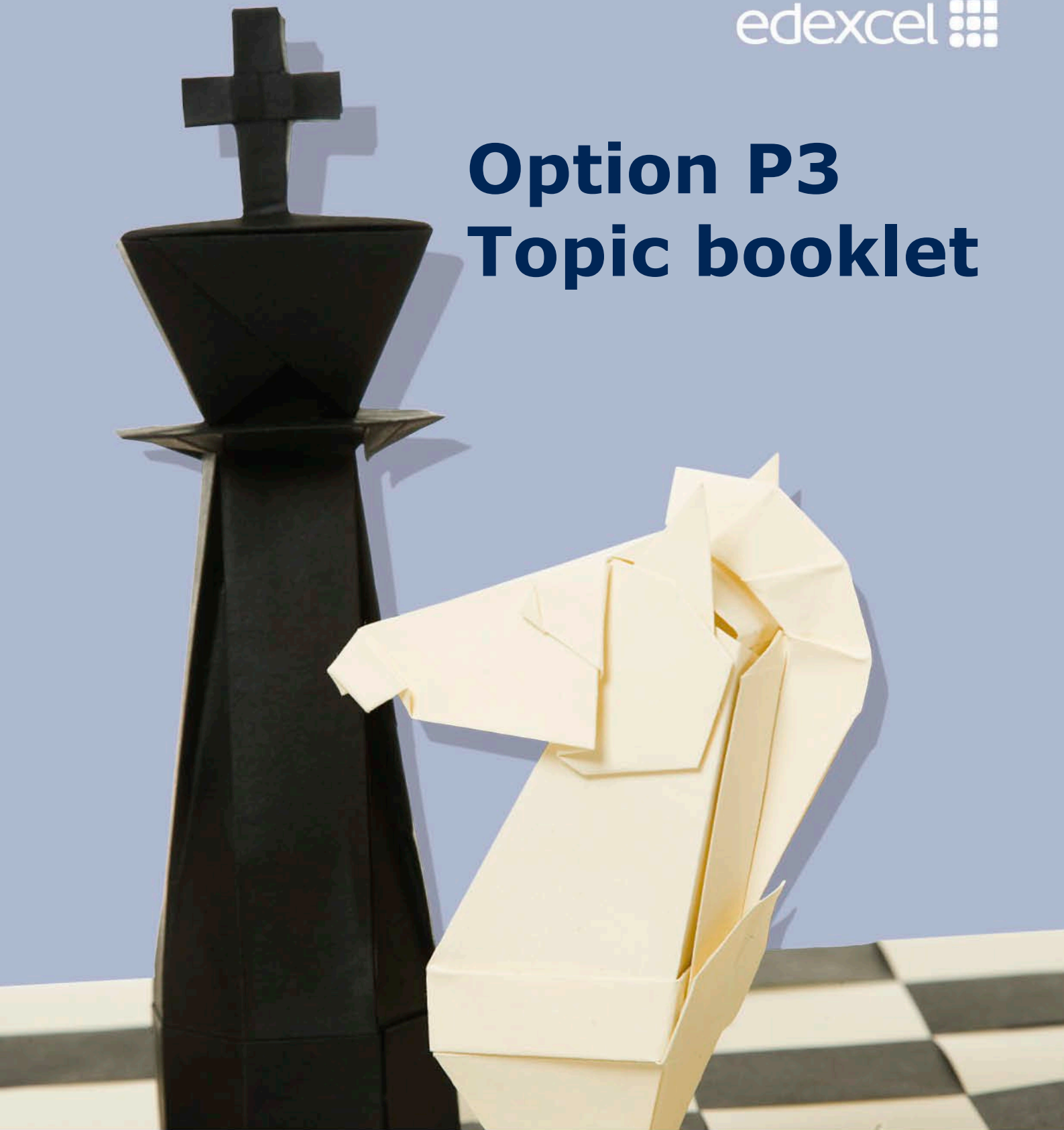


# Option P3

## Topic booklet



**The American West, c1835–c1895**

**GCSE (9–1) History**

**Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in History (1HI0)**

# Contents

Version 4 (March 2025)	1
The Period study	1
<b>1. Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Assessment	2
1.2 Language changes	2
Treated Spaces	3
<b>2. Content guidance</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Summary of content	4
The early settlement of the West, c1835–c1862	4
Development of the Plains, c1862–c1876	4
Later developments in the West, c1876–c1895	5
The unfolding narrative	6
Key terms	6
2.2 Content exemplification	7
<b>3. Student timeline</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. Resources</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Free support materials	14
4.2 Endorsed resources*	16
4.3 Resources for students	16
4.4 Resources for teachers	18
Educational Recording Agency	20

## Version 4 (March 2025)

This topic booklet has been updated to include changes made to new issues of the specification and sample assessment materials.

