

Settling the Great Plains Guided Reading Questions

1. Describe the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads.
 - Central Pacific moved eastward from Sacramento and the Union Pacific moved westward from Omaha, Nebraska. Both meet in Utah.
 - Most of the difficult work was done by immigrants – the Irish, Mexicans, and the Chinese.
 - The US government paid for the railroads – they gave companies 170 million acres of land, worth half a billion dollars.
2. What was the Homestead Act?
 - 160 acres of land was given free to heads of households.
 - Between 1862 – 1900, about 600,000 families moved West.
3. Who were the exodusters?
 - African-Americans who moved from the South to Kansas because of the availability of free land.
4. Describe the closing of the frontier.
 - By 1880, the US had expanded all the way to the Pacific.
 - 19 million acres of government-owned land had been bought.
5. What were some of the challenges of settling in the plains?
 - Droughts, blizzards, fires, and attacks by outlaws or Native-Americans.

- People either lived in dugouts (side of hills or ravines) or soddies made up of sod. Offered little light, air, lots of insects, and snakes.

6. Describe the life of women in the plains.

- Women did everything – they worked along their husbands in the fields, took care of livestock, made their own clothing, played doctor, and built churches and schools.

7. Describe the new farm devices.

- Grain drill to plant seeds was invented in 1841
- Spring-tooth harrow prepared the soil (1869)
- By 1890, 900 manufacturers of farm equipment.

8. What were the Morrill Act and the Hatch Act?

- Morrill Act set aside federal land to build agricultural colleges.
- Hatch Act established agricultural experiment stations to educate farmers on new developments.

9. What challenges did farmers face in the second half of the 19th century?

- Farmers continually bought machines that were too expensive and went into debt.
- Bonanza Farms (MASSIVE FARMS) went bankrupt because of droughts in the Great Plains.
- Railroad companies charged excessive fees to farmers – sometimes charging more for a short-haul rather than a long-haul.

