***A Native Americans***

Native Americans were completely misunderstood by most white Americans. Their lifestyle and values were completely different. Native Americans lived in a communal style with their tribes. Very little property was individually owned -- and certainly not land. Other than this, individual tribes' lifestyles varied highly. While Eastern tribes tended to live in settlements and grow crops, the Plains tribes were frequently nomadic, following the bison that was their main source of food and clothing. Native Americans were looked down upon as "savages" because they did not dress, live, or behave as whites did. Thus, misunderstandings were frequent and their rights were frequently ignored. Native Americans were not considered to be citizens of the U.S. -- each tribe was considered to be a separate "nation" (for instance, the Cherokee Nation). The government originally negotiated treaties with tribes just like they negotiated with Great Britain, France, etc. This policy gradually changed. By 1876, the government ceased to make treaties and regarded the Native Americans as people who needed to be taken care of because they were incapable of doing it themselves. Thus, their plight became a shameful story of abuse of power by the American government. Many Native Americans suffered greatly during this period: their land rights were repeatedly disregarded; misunderstandings developed into armed conflicts and massacres; their traditional source of food and clothing was virtually eliminated; and they became very demoralized.

**B The "Trail of Tears"**

Native Americans had played a significant role in the development of the original colonies and helped the colonists in the early days of colonial exploration. However, despite this, beginning in the 1820s the government pursued a policy of removing Native Americans from any land desired by white settlers and moving them to land that was thought to be unwanted by settlers. One of these Native American removals is known as the "Trail of Tears" because so many people died on the trip. The "Trail of Tears" occurred when the federal government forcibly relocated the Cherokee tribe from its land in Georgia to government reservations in Oklahoma in 1838-1839. Whites wanted the land to grow cotton on it and gold had also been discovered on some of it. The Supreme Court had ruled in "Worcester v. Georgia" (1832) that the Cherokees had legal title to their land in Georgia. However, President Andrew Jackson refused to enforce this ruling and ordered the eviction of the Cherokee. The constitutional principle of checks and balances was threatened by Jackson's refusal. The principle of checks and balances refers to the principle of one branch of government being able to check the power of another branch. The Supreme Court had tried to check the power of Congress, but the president (who is responsible for enforcing the laws) sided with Congress and did not enforce the court decision. As a result, the Cherokee tribe was forced to leave Georgia for Oklahoma. Over 4,000 Cherokees died on the arduous trip to Oklahoma. Most of them were forced to walk and there were inadequate food supplies, due to poor management on the part of the U.S. Army, which handled the removal.

**Development of Reservations**

Beginning in the 1840s, to prevent hostilities between Plains Native Americans and settlers, the U.S. assigned each Western tribe a specific section of land, called a reservation, to live on. In 1851, Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act, which formally consolidated various Western tribes onto reservations. Reservations were intended to isolate the Native Americans from the settlers. Areas outside the reservations would be open to white travel and settlement. The land that is now the states of Oklahoma and South Dakota was intended to be for Native Americans only. Thus, beginning with the 1850s, the U.S. government began forcing Native Americans to live on their designated reservations. This process involved battles between the Native Americans and the U.S. Army throughout the Western Plains.

**C Broken Agreements and Armed Conflict**

Overwhelmed and demoralized by the late 1860s, most Native Americans in U.S. territories had reluctantly agreed to move onto their assigned lands. Soon, however, white settlers began to trespass upon these lands also. Fighting broke out again. Gold was discovered on Cheyenne land in Colorado in 1864. This brought more whites to the area and conflicts with the Cheyenne tribe. U.S. troops (mostly Colorado volunteers) under Colonel John Chivington attacked a group of peaceful Cheyenne in 1864 in the Colorado Territory. They slaughtered men, women, and children. It became known as the Sand Creek Massacre and caused the Cheyenne to raid white settlements in retaliation. In 1868, a Cheyenne village was destroyed and many were killed at Washita River (Oklahoma) by U.S. Army troops, led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, in the Battle of Washita.

