campaigns, eliminating any semblance of resistance and culminating in the Massacre at Wounded Knee.

The End of Tribal Life
In the 1870s and 1880s, Congress began a new policy to try to end tribal authority, turn Native Americans into farmers, and “educate” their children to be more like Whites. The
Dawes Act of 1887 forced Native Americans to live on individual plots of land and allowed 90 million acres of Indian lands to be sold to White settlers, but the crushing blow to traditional tribal ways resulted from the near extermination of the buffalo by White hunters. By 1900, there were only 250,000 Native Americans counted in the census, down from nearly five million in 1492, and most of them suffered from extreme poverty and the problems associated with it.

**Settlement of the West**
In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Whites, along with some Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians, moved West seeking adventure, or religious freedom, as in the case of the Mormons, and better health and economic opportunity.

**Men and Women on the Overland Trail**
Some one-half million settlers flocked to the West, especially California and Oregon, in the three decades after the Gold Rush of 1849. Traveling the Overland Trail, men and women found the journey both arduous and dangerous. For women in particular, movement to the West meant separation from friends and family, loneliness, and exhaustive work.

**Land for the Taking**
Government policy, beginning with the Homestead Act of 1862, provided free or inexpensive land to individual settlers, land speculators, and private corporations like railroads, all of whom were eager to supply the desire of a growing nation for the products of the West. Railroads became the West’s largest landowners. Often, unscrupulous speculators and companies took advantage of these government land programs.

**Territorial Government**
The new territories of the West related to the federal government much like colonies. The generation that grew up in the territorial West often developed distinctive ideas about politics, government, and the economy.

**The Spanish-Speaking Southwest**
The Spanish-Mexican heritage of the Southwest also influenced Americans in the West and gave a distinctive shape to that area’s politics, language, society, and law.

**The Bonanza West**
Quests for quick profits led to boom-and-bust cycles in the western economy, wasted resources, and uneven growth.

**The Mining Bonanza**
Lured by the prospect of mineral wealth throughout the region, many settlers moved west, building hasty and often short-lived communities that reflected primarily materialistic and exploitative interests. Individual prospectors made the first strikes using a process of placer mining. As the placers gave out, corporations moved in to dig the deep shafts, employing many foreign-born miners, who faced hostility and discrimination. Huge strikes like the Comstock Lode added millions of dollars to the economy, but by the 1890s the mining bonanza was over.
Gold from the Roots Up: The Cattle Bonanza
Between 1865 and 1885, large profits also were possible for the cattle ranchers who grazed their herds on the prairie grasses and used cowboys, many of whom were Black or Hispanic, to drive them to the railheads. By 1880 more than six million cattle had been driven to northern markets, but the establishment of ranches with barbed wire and the invention of new technologies like the refrigerated railroad car ended the possibility of and need for great drives.

Sodbusters on the Plains: The Farming Bonanza
Like the miners and cattlemen, millions of farmers moved onto the Great Plains seeking economic opportunity as well. Known as the Exodusters, many of these settlers were Blacks fleeing oppression in the South. White or Black, Plains farmers encountered enormous hardships, including a lack of accessible water, inadequate lumber for homes and fences, devastatingly hot summer winds, and savage winter storms.

New Farming Methods
Several important inventions, innovations, and adaptations made farming on the treeless, semiarid Plains not only possible, but also profitable. Dry farming, new plants, and new machinery were among the innovations that facilitated the rise of huge bonanza farms.

Discontent on the Farm
Bad weather, low prices, and rising railroad rates stirred up many farmers’ anger, leading some to form political lobbies and others to adopt more scientific, commercial methods. The Grange and the Farmers’ Alliance were organizations that worked for farmers’ interests and met important social and economic needs.

The Final Fling
The Oklahoma land rush of 1889 symbolized the closing of the frontier and in many ways reflected the attitude of Anglo-Americans toward Native Americans and their land.

Conclusion: The Meaning of the West
In the 1890s, historian Frederick Jackson Turner theorized that the West and Americans’ settlement of it explained American development, shaping American customs and character, giving rise to the American ideals of independence and self-reliance, all while fostering invention and adaptation. Later historians have challenged Turner’s thesis, pointing out frontier conservatism and imitativeness or the importance of family and community on the frontier as opposed to individualism. “New Western Historians” have rejected Turner’s ideas altogether, producing a complex view of the West in which racial and ethnic diversity and conflict dominate, and White Americans can be said to have conquered rather than settled the West.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the geographic and climatic conditions of the four major regions of settlement between Missouri and the Pacific.

