

**Focus on U.S. History:**

# **The Era of Industrial Growth and Foreign Expansion**

Kathy Sammis

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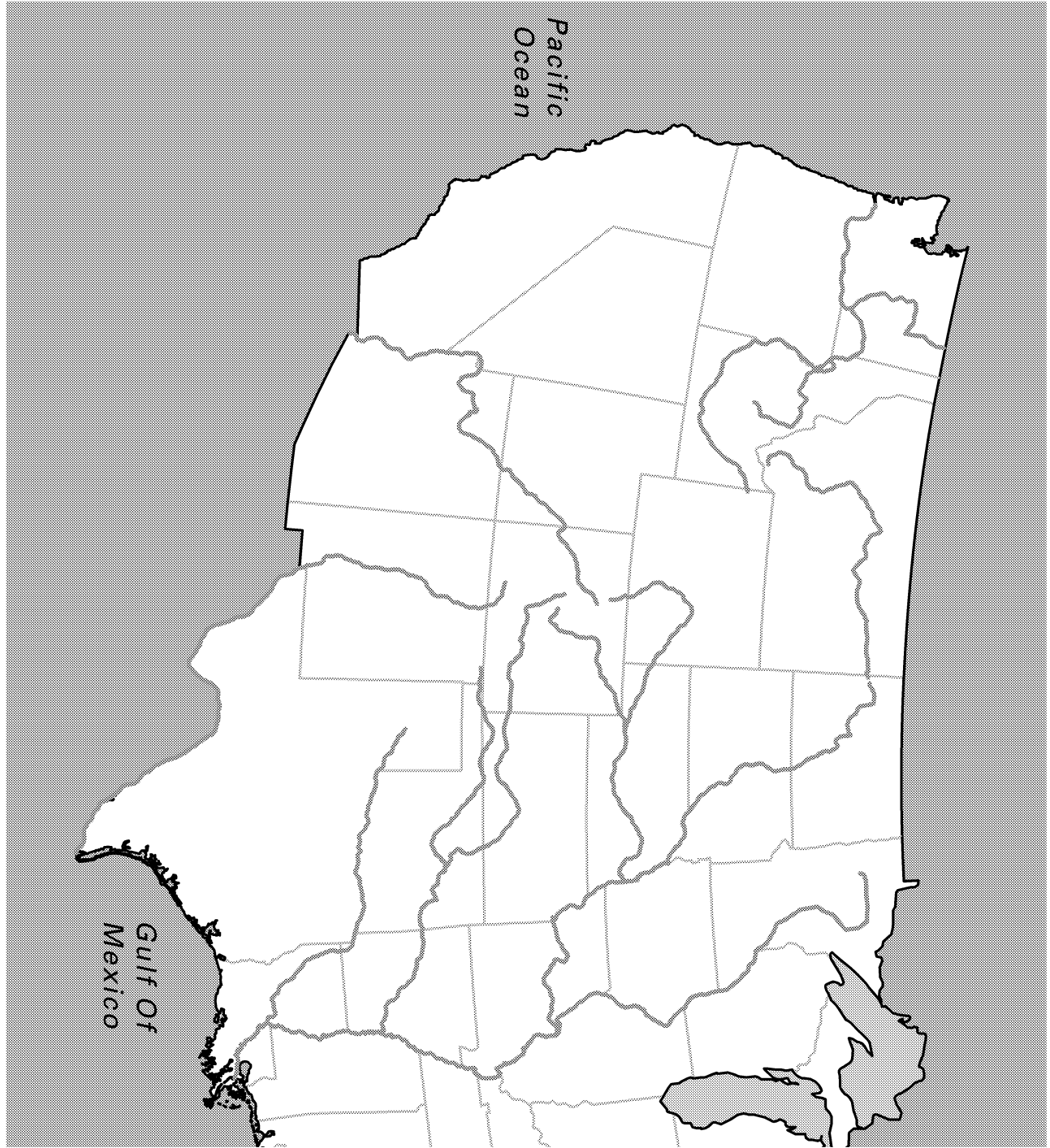
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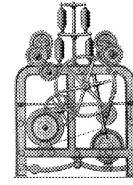
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# Western United States