- Issue 5: language and assessment changes, for first assessment June 2025.
- Issue 6: content changes, for first teaching September 2024 and first assessment June 2026. *NB no content changes to American West.*

Information on new resources has also been added.

Summary guidance on the changes can be found [here](#); see also the new section 1.2 below on the language changes.

## The Period study

Period studies focus on a substantial and coherent medium time span of at least 50 years and require students to understand the 'unfolding narrative' of substantial developments and issues associated with the period.

A narrative framework forms the basis of the division of the content into three key topics. These key topics clearly run in chronological sequence, but should not be taken in isolation from each other. Students should be encouraged to see the period study as a whole and appreciate the narrative connections across the key topics.

# 1. Overview

---

The history of the American West has long been mythologised, going right back to Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 'frontier thesis', and compounded throughout the twentieth century by countless portrayals in literature and onscreen. In this option, students will have the opportunity to look beyond the myth of the American West, see the picture built up by more recent scholarship and examine the impact of government-sponsored expansion in the American outback, which had far-reaching consequences for both Indigenous peoples and the many settlers of the time.

The years c1835–c1895 were a defining period in the history of the USA, as a huge number of people moved west to settle on the Plains and the 'frontier' of settlement was pushed westwards – driven by the belief in Manifest Destiny to expand the United States from coast to coast. The impact of government-sponsored expansion had far-reaching consequences for both Indigenous peoples and the many settlers of the time. The lives of Indigenous peoples changed dramatically over these 60 years, as railroads, the cattle industry and gold prospecting had a significant and violent impact on their ways of life and means of survival, and they were dispossessed and moved into reservations.

## 1.1 Assessment (from June 2025)

Students answer five questions for the period study.

- Questions 1(a) and (b): focus on consequence. These are compulsory; each question asks students to provide one consequence.
- Question 2: focuses on analytical narrative, in which students write an account that not only describes what happened, but also involves analysis to find connections and make sense of events and their impact to explain why events unfolded in the way that they did. This is likely to involve a mix of second-order concepts (i.e. causation, consequence, change).
- Question 3: students select two from a choice of the three events or developments given. Each focuses on the importance of an event/person/development in terms of what difference they made in relation to specified situations and unfolding developments (i.e. their consequence and significance).

Detailed information and guidance on assessment can be found in the separate [Getting Started Guide](#).

## 1.2 Language changes

We reviewed our GCSE History specification for sensitivity of language and identified a number of terms which are now considered outdated and problematic. Consequently, we updated some of the language in our specification, one of the key changes being the use of the term 'Plains Indian' in the American West option.

Throughout the American West option, 'Plains Indians' has been amended to 'Indigenous peoples'. This is the widely preferred term among Indigenous peoples themselves, and among many historians who study indigenous histories.

To support students with the change to Indigenous peoples, we will provide a transition period, and will gloss the term Indigenous peoples in live series from June 2025, for the remainder of the current specification's lifecycle. An example is provided in the Sample Assessment Materials:

## 1. Overview

- 2 Write a narrative account analysing the destruction of the traditional ways of life of Indigenous peoples of the Plains (Plains Indians) in the years 1876–c1895.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Battle of Little Big Horn (1876)
- Dawes Act (1887)

You **must** also use information of your own.

In any exam series, students are credited for any relevant and appropriate terms that they use. Students can therefore continue to use Plains Indians in the summer 2025 series and beyond.

More information on the language changes can be found in the [rationale](#) document, the [FAQs](#), and in the [slides from the online event](#) run in September 2023.



### Treated Spaces

In 2022, we commissioned a review by [Treated Spaces](#) of the American West period study.

Treated Spaces are a leading UK-based academic organisation for studies into the culture and history of Indigenous people. They work with Indigenous American academics to address the historical imbalance in the study of this period. Their review considered the representation of Indigenous Americans, diversity of voices across race, gender and background, and current historiographical trends.