2. Distinguish the basic cultural features of the Pueblo, Plains, California, and Northwestern tribes.

3. Analyze the various factors that ended tribal life for the Native Americans.

4. Explain the United States’ policies toward Native Americans and the results of those policies.

5. Discuss the motives that stimulated migration to the West.

6. Describe the journey along the Overland Trail for men and women.

7. List and explain the land laws passed by the federal government in the latter nineteenth century.

8. Locate the mineral strikes of the West and describe the life that developed in the mining camps.

9. Trace the boom-and-bust development of the open-range cattle industry.

10. Describe the problems faced by early farmers of the Great Plains and the new methods with which they addressed their problems.

11. Describe and assess the varying interpretations of the importance of the West in American history.

GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. communal shared in common by all members of a group. "... they built communal houses . . ."

2. nomadic relating to a culture or tribe that moves about in search of food or pasturage. "Nomadic and warlike, the Plains Indians . . ."
3. **migratory** roving or wandering from place to place, usually in response to seasonal changes. "Migratory in culture . . ."

4. **assimilate** to make similar, alike, or to bring into conformity with. ". . . urging instead that the nation assimilate them individually into White culture . . ."

5. **speculators** buyers or sellers who expect to profit from market fluctuations. "Speculators made ingenious use of the land laws."

6. **patronage** the awarding of government jobs on a basis other than merit (i.e., friendship, financial support, etc.). "[The territories] became an important part of the patronage system . . ."

7. **placer mining** surface mining in which gravels are picked or dredged from deposits; ore is separated from the wastes by panning or sluicing. " . . . they used a simple process called placer mining."

8. **simple democracy** uncomplicated rules and penalties characteristic of the government of early mining towns. "Mining camps were governed by a simple democracy."

9. **exploitation** using a natural resource or economic condition for one's own profit. "Opportunistic, materialistic, and exploitative Westerners were always ready to seize the main chance."

10. **Sooner** settler who moved onto government land before it was officially opens, hence, a nickname for an Oklahoman. " . . . 'Sooners'—those who had jumped the gun . . ."

**IDENTIFICATION**

Briefly identify the meaning and significance of the following terms:

1. “Great American Desert”

3. Wounded Knee

4. Dawes Severalty Act

5. Overland Trail
6. Homestead Act of 1862

7. Comstock Lode

8. Chinese Exclusion Act

9. The Grange

10. Exodusters

MATCHING

A. Match the following leaders with the appropriate description:

_____ 1. Black Kettle  a. Sioux chief who ambushed Captain William J. Fetterman in response to the government's plans to build the Bozeman Trail

_____ 2. Red Cloud  b. leader of the Cheyenne during the massacre by Colonel John M. Chivington at Sand Creek

_____ 3. Chief Joseph  c. Nez Percé chief who led his tribe on a phenomenal flight to Canada in 1877

_____ 4. Crazy Horse  d. war chief of the Sioux who led them in battle against Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer at the Little Big Horn

_____ 5. Sitting Bull  e. spiritual leader of the Sioux in the campaign against Whites in 1875-1876

f. leader of the Teton Sioux in the time of the Ghost Dance religion and the massacre at Wounded Knee
B. Match the following individuals with the appropriate description:

_____1. Horace Greeley  
   a. early explorer who thought the land west of the Mississippi uninhabitable for Whites

_____2. Samuel Johnson  
   b. historian who wrote that the frontier shaped American character

_____3. Oliver Dalrymple  
   c. editor who urged unemployed readers to settle western farms

_____4. Oliver Kelley  
   d. Yale professor who wrote books on crop growth and soil minerals

_____5. Frederick Jackson Turner  
   e. bonanza farmer who produced 600,000 bushels of wheat in one year  
   f. government clerk who founded organizations to provide farmers with social, cultural, and educational activities

COMPLETION

Answer the question or complete the statement by filling in the blanks with the correct word or words.

1. Historian Walter Prescott Webb argued that the Great Plains lacked two of the three “legs” on which eastern civilization had stood. The three legs were _____________, _____________, and _____________.

2. The Paiute messiah Wovoka claimed to have had a vision that Indians would gain a new life if they performed the _____________.

