

The Destruction of the Indian Way of Life 1876-1890

The battle of Little Big Horn in 1876, although a victory for the Sioux Indians over the US army in the short term, was catastrophic for the Indians in the long term. Public opinion towards the Indians hardened and now white Americans wanted to see them crushed. Plains Indians would have to 'assimilate* or die.'

* Become like white
Americans

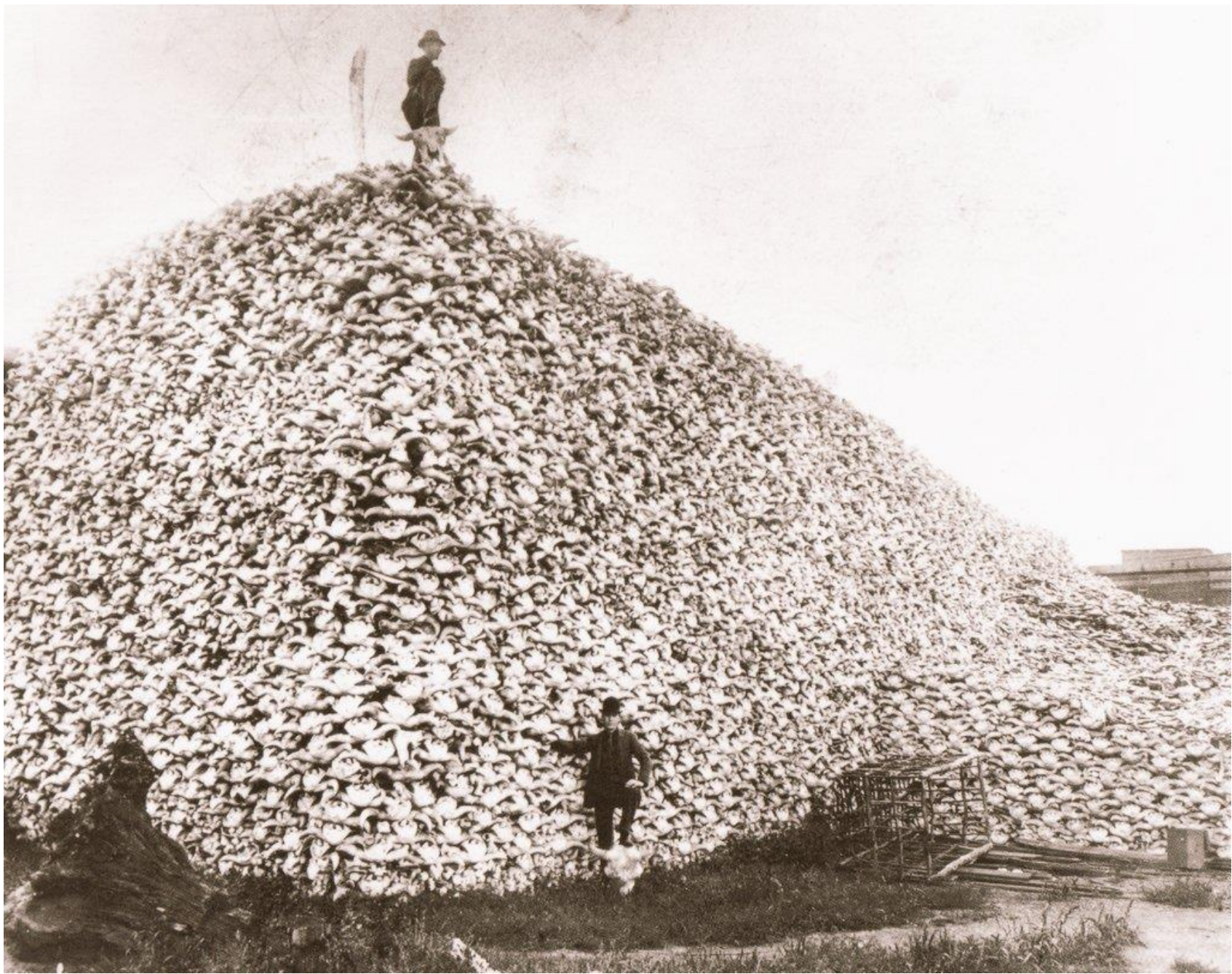
The Destruction of the Indian Way of Life 1876 - 1895