The review flagged various ways in which the American West option has fallen behind contemporary academic scholarship – for example in the perspectives it offers and in the implication that Indigenous peoples ‘disappeared’ after the 1890s – and proposed ways in which it can be brought up-to-date.

Following this review, we have been working with teachers to draft a revised American West option, one that gives greater weight to Indigenous perspectives, reflects contemporary scholarship, and moves away from the ‘Great American West’ narrative. This will be introduced at the next specification reform, and we will continue to consult with teachers and other stakeholders as this redesigned option takes shape.

## 2. Content guidance

---

### 2.1 Summary of content

#### **The early settlement of the West, c1835–c1862**

The first key topic covers the early settlement of the West, c1835–c1862. Students should be aware that Indigenous peoples of the Plains were many different tribes and nations such as the Sioux. They should understand that life on the Plains could be difficult and be aware of Indigenous peoples' means of survival. Students should be aware of the main beliefs of Indigenous peoples about land, nature, warfare and personal property, and that these differed greatly from those of the Americans who were starting to settle on the Plains.

Students should understand that this was a period in which migration and early settlement of the West by people from the East was developing. Students should appreciate the range of factors that encouraged migration west, especially those factors responsible for drawing people to the West, such as the discovery of gold, as well as settlers' belief in Manifest Destiny, which underpinned their 'right' to seek out and claim land for themselves. Students should appreciate, however, that migration west was not easy, as exemplified by the disastrous experience of the Donner Party and the experiences of the Mormon migration. They should understand the nature of the early settlements and the conditions that made settlement difficult.

Students should consider how the growing number of settlers moving on to the Plains led to conflict between settlers and Indigenous peoples, as well as tensions in the early towns and settlements. Students should understand that the government supported westward expansion and, while Indigenous peoples continued to live on the Plains, by 1840 the US government 'allowed' them to live only to the west of the 'Permanent Indian Frontier'. By examining the significance of the first Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the promises made on both sides, as well as the Indian Appropriations Act, students should understand the problems that developed in this period and over subsequent decades. Students should understand the nature of lawlessness and the early attempt to establish law and order by the government and local communities.

#### **Development of the Plains, c1862–c1876**

The second key topic covers the development of the Plains, c1862–c1876. Students do not need to know the events of the Civil War itself, but should understand that the Civil War and the tensions it created had an impact on the settlement of the West, including increased migration west and problems for law and order. Students will learn about two significant factors in the development of settlement in the West. Firstly, the spread of the railroad network, helped by US government legislation like the Pacific Railroad Act and the building of the First Transcontinental Railroad, opened up more of the West to settlers. Secondly, government incentives, such as the Homestead Act (1862), encouraged homesteaders to settle in the West. Students should be aware that, despite the government incentives to move to the West, homesteaders faced a range of difficulties in living on and farming the land, such as the lack of water, and found solutions to deal with them, such as wind pumps. They should appreciate, as the population in the West grew, the introduction of law and order in settlements, with the roles of law officers, such as sheriffs, and increased federal government influence.

Students should be aware that as well as the increasing number of settlers at this time, the cattle industry was growing too, helped by the railroads, individuals such as Goodnight and McCoy and cow towns such as Abilene. They should be aware too of the changing role of cowboys in the West. Through this period, relations between

## 2. Content guidance

the ranchers and the homesteaders worsened, and this would become a significant factor in later tensions over land such as the 'range wars' covered in key topic 3.

The ongoing settlement of the West, which included the railroads, gold prospecting and cattle ranching, adversely affected Indigenous peoples' ways of life, and led to conflict on the Plains. Students should be aware that the US government still pursued a policy of encouraging Indigenous peoples on to the reservations. The second Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) was an example of a short-lived effort to achieve a peaceful status quo. Any peace was temporary, with continued tensions between the US government and Indigenous peoples spilling into open conflict between the two parties. Students should study the key developments in the conflict during this period (Little Crow's War, the Sand Creek Massacre, Red Cloud's War).