3. The Plains Indians developed a nomadic lifestyle following, hunting, and living off every part of the _____________.

4. One of the most famous professional buffalo hunters and the producer of a “Wild West” show was _____________.

5. Most wagon trains bound for the West began their journey at _____________.

6. To lure land-seeking Europeans to the American West, railroads set up _____________ of _____________.

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7. Farmers on the Plains compensated for the lack of water with a technique called ________.

8. Agricultural extension stations, which helped spread new techniques to American farmers, were supported by ________________ Act of 1877.

9. Black soldiers, who were first used during the Civil War, were often stationed in the West and used to fight the Indians who referred to them as ___________ ____________.

10. African Americans who migrated to the west in 1879 fleeing Southern oppression and discrimination were known as ____________.

TRUE/FALSE

Mark the following statement either T (True) or F (False):

_____ 1. Westerners created subsistence economies that were largely independent of both eastern capital and the federal government.

_____ 2. The material culture of the Plains Indians was based on a diversity of animal and plant life.

_____ 3. United States policy toward Native Americans aimed at maintaining tribal life.

_____ 4. Red Cloud's victories caused the government to change policy and attempt to “civilize” Native American tribes.

_____ 5. Americans settled more land between 1870 and 1900 than in all the years before 1870.

_____ 6. Government officials made sure that only legitimate farming families received any of the federal lands.

_____ 7. The Spanish-Mexican heritage of the Southwest had an important impact on the development of that region.

_____ 8. The mining and cattle industries experienced a slow but steady growth pattern in the decades after the Civil War.

_____ 9. The Great Plains area was a problem for Anglo settlers because of Native American tribes, the relative scarcity of trees, and the inadequacy of rainfall.

_____ 10. The droughts of the 1880s slowed the march of the pioneer Anglo farmers.
MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the one alternative that best completes the statement or answers the question.

1. Early explorers thought the trans-Mississippi West best suited for
   a. irrigated farmland.
   b. ranching grassland.
   c. timber and minerals.
   d. Indians and buffalo.

2. The Plains Indians were
   a. organized into one large and powerful tribal group.
   b. an insignificant proportion of the total Native American population in the United States in 1870.
   c. a complex of tribes, cultures, and bands that assigned most work on the basis of sex.
   d. at a distinct disadvantage when fighting Whites because of weapons.

3. Government policy toward Native Americans
   a. ignored or opposed tribal organization.
   b. was consistent but not successful because of tribal organization.
   c. was formulated by humanitarians who wanted to preserve tribal organization.
   d. was a failure because the Indians insisted on being farmers.

4. All of the following were problems for the pioneer farmers of the Great Plains except
   a. lack of rain
   b. declining crop prices
   c. lack of available land
   d. inadequate housing materials

5. By the 1700s, the culture of the Plains Indians had been revolutionized by
   a. reservation life.
   b. new farming techniques.
   c. the Pueblo Indians.
   d. the introduction of the European horse.

6. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887
   a. gave small plots of reservation lands to individual Native Americans.
   b. succeeded because it respected tribal organization.
   c. placed power in the hands of the Indians’ traditional leaders or chiefs.
   d. prevented the alienation of Indian leaders.
7. Between 1870 and 1900, most settlers moved west to
   a. seek freedom from religious persecution.
   b. escape the drab routine of factory life.
   c. escape the diseased conditions of crowded eastern cities.
   d. improve their economic situation.

8. The most difficult leg of the Overland Trail was the
   a. initial journey to Fort Kearney.
   b. pass through the Rocky Mountains.
   c. barren stretch between Fort Laramie and Fort Hall.
   d. final trek through the desert and the Sierra Nevada.

9. One purpose of the Dawes Act was to
   a. separate the civilized from the uncivilized tribes.
   b. enforce all previous treaties between the federal government and the various tribes.
   c. force Native Americans to abandon the communal ownership of land.
   d. support Native American religions, such as the Ghost Dance movement.

10. Between 1862 and 1890, the federal government gave more land to
    a. individual homesteaders.
    b. private corporations.
    c. railroad companies.
    d. state governments.

11. Cities like Abilene, Fort Worth, and Dodge City owed their population growth and prosperity in the latter nineteenth century to
    a. silver mining.
    b. their location in the farming belt.
    c. shipping or receiving cattle.
    d. the discovery of oil in nearby fields.

