

## Year 8 HT 1 – The American West

The American West refers to the vast region of the United States that lies west of the Mississippi River. During the 19th century, this area underwent significant changes and became an important part of American history and folklore. The exploration and settlement of the American West were driven by various factors, including the desire for land, economic opportunities, and the idea of manifest destiny, which believed it was America's destiny to expand westward. The West was home to Native American tribes who had lived there for centuries, and their way of life was profoundly affected by the arrival of European settlers. The discovery of gold and other valuable resources led to the California Gold Rush and other mining booms, attracting people from all over the world in search of wealth. The expansion of railroads connected the East and West, facilitating trade and migration. The American West is also known for its iconic figures such as cowboys, pioneers, and outlaws.

Concurrent historical events in the UK during this time period include:

1. Victorian Era - The Victorian Era refers to the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837-1901, during which the British Empire reached its peak. The industrial revolution transformed British society, and there were significant improvements in transport, communication, and medicine.
2. London's Great Exhibition - In 1851, the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park, London, showcasing Britain's cultural and industrial supremacy. It attracted over 6 million visitors and showcased the latest inventions and technology.
3. The Crimean War - The Crimean War was fought between the Ottoman Empire, supported by Britain and France, and Russia. It lasted from 1853 to 1856 and was fought primarily in the Crimean peninsula. Its outcome led to a significant decline in Russian influence in Europe.

Key historical events that were happening around the world during this time period include:

1. American Civil War - The American Civil War was fought between the northern Union states and southern Confederate states from 1861 to 1865. The war led to the abolition of slavery in the United States and significant changes in American society and politics.
2. Second Opium War - The Second Opium War was fought between Britain and France against the Chinese Qing dynasty from 1856 to 1860. It resulted in foreign concessions being granted to Western powers and opened up China to foreign trade and influence.
3. Meiji Restoration in Japan - The Meiji Restoration occurred between 1868 and 1912 when Japan transformed from a feudal society to a modern industrialised nation. It set Japan on the path to becoming one of the world's major powers.

Understanding the chronological interrelation between different historical periods and events is vital in the study of history, and this gives students a broad understanding of historical development and perspective of the events that shaped societies and nations.

### Further reading:

Fiction:

"How I Became a Ghost" by Tim Tingle - This novel tells the story of a young Choctaw boy during the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and his journey to becoming a spirit.

Non fiction:

"You Wouldn't Want to Be an American Pioneer!" by Jacqueline Morley - This book provides a humorous look at the challenges and hardships pioneers faced while traveling along the Oregon Trail.