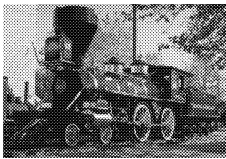
(for use with Units 1 and 4)





# Big Business and the Opening of the West

The objectives of this unit are to help students understand how the rise of big business, heavy industry, and mechanized farming impacted Americans and transformed the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The years between 1865 and 1900 saw the emergence of huge corporations and monopolies, with whole industries controlled by single individuals, some of whom earned the name “robber baron.” Electricity, the telephone, and transcontinental railroads created a truly national economy. Western products like lumber, ore, and cattle



**An Age of Invention** shows students various inventions that played a key part in the growth of big business and big industry. Students are asked to identify each item and its inventor and to explain how the item impacted the national economy. The Extra Challenge asks students about the cigarette-rolling machine that transformed the tobacco industry, for better or worse.

**The Robber Barons Speak** presents some frank comments by, along with portraits of, six well-known “robber barons.” Students are asked to match names with the quotes and pictures. The Challenge Question asks students to evaluate the fairness of referring to Andrew Carnegie as a “robber baron.”

**Big Business Terms** helps students clarify the meaning of terms often used in discussions of the age of big business and big railroads. Students are given a list of terms and then a series of descriptions of economic situations they are in as a business person of the times. They match each term with the appropriate situation.

could now be marketed economically in the East. Western lumber was harvested, and western plains became vast corporation-style cattle ranches interspersed with small farms. Fabulously rich mines opened the West to further exploitation. The Great Plains, formerly shunned as “The Great American Desert,” were transformed into America’s breadbasket, with enormous farms made profitable by the use of new farming machines. This unit’s activities are designed to draw students into a better understanding of these changes in American life.

## Student Activities

**Geography of the West** uses mapping to familiarize students with the geographical features and environmental areas of the West. In addition, students describe the natural environment of five areas of the western United States. The Extra Challenge asks students to evaluate the ways in which the geography of the West both helped and hindered settlement of the area.

**Railroads and the West** uses mapping to show students visually how the major railroad lines linked West and East during this period. The Challenge Questions ask students to identify transcontinental communication lines before 1869 and to see from their maps what natural obstacles and hardships the transcontinental railroad crews had to face and overcome.

**Across the Plains** presents a vivid and amusing description of a typical lower-class railroad trip across the West, written by visiting Scotsman Robert Louis Stevenson. Students are encouraged to read more of Stevenson’s account and/or other such accounts and

then write their own description of their experiences on an “emigrant” train. The Extra Challenge presents an illustration of a first-class railroad journey and asks students to compare this with their “emigrant” train experiences.

**Farming the Plains** presents captioned pictures of important farming innovations of this period and asks students to explain what each was used for and how it aided the growth of large-scale mechanized farming. The Challenge Question asks students to identify the downside to farmers who needed to use this new equipment.

**Abbie Bright: On the Plains** presents excerpts from the diary of a spirited young woman who homesteaded on the plains of Kansas in 1871. Students are then asked to identify the various hazards and difficulties Abbie had to deal with, in various categories. Next, students are invited to read more of Abbie’s diary on the Internet (see Answer Key for URL) and/or read other such accounts, and also look at photographs of Plains pioneer life. Then students create a journal of their own life as a member of a pioneer farm family on the Plains during this period. The Challenge Question guides students to identify the effect of the Plains pioneer experience on the character and lives of the women pioneers.

**The Great Cattle Drives** uses mapping to show students visually where these drives occurred and then asks students to identify the hazards cowboys on these long drives faced. The Extra Challenge asks students to put themselves in the place of one of these cowboys and either to describe their experience or to compose their own cowboy song about their experience.