12. The Great Plains presented “sodbusters” with one problem not faced by farmers of earlier American frontiers which was
    a. hostile Indians.
    b. scarce water and timber.
    c. isolation and loneliness.
    d. inadequate transportation.

13. One of the results of the rapid increase in cultivated acres the latter half of the nineteenth century was
    a. higher tariffs on farm products.
    b. lower prices for farm products.
    c. a decrease in demand for farm machinery.
    d. an increase in land values.
14. The farming boom on the Plains lasted until the
   a. Panic of 1893.
   b. bumper crop of 1884.
   c. rise of the “bonanza” farms in the 1870s.
   d. droughts of 1887-1894.

15. By the Dawes Act of 1887, the Indian Bureau tried to
   a. end the traditional Native American religions and encourage Christianity among
      the tribes.
   b. increase the power of the tribal councils.
   c. establish Indian-controlled and -funded educational institutions.
   d. seek out urban-industrial employment for young, male Indians.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

To check your understanding of the key issues of this period, solve the following problems:

1. Was Horace Greeley's 1867 editorial on the agrarian opportunity of the West an
   overly optimistic view of the conditions and forces at work on the Great Plains?

2. Why did the policy of the government toward Native Americans waver from 1834 to
   1934?

3. Theodore Roosevelt once stated that the only alternative to the defeat of the Indian
   was to “keep the entire continent as a game preserve for squalid savages.” Explain
   the causes and results of such an attitude.

4. What factors propelled and made possible rapid settlement of the American West
   from 1870 to 1900? What were the economic and political consequences?

5. What influence did the Spanish-Mexican heritage have on the development of the
   American Southwest?
CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

After reading Black Elk, “Account of the Wounded Knee Massacre,” (1890), Benjamin Harrison, “Report on Wounded Knee Massacre and the Decrease in Indian Land Acreage,” (1891), and Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” (1893), answer the following questions:

Black Elk, Account of the Wounded Knee Massacre (1890)

It was about this time that bad news came to use from the north. We heard that some policemen from Standing Rock had gone to arrest Sitting Bull on Grand River, and that he would not let them take him; so there was a fight, and they killed him.

It was now the end of the Moon of Popping Trees, and I was twenty-seven years old [December 1890]. We heard that Big Foot was coming down from the Badlands with nearly four hundred people. Some of these were from Sitting Bull’s band. They had run away when Sitting Bull was killed, and joined Big Foot on Good River. There were only about a hundred warriors in this band, and all the others were women and children and some old men. They were all starving and freezing, and Big Foot was so sick that they had to bring him along in a pony drag. They had all run away to hide in the Badlands, and they were coming now because they were starving and freezing. Soldiers were over there looking for them. The soldiers had everything and were not freezing and starving. Near Porcupine Butte the soldiers came up to the Big Foots, and they surrendered and went along with the soldiers to Wounded Knee Creek.

It was in the evening when we heard that the Big Foots were camped over there with the soldiers, about fifteen miles by the old road from where we were. It was the next morning [December 29, 1890] that something terrible happened.

That evening before it happened, I went into Pine Ridge and heard these things, and while I was there, soldiers started for where the Big Foots were. These made about five hundred soldiers that were there next morning. When I saw them starting I felt that something terrible was going to happen. That night I could hardly sleep at all. I walked around most of the night.

In the morning I went out after my horses, and while I was out I heard shooting off toward the east, and I knew from the sound that it must be wagon-guns [cannon] going off. The sounds went right through my body, and I felt that something terrible would happen...[He donned his ghost shirt, and armed only with a bow, mounted his pony and rode in the direction of the shooting, and was joined on the way by others.]

In a little while we had come to the top of the ridge where, looking to the east, you can see for the first time the monument and the burying ground on the little hill where the church is. That is where the terrible thing started. Just south of the burying ground on the little hill a deep dry gulch runs about east and west, very crooked, and it rises westward to nearly the top of the ridge where we were. It had no name, but the Wasichus [while men] sometimes called Battle Creek now. We stopped on the ridge not far from the head of the dry gulch. Wagon guns were still going off there on the little hill, and they were going off again where they hit among the gulch. There was much shooting down yonder, and there were many cries, and we could see calvarymen scattered over the hills ahead of us. Calvarymen were riding along the gulch and shooting into it, where the women and children were running away and trying to hide in the gullies and the stunted pines...