### **Later developments in the West, c1876–c1895**

The third key topic covers further conflict and the taking of Indigenous lands, c1876–c1895. Students should understand that changes in farming in this period, as a result of new inventions such as barbed wire and new technology such as dry farming, meant that most of the early problems the homesteaders had faced were now solved. They should understand too that this period saw the end of the 'open range', leading to the formation of new ranches, fenced with the new barbed wire. A factor in this change was the poor conditions during the winter of 1886–87. Students should be aware settlement continued and that the effects of the Civil War were still being felt, with the Exoduster movement from the South, and they should also be aware of the significance of the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1893, which opened up to the settlers land that had previously been promised to the Cherokee Nation.

They should understand the additional tensions and challenges this brought to law and order, including the significance of the notorious Billy the Kid, as well as key law enforcers such as Wyatt Earp and the events at OK Corral. They should be aware that, although law enforcement did not eradicate lawlessness, by the end of the period a reduction in lawlessness connected to the 'Wild West' was evident as settlements evolved into communities and communication over long distance improved. Students should understand the reasons for clashes between cattlemen and homesteaders in the range wars, including the key events of the Johnson County War of 1892.

Students should understand that the US Government and US Army were still engaged in conflict with Indigenous peoples, reaching a climax with the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Wounded Knee Massacre, which effectively ended Indigenous resistance on the Plains. Students should appreciate the effects of the destruction of the buffalo, on which Indigenous peoples had been so reliant, and the resulting changes that Indigenous peoples faced with life on the reservations. They should be aware that this was against a backdrop of changing government attitudes, now wanting to remove Indigenous peoples from the Plains altogether, and that this was reflected in government policy and measures such as the Dawes Act in 1887.

## 2. Content guidance

### The unfolding narrative

Period studies focus on an analytical narrative of events and therefore students should appreciate the chronology of key events, while understanding that some developments overlap several events. For example, migration waxes and wanes at several points in the narrative.

Within that analytical narrative, students will need to see that events do not occur in isolation but unfold as a consequence of what has gone before. For example, the events at the OK Corral were both a consequence of attempts to establish law enforcement in frontier towns and the lawlessness accompanying the westward migration.

When discussing the significance of an event, students should be able to explain its impact and the way it changed the situation or attitudes.

### Key terms

It may be useful at the start of the course to provide students with a list of key terms and concepts that they will need to be familiar with for this option. Students should be familiar with the terminology found in the specification content.

The list of terms below is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, rather simply a useful starting point for teachers to produce their own list of terms that their students may not fully understand or have difficulty spelling.

Students should also be familiar with broad terms, such as authorities, economic, government, political, religious and social.

- buffalo
- claim
- corral
- dry farming
- Exoduster
- federal
- frontier
- Ghost Dance
- government
- homesteader
- Indigenous
- lawlessness
- Manifest Destiny
- marshal
- migration
- nomadic
- open range
- prospecting
- railroad
- ranch/rancher
- range war
- reservation
- rustling
- settlement/settler
- sheriff
- transcontinental
- vigilante



## 2. Content guidance

### 2.2 Content exemplification

This section provides additional guidance on the specification content. It should be remembered that the official specification is the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance. Any examples provided here do not constitute additional specification content and other relevant material illustrating aspects of the specification can be used.

Key topic 1: The early settlement of the West, c1835–c1862		Exemplification
1 <b>Indigenous peoples of the Plains: their beliefs and ways of life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social and tribal structures, ways of life and means of survival on the Plains.</li><li>• Beliefs about land and nature and attitudes to war and property.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The different Indigenous nations and tribes that existed on the Plains. Chiefs and braves. Indians' respect for nature and the land and their nomadic lifestyle. Their beliefs about the buffalo and their dependence on it; their reliance on use of horses.</li><li>• The reasons for and importance of war for Indigenous peoples and their beliefs about counting coup.</li></ul>
2 <b>Migration and early settlement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The factors encouraging migration, including the Oregon Trail from 1836, the belief in Manifest Destiny, and the California Gold Rush of 1849.</li><li>• Early migration to c1850, including the experiences of the Donner Party and the Mormon migration, 1846–47.</li><li>• The development and problems of early settlement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The different factors that led to migration to the West from the 1840s, including the setting up of the Oregon Trail from 1836 with government encouragement, Manifest Destiny and the belief that Americans had the 'right' to populate all areas of the land from coast to coast, and the discovery of gold in 1848 and the subsequent mass movement of people west seeking wealth.</li><li>• The process of migration and the different experiences of those who went west. The disastrous outcome of the Donner Party's trek west, and the experiences of the Mormons, led by Brigham Young, driven west by persecution.</li><li>• Problems faced by new settlers attempting to settle and farm on the Plains, for example, the weather and climate, prairie fires, grasshopper plagues, lack of water, few trees, lack of fencing to protect crops.</li></ul>