**Cowboys and Vaqueros** reminds students of the Hispanic background of the West by asking students to write an English equivalent for each Spanish term given that is related to cowboys and their horses. The Extra Challenge asks students to list other Spanish words that have passed into English.

**Mining Towns, Ghost Towns** presents Mark Twain’s description of the site of a former California mining boom town. This serves as the springboard to the activity, in which students trace the rise and fall of a specific mining town like the one Twain describes.

**Big Business and the West Time Line** gives a chronological list of important events related to industrial expansion and final settlement of the West. Students construct a time line of these events. Later units of this book will add to this initial time line.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1**  
**STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET**

## Big Business and the Opening of the West

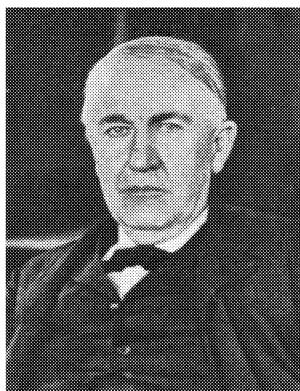
### Big Business Emerges

In the years before the Civil War, the industrial revolution had come to the United States. Industry and the factory system spread through the East and eastern Midwest. Transportation systems grew through those regions, too.

After the Civil War, business and industry had another tremendous growth spurt. Railroads spread rapidly across the continent, linking East, Midwest, and West. Western beef, ore, and lumber rumbled across the Plains on freight trains and fed eastern commerce and industry. Thousands of inventions made the technology of industry modern and efficient. Two of these inventions were especially important.

**Thomas Edison's** electric power system made huge industrial complexes possible.

**Alexander Graham Bell's** telephone made it efficient to conduct business on a national scale.



**Thomas Edison**



**Alexander Graham Bell**

### The Robber Barons

Big business and big industry meant big money and big profits. Competition grew fierce. A few business leaders developed empires that controlled whole industries.

**Andrew Carnegie** controlled the steel industry.

**John D. Rockefeller** ran the oil industry.

**J. P. Morgan** dominated banking.

These men, and others, accumulated huge fortunes. Many used ruthless business practices, including bribery and blackmail of public officials, to gain the upper hand. This earned them the nickname “robber barons.” They ran roughshod over competitors, workers, farmers—anyone blocking their path of profits. They used new business forms such as monopolies, trusts, and holding companies to stifle competition and fix prices. Some, like Carnegie, eventually gave much (or some) of their wealth to charity.

### The Transcontinental Railroads

The huge growth in business and industry propelled railroad lines across the vast U.S. West. Largely Chinese crews raced to lay track for the Central Pacific Railroad east from Sacramento, California. Mainly Irish crews scrambled to lay track for the Union Pacific Railroad west from Omaha, Nebraska. The two lines met at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869. The nation now had its first transcontinental railroad.

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*Focus on U.S. History:*



*The Era of Industrial Growth and Foreign Expansion*

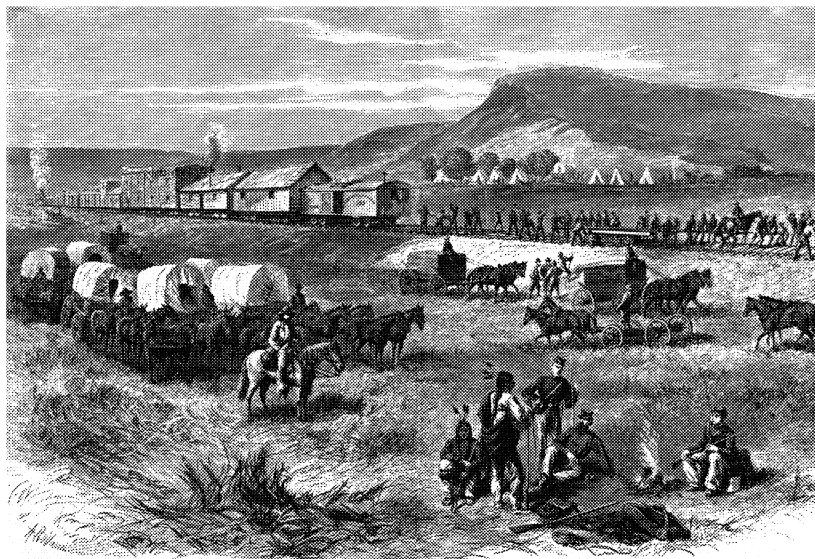
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**UNIT 1**  
**STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET**

