

Conflict on the Frontier

Lesson 2: The West Texas Wars

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why does conflict develop?

Terms to Know

encounter a meeting between two or more individuals or groups

sinew strong tissue that connects muscles to bones

tactic a course of action used to achieve a goal

vision a mental image of the future that may come in a dream

Where in the world?



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Lesson 2: The West Texas Wars, *continued*

Explaining

1. Why did General Sherman go to Texas in 1871?



Marking the Text

2. Circle the names of the three Native American leaders who were arrested for the Warren Wagon Train Raid.

Explaining

3. Why did Governor Davis change the sentences of Satanta and Big Tree to life in prison?

Reading Progress Check

4. What event in West Texas led to changes in government policy toward the Native Americans there?

Hopes for Peace End

Guiding Question *Why did the U.S. policy seeking peace with the Native Americans change in 1871?*

After the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty was signed, reports reached Washington, D.C., in 1871 that Native Americans were still raiding in Texas. General William Tecumseh Sherman decided to travel west to investigate.

While Sherman was touring Texas, about 100 Native American fighters left Indian Territory and crossed into the state. On May 18, 1871, they attacked a wagon train on the same route that Sherman had taken the day before. In this attack, the Native Americans killed seven people. The attackers then returned to Indian Territory with captured mules and supplies. Henry Warren owned the wagon train, so the **encounter** is called the Warren Wagon Train Raid or Massacre.

Sherman ordered federal agents to question Native Americans about the attack. Satanta, a Kiowa leader, admitted that he had helped lead the raid. Sherman ordered Satanta and two others, Big Tree and Satank, arrested and tried for murder. The three Native Americans were to be imprisoned at Fort Sill. On the way, Satank tried to escape and was killed. Big Tree and Satanta were found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

Satanta used his speaking skills to tell the court about the problems Native Americans faced on the reservation. Governor Edmund Davis worried that executing the Native Americans would cause a war. Hoping to keep the peace, Davis changed their sentences to life in prison. The Kiowa ended their raids, and two years later, the prisoners were set free because of their people's peaceful behavior. However, Satanta took part in more raids in 1874 and was arrested again. He took his own life in prison four years later.

Sherman concluded that the peace policy with Native Americans had not worked and that the forts in the area could not protect settlers. Sherman now ordered U.S. troops to pursue any Native Americans not living on reservations and to destroy their camps.

Early Campaigns and the Buffalo

Guiding Question *How did the United States attempt to control the Native Americans in West Texas?*

In 1871 Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie was given command of a force charged with driving the last nomadic Native Americans onto reservations. In October of that year, some of Mackenzie's men skirmished with a group of Comanche led by Quanah Parker.

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Mackenzie’s troops followed the band, but they lost the trail. In November they gave up.

Mackenzie learned from this first failed campaign. In 1872 his troops fought the Comanche near present-day Pampa. The soldiers defeated the Comanche, and by 1873 Comanche raids in West Texas had declined. Mackenzie then focused on the Rio Grande in South Texas. There, Kickapoo and Apache were attacking settlements. The army attacked Native American villages in the area. For several years after that, South Texas was peaceful.

The buffalo, or bison, was the Plains peoples’ main source of food and other goods. They depended on the buffalo for meat. They used their hides to make clothing, tepees, bedding, and water bags. The bones were used in weapons, rattles, and needles. Horns were made into spoons, and **sinews** were turned into thread and bowstrings. Even the skulls were used in religious ceremonies.

By the early 1870s, white traders in Texas and other areas had begun to make large profits from buffalo hides. Using rifles that fired very heavy bullets, hunters slaughtered millions of buffalo in just a few years. For Native Americans who depended on buffalo, this ended their traditional way of life.

Some settlers in Texas were sympathetic to the Native Americans and knew how important the buffalo was. A law protecting the buffalo was proposed in Texas. However, the U.S. government recognized that killing off the buffalo was an important **tactic**, or approach, in defeating the Native Americans. Testifying against the proposed law in 1875, General Philip Sheridan supported the white hunters. He said that they would do more to clear Native Americans from the Plains than the army ever could. Soon, he predicted, the Plains peoples would be gone, replaced by grazing cattle.

By 1877, only a few buffalo remained in Texas. As a result, those Native Americans who wished to stay off the reservations found it increasingly hard to do so.

The End of Fighting in West Texas

Guiding Question *Why were army troops able to defeat the Native Americans in West Texas?*

In 1874, based on the **vision** of a shaman (also called a medicine man), Comanche leader Quanah Parker planned an attack on a camp of buffalo hunters at Adobe Walls. The shaman promised victory and said that bullets would not harm the warriors. Parker led a group of about 700 fighters. There were only 28 buffalo hunters at the camp, but they were well armed.

Defining

5. What does *sinew* mean?

Marking the Text

6. Highlight the testimony of General Philip Sheridan on the purpose of white buffalo hunters.

Reading Progress Check

7. Why was the buffalo important to the Plains peoples?

Describing

8. What did the Comanche shaman see in his vision?

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Marking the Text

9. Highlight the events at Palo Duro Canyon.



Reading Progress Check

10. What was the significance of the attack on Adobe Walls?

In the attack, about 15 Comanche were killed, while only four of the hunters died. As a result, the Comanche pulled back. Parker had been injured, and the medicine man's prediction proved untrue. Frustrated by this loss, Native Americans began attacking even more frequently.

After the attack on Adobe Walls, President Grant turned Native American affairs in West Texas over to the army. Native Americans had to register on the reservations, but about 4,000 did not. These included Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne. They moved into the Texas Panhandle and set up camps with about 1,200 warriors. General Sherman planned to destroy these remaining free Native Americans by attacking from five directions. Army officers hoped they could trap the Native Americans in canyons from which they could not escape.

In 1874, Colonel Mackenzie led a cavalry unit down the steep walls of Palo Duro Canyon. The troops surprised the Native Americans, burned several camps, and destroyed many horses. The attack left the Native Americans with little chance of surviving the winter, so most agreed to move to a reservation. A few groups kept fighting, but with little success. The last band of Comanche, with Quanah Parker, surrendered in 1875. Texas was now mostly safe for new settlers. Native Americans were rarely seen again in Texas. A few groups still fought along the Rio Grande, but only for short while.

Writing

Check for Understanding

1. **Narrative** Describe the events at Adobe Walls from the viewpoint of Quanah Parker.

2. **Expository** Why was killing off the buffalo an important tactic in defeating the Native Americans of the Plains?