'Assimilate
or Die'*



LENDY STANDING REAR

* Become like us





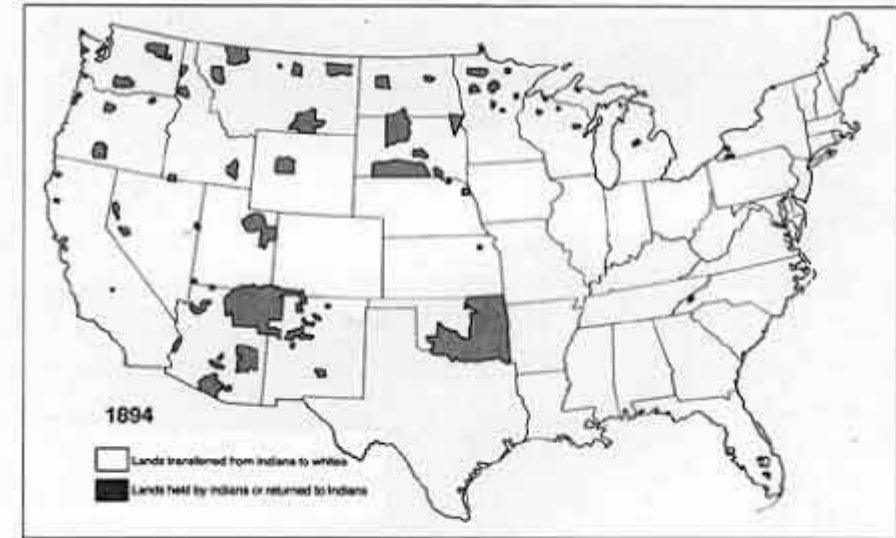
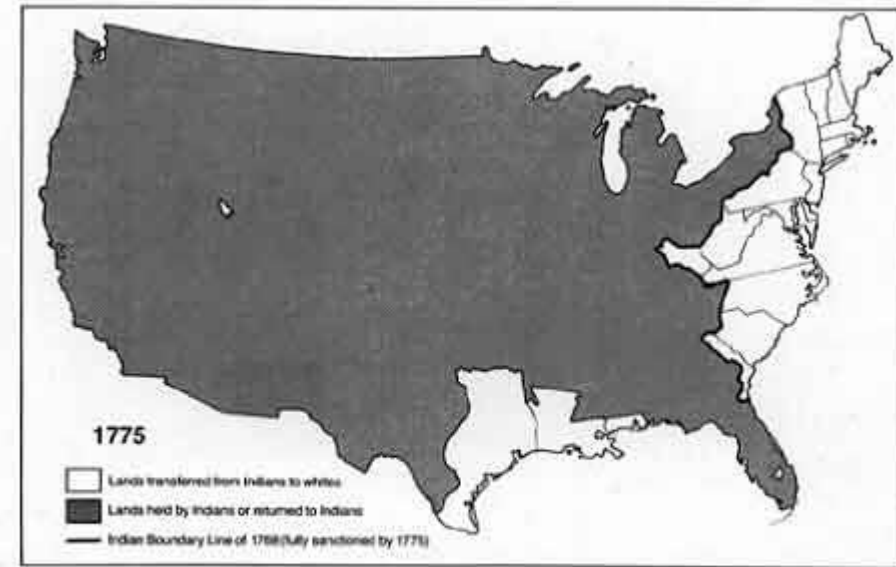
Task:

The Destruction of the Indian Way of Life

Divide a double page into 4, with these 4 headings sticking the 4 pictures in the right place:

- Through Education
- Through the Destruction of the Buffalo
- Through the Reservation system
- Through the Dawes Act

Read the statements that follow carefully and assign them to the correct heading and picture.



These two maps reveal the dramatic transfer of Indian lands into white hands between 1775 and 1894. The shaded areas are Indian holdings, the white areas those held by settlers. Lands transferred include those given over by treaty; purchase; unratified treaty or agreement; and those taken without Indian consent by private seizure and executive order, usually from the Secretary of the Interior or Congress. The huge reserves held by tribes before the Europeans arrived were necessary to support hunting, agriculture, and their nomadic way of life. White settlers, used to much denser populations, saw this as wasteful and unnecessary. It was the conscious desire and mission of many settlers and government officials to rid the Indians of any title to their lands by 1900, and vest those title rights in the U.S. government.

'Kill the Indian In him and save the man'
School aim

1880s:
When children left school and returned home they neither fitted the Sioux world nor the world of other Americans where they faced persecution.

1880s:
Feasts, dances, ceremonies such as the Sun Dance were banned. Instead Christian missionaries tried to fill this 'spiritual gap' and convert the Indians to Christianity.

Chiefs and Indian councils lost all powers over the own people. By 1885 the government had totally taken over legal matters – justice, punishment etc. The Indians lost the right to govern themselves.

Late 1870s/1880s
The Indians were not allowed to leave their reservations, this destroyed the foundations of their society – no buffalo meat, hides, etc for food, tipis, fuel etc.

..there's no two ways about it, either the buffalo must go or the Indian must go. Only when the Indian becomes absolutely dependent on us for his every need, will we be able to handle him. He's too independent with the buffalo. But if we kill the buffalo we conquer the Indian. It seems a more humane thing to kill the buffalo than the Indian, so the buffalo must go.
The view of an army officer in 1870s

Indians were not allowed horses, tipis or weapons on the reservations. They were all seized.