## Big Business and the Opening of the West *(continued)*

Building of the transcontinental railroad



This line was rapidly followed by others. Railroad companies were eager to lay down lines. They saw enormous profits to be made. Bulky western products like lumber, ore, and cattle cost too much to send east by wagon. But railroads could move such products quickly and relatively cheaply. Now there was a reason for non-Indian people to move into all parts of the West and take up its resources. The U.S. frontier was about to disappear.

Mining debris polluted streams. Hillsides collapsed into mudslides. Smelter smoke turned daytime air into twilight. Not many people seemed to care about this just yet.

The **Black Hills gold rush** of 1874 invaded sacred Sioux territory. It drew George Armstrong Custer, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and their support forces to the area. They would meet at Little Big Horn in 1876.

### **The Mining Boom**

In 1859, the fabulously rich vein of silver known as the Comstock Lode was discovered in Nevada. Soon, mining boom towns burst into existence all through the mountains and hills of the West. The glittering lure of possible wealth drew men and women of all races and national origins. Great fortunes were made, and lost, overnight. Many prospectors, though, never earned much.

Mining scarred the face of the West. Forests were denuded to provide timber for the mine shafts and mining towns' buildings.

### **The Cattle Kingdom**

The cattle business became a big industry during these years, too. As eastern cities grew, the demand for beef grew too. In Texas, huge herds of longhorn cattle roamed the grassy plains. When the railroads came West, cattle ranchers saw a great way to profit from those herds. A longhorn worth \$5 in Texas was worth \$40 in Abilene, Kansas. Shippers would buy the cattle in a town like Abilene, on a railroad line. Then they would ship the cattle east to Chicago for slaughter and sale to the high-priced eastern market.

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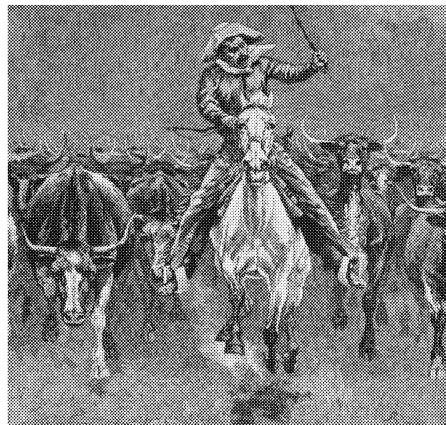


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1**  
**STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET**

## Big Business and the Opening of the West *(continued)*



Cattle drive

So the era of the big cattle drive began. Cowboys—many of them African-American—would drive herds of several thousand

cattle a thousand miles or more to rail towns. Open-range ranches spread as far north as Montana to get a share of the cattle profits. This opened more of the West to non-Indian use.

This version of the cattle kingdom didn't last long, though. The late 1880s featured several years of record droughts and record blizzards. So many cattle perished that these years were called "The Great Die-off." Rather than open-range, western ranches became huge, corporation-style, fenced areas. Smaller farmers and sheepherders fenced off their own homestead areas. The vast Plains, bisected by railroad lines, were now also divided by thousands of miles of barbed wire fencing.

