

## 8SS Newsletter – 9.25.20

Hello 8th Grade Families,

The students have begun studying Chapter 10, The Western Frontier. Many Native American nations lived on the Great Plains, along with the buffalo herds that were their primary source of food. Then, beginning in 1869, transcontinental railroad lines opened the West for white settlers, forever changing the Native American way of life. Settlement of the Great Plains came along with the development of machines for plowing, planting, and harvesting. This combination still makes the Midwest a leader in supplying meat and grain to the world.

Students will begin by exploring the opening of the West and the impact that mining had on the westward movement. We will then discuss the effect of the railroad on the nation and discuss the growth of the railroad industry between 1860 and 1900. Students will then discover what life was like for the ranchers and farmers, and how the Homestead Act affected settlement of the Western lands. We will end the chapter analyzing the struggles of the Native Americans. Students will discuss the many conflicts that arose as the white settlers began to take over more and more of the Western land. Through song and film, students will gain an understanding of the many issues.

As we focus on the conflict between the Native Americans and the U.S. Government, students will watch the film "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" in class. Inspired by Dee Brown's acclaimed bestseller, the HBO Films event begins powerfully with the Sioux triumph over General Custer at Little Big Horn. The action centers on the struggles of three characters: Charles Eastman, a young, Dartmouth-educated Sioux doctor; Sitting Bull, the proud Lakota chief who refuses to submit to U.S. government policies designed to strip his people of their identity, their dignity, and their sacred land - the Black Hills of the Dakotas; and Senator Henry Dawes, one of the men responsible for the government policy on Indian affairs. While Eastman works to improve life for the Sioux on the reservation, Senator Dawes lobbies President Grant for kinder Indian treatment. The film ends with the dramatic massacre of the Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee.

The book and film are both based upon true events and primary sources. The movie was originally aired on TV and is rated PG-13 due to some violence in the film during the battle scenes. If you wish for your student to not view the film, please let me know and they will have an alternative assignment to complete related to the topic while the classes watch the movie. There will be a permission form sent home next week.

Have a great weekend!

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Mrs. Esquivel