

PrepUS History
Unit 6 – America Expands
Native American Struggles Reading and Questions

The Long March of the Nez Perce

The **Nez Perce** (NEHZ PUHRS) were a large and powerful group of the Pacific Northwest. Their relations with white settlers were friendly and peaceful until the 1860s, when gold was discovered on Nez Perce land in Oregon.

In 1877 the U.S. government ordered the Nez Perce to leave their land and move to a reservation in Idaho or be forcibly removed. Their leader, **Chief Joseph**, decided to leave. Before he could act, a small group of Nez Perce attacked and killed several settlers. Knowing that his small band had no chance of defeating the U.S. Army, Joseph decided to retreat to Canada. With only about 200 warriors and nearly 600 women and children, he started north.

After traveling more than 1,000 miles (1,609 km), the group stopped to rest just 40 miles (64.4 km) from the Canadian border. It was a costly error. Army troops surrounded the Nez Perce and initiated a five-day siege. They blocked Joseph's people from getting out to find food and water. Finally, Chief Joseph surrendered, vowing, “**From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.**”

The army took Chief Joseph and his people to a reservation in what is now Oklahoma. Later, in 1885, he and many of his people moved to a reservation in Washington. Joseph spent the rest of his life trying to get better treatment for Native Americans.

The Apache Wars

Trouble also broke out in the Southwest between Native Americans and government troops. In the 1870s, the government forced the Chiricahua (chihr • uh • KAH • wuh) Apache to move to a reservation in Arizona. The Apache leader, **Geronimo**, then fled to Mexico.

During the 1880s, Geronimo led raids in Arizona. Thousands of U.S. Army troops pursued the Apache leader and his warriors. In 1886 Geronimo finally gave up the fight—the last Native American to surrender. The conflicts, however, were not over.

A Changing Culture

Many factors changed Native American life—white people moving onto their lands, the killing of the buffalo, U.S. Army attacks, and the reservation policy. Change also came from reformers who wanted Native Americans to fit into white culture.

In 1887 Congress passed the **Dawes Act**. With this law, Congress hoped to change what white people saw as weaknesses in Native American cultures: the lack of private property and nomadic habits. The Dawes Act called for breaking up reservations and ending Native Americans' identification with a tribal group.

According to the plan, every Native American would receive a plot of reservation land. Reformers hoped that the native peoples would become farmers and, in time, adopt the way of life practiced by most American citizens.

Some Native Americans became successful farmers or ranchers, but many had little training or eagerness for the jobs. Like homesteaders, Native Americans often found the plots of land they received too small to be profitable, so they sold them.

In 1889 many western Native Americans began to perform a ceremony called the **Ghost Dance**. This dance celebrated a hoped-for day when the settlers would disappear, the buffalo would return, and Native Americans could go back to traditional ways of life. As tensions between Native Americans and white settlers increased, the popularity of the Ghost Dance spread.

After Sitting Bull's death, several hundred Lakota Sioux gathered at Wounded Knee, a creek in southwestern South Dakota. They were armed. In December 1890, the U.S. Army sent troops to **Wounded Knee**. Their mission was to collect the Sioux weapons. As they did this, one of the guns discharged—fired a shot. The army, in turn, opened fire. When the shooting ended, more than 200 Sioux and 25 soldiers lay dead. Wounded Knee marked the end of armed conflict between the U.S. government and Native Americans.

1. The Dawes Act broke up reservations into plots to encourage Native Americans to farm and stay in one place.
A. TRUE B. FALSE
2. Who led the Apache resistance to the U.S. Army in Arizona?
A. Crazy Horse C. Sitting Bull
B. Geronimo D. Chief Joseph
3. Why was Wounded Knee significant?
A. It marked the end of armed conflict between the U.S. government and Native Americans.
B. It was a battle over mining rights in Montana.
C. It showed that Native Americans could not be forced onto reservations.
D. It was a terrible massacre of U.S. soldiers.
4. The _____ was a Native American celebration hoping for the day when the settlers would disappear and the buffalo would return.
A. Dawes Act C. Soddie
B. Wounded Knee D. Ghost Dance

What was the stated purpose of the Dawes Act, and what was its actual effect?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.