### **Plains Farming Transformed**

The final transformation of the Plains came through farming. The railroads had opened up the Plains. Advertisements for railroad and government land drew torrents of eager homesteaders. Many farm families emigrated from Europe. Railroads sold land near their tracks to create customers for their freight services. The federal government

offered cheap land under the Homestead Act of 1862.

Technical innovations had now made it possible to farm on what had once been called "The Great American Desert."

- Steel-tipped plows could cut through the tough prairie sod.
- Joseph Glidden's new invention, barbed wire, would keep livestock out of crop fields.
- Windmills and pumps would draw water from its hidden sources deep beneath the prairie.
- Power equipment—thresher/binders, harvesters, combines, sowers—made it possible to cultivate ever-larger acreages.

Unfortunately, modern farm technology was expensive. Many farm families went into debt, and went under, trying to pay for these necessary machines. Weather on the Plains was brutal, with extremes of both hot and cold. Swarms of grasshoppers could be counted on to appear at any time to devour crops, as could prairie fires. Nevertheless, the Plains provided the grains the rest of the country needed.

### **The Frontier Vanishes**

By the end of the 1800s, the United States no longer had a "frontier." The sections of the country that were slightly or very lightly settled by non-Indians had now filled in with such settlement. East, West, and Great Plains were part of one large whole.

This transformation of the West was, of course, tragic for the people who had been there first. You'll read about the Native-American experience in Unit 4 of this book.




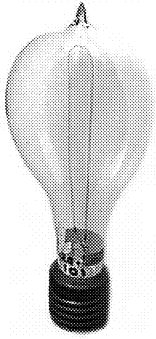
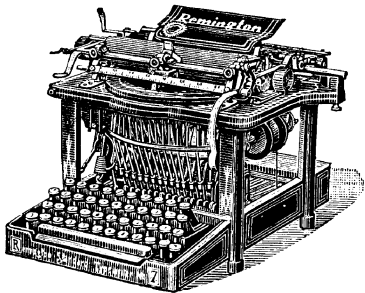

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1**  
**WORKSHEET 1**

## An Age of Invention

**Directions:** The new age of big business and big industry was helped along by some new and very useful inventions. Shown below are four familiar inventions and innovations of the 1870s and 1880s. Identify each item and the person who created it. Also, tell how the item affected the national economy.

	
<p>What: _____</p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>What: _____</p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
	
<p>What: _____</p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>What: _____</p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

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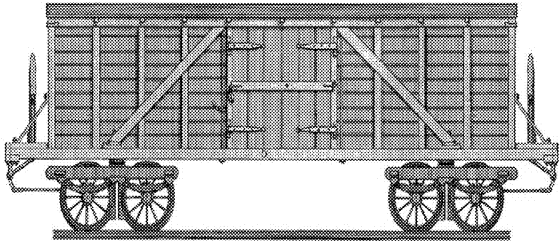
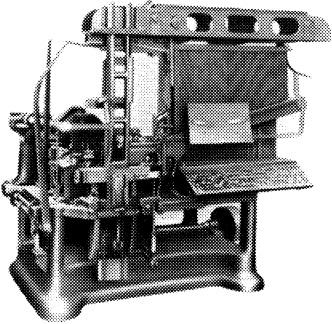
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**UNIT 1**  
**WORKSHEET 1**

## An Age of Invention *(continued)*

**Directions:** Some important inventions of the late 1800s are less easy to recognize than the devices on the previous page, but they were equally useful. Explain the use and importance of the items shown below.

	
<p><b>refrigerated railroad car (1887)</b></p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>linotype machine (1884)</b></p> <p>Inventor: _____</p> <p>Impact: _____</p> <p>_____</p>

**Extra Challenge:** Young women working in factories used to roll cigarettes by hand. A machine invented in 1876 transformed the cigarette industry. What was this machine? Who invented it? How did Washington and James Duke take advantage of it? How did the new urban market favor the use of cigarettes and help lead Americans into widespread tobacco consumption by the 1890s?