Children were taken from their parents and sent to boarding school. There they were prepared for life in 'the white man's world'.
From late 1870s

Children were not allowed to speak their own language at these schools and were taught to have no respect for their traditional way of life.

The Dawes Act 1887. This was the final nail in the coffin for Indian tribal structures and traditional ways of life. It was like a Homestead Act for the Indians. Each Plains Indian family was allocated 160 acre share of reservation land. All left over reservation land was sold to whites. (as seen in the Oklahoma Land Rush)

The Sioux were unable to stop their children being taken to these schools, If they tried their food rations were stopped on their reservation.

There was often no way to be independent on the reservations, the land was too poor to farm and they were not allowed to leave. This shattered confidence, pride and self belief and forced Indians to become dependent on the government handouts

By 1890, thanks to the Dawes Act, Plains Indians had lost half the lands they had in 1887. Those that took up the 160 acre offer often found it impossible to farm. Most gave up, sold their land to whites (or were cheated out of it) and ended up landless.

Before the 1870s, buffalo had been hunted by white Americans for their hides to be made into clothing. However, in 1871 a process was discovered for turning buffalo hide into leather much more cheaply both for clothing and machine belts. Buffalo hunters poured onto the Plains to kill and skin the buffalo.

The extinction of the buffalo also further opened up the Plains for cattle ranching. Cattle ranchers had powerful friends in the US government.

Between 1872-74, professional buffalo hunters killed 4.5 million buffalo. By 1883 the northern herd had gone (approximately 25 million animals). By 1890 less than a 1000 buffalo remained across the whole of the USA

In 1890 the US government declared the Indian Frontier had ceased to exist. New states were rapidly established in areas that had once been entirely given over to the Indians. (like Oklahoma) Railways, towns, cities had all grown up behind that original 'permanent Indian Frontier'. Nowhere within the USA's borders now belonged to any other nation or people.

The southern buffalo herd had been wiped out by 1875, partly through the sport of shooting buffalo from the trains that developed.



A huge pile of buffalo skulls, waiting to be turned into bone meal (fertiliser) photographed in 1880s



Two photographs of Lakota Sioux boys. One on arrival at the school, one 6 months later.

