**Impact of Westward Expansion 7.2**

**SSUSH12 Evaluate how westward expansion impacted the Plains Indians and fulfilled Manifest Destiny.**

**a. Examine the construction of the transcontinental railroad including the use of immigrant labor.**

**Document Analysis 1**

**As a class, they [Chinese Laborers] are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious, and economical. More prudent and economical [than white laborers], they are content with less wages. We find them organized for mutual aid and assistance. Without them, it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise [Transcontinental Railroad] within the time required by the Act of Congress.**

**Source: Leland Stanford, President of the Central Pacific Railroad, 1865**

**The Transcontinental Railroad**

Following the Civil War, the US continued to expand and become more and more industrialized. Railroads played a major role in this industrial growth and expansion. Railroads made life out west possible by allowing farmers, ranchers, and other settlers’ access to eastern markets and resources. They also made it easier for people to move west and populate territories at a rapid rate. In 1862, Congress coordinated an effort among the railroad companies to build a **Transcontinental Railroad**. Union Pacific (an eastern rail company) and Central Pacific (a rail company from Sacramento, California) joined their tracks at Promontory, Utah, in 1869. As a symbol of their union that now linked the nation east to west, representatives drove a gold spike to mark the occasion. The completion of the transcontinental railroad, however, would not have been possible without the contribution of thousands of immigrant laborers from **Ireland**and**China**. These immigrants often worked under very dangerous conditions. Laying railroad track could cause injury or even death. Also, attacks from hostile Native Americans were always a possibility. Railroad workers labored in the blistering heat of summer months and freezing snowstorms during winter. All the while, their employers paid them very little money. In addition, Chinese workers were often the victims of racism and abuse because of their Asian features, cultural differences, distinct dress, and "funny" language. Many of those who worked on the railroads lost their lives or suffered serious injury in the process of opening the West for further expansion.

**b. Evaluate how the growth of the western population and innovations in farming and ranching impacted Plains Indians.**

**Growth of Western Population & Innovations in Farming and Ranching**

Many settlers moved west intending to be farmers. However, they had to adapt to terrain very different from the East. Since the prairies of the Midwest lacked wood and other traditional building materials, settlers learned to build and live in sod houses called “Soddies.” Sod from the thick prairie grass was abundant and proved to be very strong and durable. Meanwhile, a number of technological advances made western farming possible. **John Deere's steel plow** allowed farmers to plant crops in the Midwest and plains by enabling them to cut through the tough prairie sod.

Since farmers often had to dig more than 100 feet to reach water, windmills proved crucial because they allowed farmers to harness the wind's power to pump water to the surface. On the plains, where trees were scarce and there was not enough wood for split rail fences, **barbed wire** made it possible for farmers to cheaply and efficiently fence in their land and livestock. Finally, the railroads created a way for farmers to import needed equipment from the East while shipping their own products to different parts of the country. As a result, they could afford to farm out west without being isolated from the nation's larger markets. Such technology made agriculture a key industry out west.

**Impact on Plains Indians**

Another industry that became big in the West was cattle ranching. Shortly after white settlers arrived in Texas, they learned the cattle ranching techniques of the Mexicans who lived there called Vaqueros. The Mexicans taught white settlers how to herd, raise, and drive cattle to market. As a result, white ranchers began imitating, not only the Mexicans' ranching techniques, but their dress and culture as well. Cowboy hats and chaps are both examples of Mexican dress that were adopted by western settlers. The growth of the cattle industry contributed to the slaughter of buffalo that otherwise would have competed with cattle for food. It also meant that even more land was taken from Native Americans. "Cow towns" popped up as settlements to which ranchers would drive their cattle so that they could be herded onto trains and shipped east to market. Cowboys (those who moved the cattle on long drives to these cow towns) became legendary figures in western culture as a result of this time. The mining industry also became important as discoveries of gold like those in California meant that people of nearly every background headed west to make their fortunes. Mining camps and towns were established and often had the reputation for being wild and full of vice (gambling, prostitution, drinking, etc.). Eventually, huge corporations moved in with advanced equipment to extract more difficult to reach metals. These corporations came to dominate western mining, thereby causing a great decline in the number of independent miners over time.

**c. Explain the Plains Indians’ resistance to western expansion of the United States and the consequences of their resistance.**

**Document Analysis 3**



**Source: Taken from a British high school history textbook published in 2004.,**

**Resistance to Westward Expansion**

As settlers and railroads ventured further west, The Plains Indians chose to accept being moved off of their land. Throughout 1890, the U.S. government worried about the increasing influence at Pine Ridge of the Ghost Dance spiritual movement, which taught that Indians had been defeated and confined to reservations because they had angered the gods by abandoning their traditional customs. Many Sioux believed that if they practiced the Ghost Dance and rejected the ways of the white man, the gods would create the world anew and destroy all non-believers, including non-Indians. On December 15, 1890, reservation police tried to arrest **Sitting Bull**, the famous Sioux chief, who they mistakenly believed was a Ghost Dancer, and killed him in the process, increasing the tensions at Pine Ridge.

**Wounded Knee: Conflict Breaks out**

On December 29, the U.S. Army’s 7th Cavalry surrounded a band of Ghost Dancers under Big Foot, a Lakota Sioux chief, near Wounded Knee Creek and demanded they surrender their weapons. As that was happening, a fight broke out between an Indian and a U.S. soldier and a shot was fired, although it’s unclear from which side. A brutal massacre followed, in which it’s estimated 150 Indians were killed (some historians put this number at twice as high), nearly half of them women and children. The cavalry lost 25 men. The conflict (Massacre) at **Wounded Knee** was originally referred to as a battle, but in reality it was a tragic and avoidable massacre. Surrounded by heavily armed troops, it’s unlikely that Big Foot’s band would have intentionally started a fight. Some historians speculate that the soldiers of the 7th Cavalry were deliberately taking revenge for the regiment’s defeat at Little Bighorn in 1876. Whatever the motives, the massacre ended the Ghost Dance movement and was the last major confrontation in America’s deadly war against the Plains Indians.