We followed down along the dry gulch, and what we saw was terrible. Dead and wounded women and children and little babies were scattered all along there where they had been trying to run away. The soldiers had followed along the gulch, as they ran, and murdered them in there. Sometimes they were in heaps because they had huddled together, and some were scattered all along. Sometimes bunches of them had been killed and torn to pieces where the wagon guns hit them. I saw a little baby trying to suck its mother, but she was bloody and dead.

There were two little boys at one place in this gulch. They had guns and they had been killing soldiers all by themselves. We could see the soldiers they had killed. The boys were all alone there, and they were not hurt. These were very brave little boys.

When we drove the soldiers back, they dug themselves in, and we were not enough people to drive them out from there. In the evening they marched off up Wounded Knee Creek, and then we saw all that they had done there.

In the morning the soldiers began to take all the guns away from the Big Foots, who were camped in the flat
below the little hill where the monument and burying ground are now. The people had stacked most of their guns, and even their knives, by the teepee where Big Foot was lying sick. Soldiers were on the little hill and all around, and there were soldiers across the dry gulch to the south and over east along Wounded Knee Creek too. The people were nearly surrounded, and the wagon-guns were pointed at them.

It was a good winter day when all this happened. The sun was shining. But after the soldiers marched away from their dirty work, a heavy snow began to fall. The wind came up in the night. There was a big blizzard, and it grew very cold. The snow drifted deep in the crooked gulch, and it was one long grave of butchered women and children and babies, who had never done any harm and were only trying to run away.

Benjamin Harrison, Report on Wounded Knee Massacre and the Decrease in Indian Land Acreage (1891)

The outbreak among the Sioux which occurred in December last is as to its causes and incidents fully reported upon by the War Department and the Department of the Interior. That these Indians had some just complaints, especially in the matter of the reduction of the appropriation for rations and in the delays attending the enactment of laws to enable the Department to perform the engagements entered into with them, is probably true; but the Sioux tribes are naturally warlike and turbulent, and their warriors were excited by their medicine men and chiefs, who preached the coming of an Indian messiah who was to give them power to destroy their enemies. In view of the alarm that prevailed among the white settlers near the reservation and of the fatal consequences that would have resulted from an Indian incursion, I placed at the disposal of General Miles, commanding the Division of the Missouri, all such forces as we thought by him to be required. He is entitled to the credit of having given thorough protection to the settlers and of bringing the hostiles into subjection with the least possible loss of life. . . .

Since March 4, 1889, about 23,000,000 acres have been separated from Indian reservations and added to the public domain for the use of those who desired to secure free homes under our beneficent laws. It is difficult to estimate the increase of wealth which will result from the conversion of these waste lands into farms, but it is more difficult to estimate the betterment which will result to the families that have found renewed hope and courage in the ownership of a home and the assurance of a comfortable subsistence under free and healthful conditions. It is also gratifying to be able to feel, as we may, that this work has proceeded upon lines of justice toward the Indian, and that he may now, if he will, secure to himself the good influences of a settled habitation, the fruits of industry, and the security of citizenship.

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

Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, continuous recession, and the advance of American settlements westward, explain American development.

Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications lie the vital forces that call these organs into life and shape them to meet changing conditions. The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people-to the changes involved in crossing a continent, this winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. . . .

Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the West. . . .

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germ, any more than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is, that here is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a very real sense. Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American. As successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations, so each frontier leaves its traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of the frontier characteristics. Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines. And to study this advance, the men
who grew up under these conditions, and the political, economic, and social results of its, is to study the really American part of our history. . . .

Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone form the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has been forced upon them. He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise. But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves. For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant. There is not tabula rasa. The stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept its conditions; the inherited ways of doing things are also there; and yet, in spite of environment, and in spite of custom, each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restrains and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier. What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bond of custom, offering new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that, and more, the ever retreating frontier has been to the United States directly, and to the nations of Europe more remotely. And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period in American history.

1. What were the immediate causes of the Wounded Knee Massacre?

2. What were the longer term more fundamental causes of the inability of Whites and Indians to avoid such events as the Wounded Knee Massacre?

3. What is the basic thesis of Turner regarding the most important influence on the American character?

4. What are the implications of Turner referring to the “area of free land” and the Wounded Knee Massacre?

5. Looking back at the Puritan ethos expressed by John Winthrop’s notion of a “city upon a hill,” and at the ideas of Manifest Destiny, compare these ideas with those of Turner.