Federal forces generally subdued the Native American uprisings with the help of the efficient six-shooter (the Colt revolver that held six bullets). However, it required a great effort on their part and a few tribes had moments of victory. One such victory was the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The Black Hills area of South Dakota had been designated by treaty for the Sioux and the Cheyenne. However, in January 1876, they were still ordered to leave when gold was discovered there. U.S. Army troops were sent to enforce this order and Custer and his troops were among them. They attacked a Sioux and Cheyenne camp on the Little Bighorn River in Montana Territory in June 1876. Custer and his more than 200 U.S. Army troops were all killed in a bloody battle. However, despite some military successes, most of the efforts of the Native Americans to resist white settlement were in vain -- the U.S. government had well-trained and well-armed troops.

**The Ghost Dance**

In January 1889, a Native American prophet had a religious revelation. This evolved into a religion that came to be accepted by more than one tribe -- the Ghost Dance. This religion promised that dead Native Americans would rise, the white man would disappear, and the traditional Native American way of life would be restored. This process would be encouraged through the performance of ritual dances and songs. The Ghost Dancers believed that the prophet was a messiah, or a leader of their cause. The Ghost Dance religion proved to be the last effort to resist white domination, however, and was doomed to failure. U.S. authorities felt threatened and sent troops to eliminate it. Some Sioux had left their reservation, but surrendered to U.S. troops near Wounded Knee Creek (South Dakota) in 1890. In the process of surrendering, a shot was fired that killed a trooper. In retaliation, the troops killed all of the Sioux in what is known as the Battle of Wounded Knee, although it was really a massacre. With this, the Ghost Dance religion and organized Native American military resistance came to an end.

**D The American Bison**

The huge herds of American bison, also known as buffalo or prairie buffalo, once reached an estimated 50 million and were a prime source of food, clothing, and shelter for Native Americans. With the expansion of the railroad through the Great Plains, railroads hired men to hunt bison so that they could feed their workers. Bison hides were also in great demand for popular "buffalo robes." Hunters also shot bison for sport. Over time, the once huge herds of bison rapidly dwindled. By 1889, fewer than 1,000 remained. This became a major source of friction between the whites and Native Americans. The bison's virtual disappearance further destroyed the ability of Western Native Americans to support themselves. It was the major factor that destroyed the Native American way of life on the Great Plains and forced the Native American population to rely even more on the government.

**The Dawes Severalty Act**

Not all Americans were in favor of the government's policy toward Native Americans. In 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson wrote "A Century of Dishonor," which detailed the broken promises and unfair treatment suffered by the Native Americans at the hands of the U.S. government. Just as the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had provided additional public pressure against slavery, this book resulted in demands for better treatment of the Native Americans. However, whites could not reconcile themselves to returning the Native Americans to their traditional way of life -- it was still viewed as inferior and "savage." Thus, what reformers advocated was to encourage the Native Americans to adopt a white lifestyle and values. In response, in 1887, Congress adopted the Dawes Severalty Act (also known as the Dawes General Allotment Act). This act provided for individual Native American homestead-style land ownership by distributing reservation land. The act also declared them American citizens with all the rights of citizenship when they received this land. The Dawes Severalty Act failed miserably. Reservation lands were not suitable for farming. Also, Western Native Americans were not used to raising crops and their whole lifestyle had been nomadic and communal (with their tribe). The act thus led to a deterioration of tribal life. Many Native Americans were swindled out of the land that they were granted. Also, the act allowed any land not given to a Native American to be sold to the public, leading to white ownership of what used to be Native American reservation land. Sadly, the destruction of their traditional culture demoralized Native Americans. Over the years, Native Americans assimilated more into American society, and their young questioned traditional ways. All Native Americans did not receive full citizenship rights until 1924, although about two-thirds had acquired it previously via negotiated treaties, military service, etc.

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