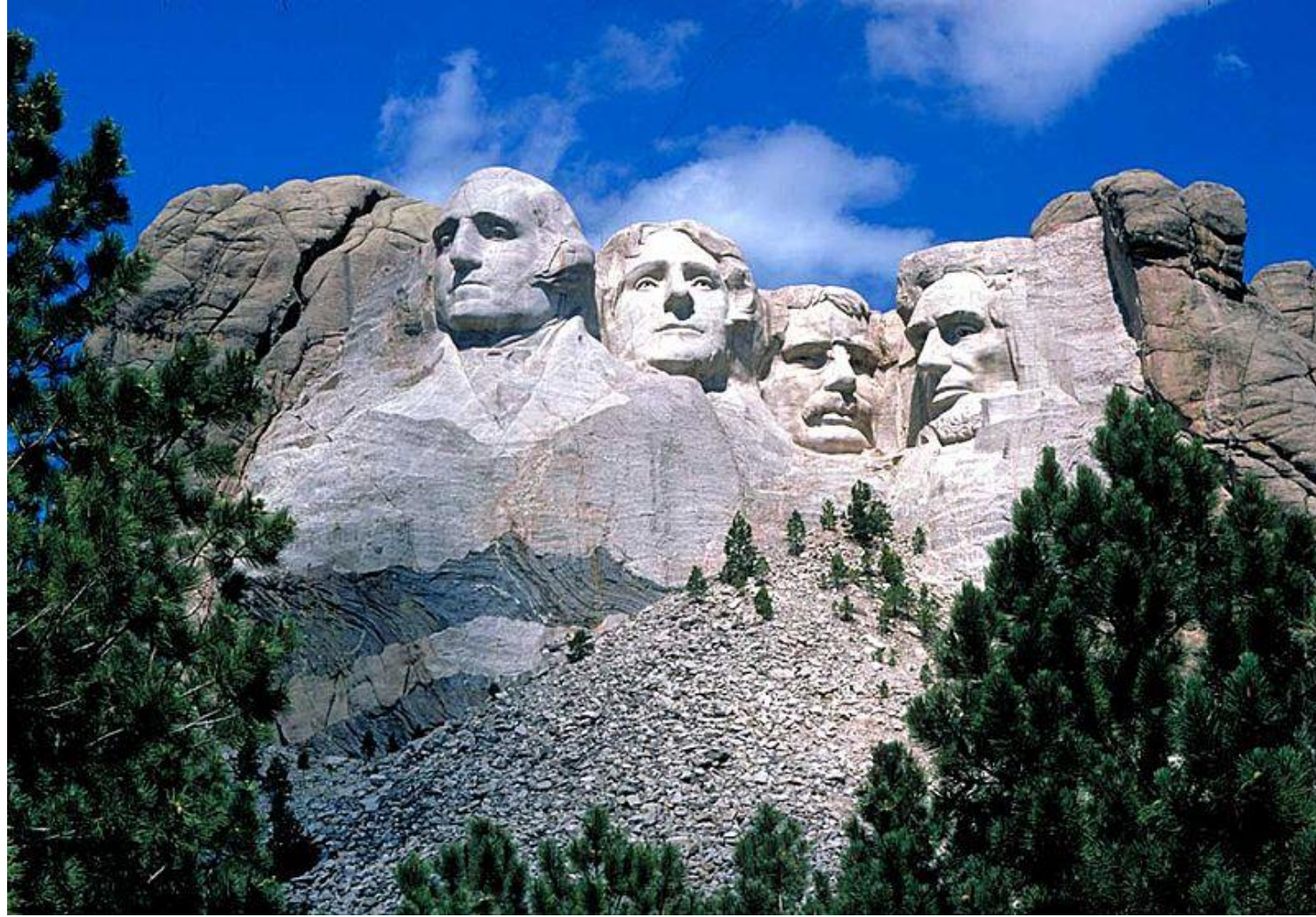


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Food rations being distributed on a Sioux reservation

Mount Rushmore – the ultimate declaration of Manifest Destiny and the destruction of Indian culture ?



The Mount Rushmore National Memorial with carvings of the heads of (from left) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln. Located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Completed 1941.

The Final Tragedy: The Ghost Dance and the Wounded Knee Massacre.

By the end of the 1880s the atmosphere amongst many of the Plains Indians was one of despair. Rations had been cut, a drought meant crops had failed, all their horses and weapons had been seized. Into this terrible situation came the Ghost Dance.

Use page 88 to take notes on the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee Massacre. Make sure you include:

- What the Ghost Dance was and what led to it.
- The US Government's reaction to the Ghost Dance
- Public Reaction to the Wounded Knee Massacre



Ghost Dance Song

Father have pity on us
We are all crying for thirst
All is gone.

Take pity on us Father
We are dancing as you wished
Because you commanded us.

You are close by in the dark
Hear us and help us.

We have nothing to eat
Father we are poor.

We dance hard
We dance long.

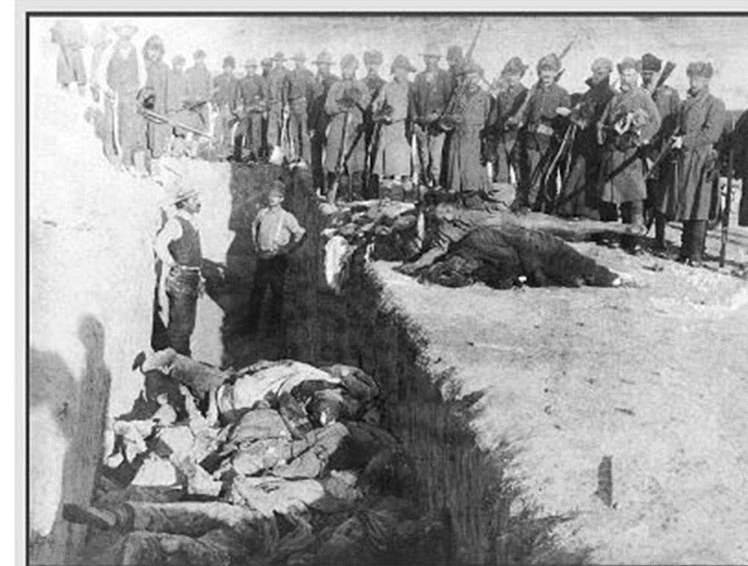
Take away the white men
Send back the buffalo.

The buffalo are gone
They are all gone.

Have pity
Father help us

We are poor and weak
We can do nothing alone
Help us be what we once were
Happy hunters of buffalo

Regardless of who was to blame the soldiers were ready for trouble. They opened fire with repeating rifles and four Hotchkiss cannon. By the time the firing stopped, 146 Indians were dead. 102 men and women, 24 old men, 7 old women, 6 boys aged between 5 and 8 and 7 babies under the age of 2. One soldier said *'It was a thing to melt the heart of a man, if it was not stone, to see those little children with their bodies shot to pieces.'*



Exam Question:

- Write a narrative account analysing the destruction of the Indian Way of Life 1876 -1890

You may use the following in your answer:

The Battle of the Little Bighorn 1876

The Ghost Dance

You must also use information of your own.

See the thinking quilt sheet to get you going and then the Guide to this style of question sheet as well.