## 2. Content guidance

Key topic 1: The early settlement of the West, c1835–c1862		Exemplification
3 <b>Conflict and tension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reasons for tension with Indigenous peoples of the Plains, including US government policy and the 'Permanent Indian Frontier'. The significance of the first Fort Laramie Treaty (1851). The Indian Appropriations Act (1851).</li><li>• Lawlessness in early towns and settlements, including attempts to tackle lawlessness.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The impact of the growing number of settlers moving on to the Plains. Indigenous and government responses to this problem. The introduction of the 'Permanent Indian Frontier' in helping to drive all Indigenous peoples west away from the settlers and on to their 'own area' on the Plains. The significance of the first Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, for both Indigenous peoples and the settlers. The Indian Appropriations Act, allocating funds for Indigenous peoples to move on to reservations.</li><li>• The impact of mass settlement on law and order. The lack of any real law and order in the towns and attempts to deal with lawlessness, such as the work of vigilante groups. The problems in keeping effective law and order, such as the growing ethnic divisions between the different settlers and the geography of America.</li></ul>

## 2. Content guidance

Key topic 2: Development of the Plains, c1862–c1876	Exemplification
<p>1 <b>The development of settlement in the West</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The significance of the railroads; the Pacific Railroad Act (1862) and the completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad (1869) and the spread of the railroad network.</li> <li>• The impact of the Homestead Act (1862). Attempts at solutions to problems faced by homesteaders: the use of new methods and new technology; the impact of the Timber Culture Act (1873).</li> <li>• Introducing law and order in settlements, including the roles of law officers and increases in federal government influence.</li> </ul>
<p>2 <b>Ranching and the cattle industry</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cattle industry and factors in its growth, including the roles of Iliff, McCoy and Goodnight, the significance of Abilene and of the increasing use of the railroad network.</li> <li>• The changing role of the cowboy, including changes in ranching. Relations between ranchers and homesteaders.</li> </ul>

## 2. Content guidance

Key topic 2: Development of the Plains, c1862–c1876		Exemplification
3 <b>Changes in the ways of life of Indigenous peoples of the Plains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of railroads, the cattle industry and gold prospecting on Indigenous peoples.</li> <li>The impact of US government policy towards Indigenous peoples, including the continued use of reservations. The second Fort Laramie Treaty (1868).</li> <li>Conflict on the Plains: Little Crow's War (1862) and the Sand Creek Massacre (1864), the significance of Red Cloud's War (1866–68).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of the growing numbers of settlers on the Plains on Indigenous peoples and their ways of life. The impact of the railroads and the cattle industry, for example restricting freedom of movement and obstructing buffalo hunts. The impact of gold prospecting as treaties were broken in pursuit of gold.</li> <li>The role played by the US government in helping to encourage settlers to move west on to the Plains while also encouraging the use of reservations. The impact of these policies. The second Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) whereby the US Government left its forts and Indigenous peoples relocated to the reservations.</li> <li>The increased tensions between Indigenous peoples, settlers and US Government. The escalation of these tensions into the 'Indian Wars' between the US Government, the settlers and Indigenous peoples, resulting in Little Crow's War (1862), the Sand Creek Massacre (1864) and finally Red Cloud's War (1866–68).</li> </ul>

Key topic 3: Later developments in the West, c1876–c1895		Exemplification
1 <b>Changes in farming, the cattle industry and settlement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in farming: the impact of new technology and new farming methods.</li> <li>Changes in the cattle industry, including the impact of the winter of 1886–87. The significance of changes in the nature of ranching. The end of the open range.</li> <li>Continued settlement: the Exoduster movement and Kansas (1879), the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1893. The closure of the 'Indian Frontier'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The continued challenges faced by farmers in the American West and their responses with new technology, such as wind pumps, mechanisation and new farming methods, such as dry farming.</li> <li>Changes in the nature of ranching, with the end of the open range and the use of barbed wire. The harsh winter of 1886–87 and loss of cattle. The impact of these changes on the lives of cowboys, for example riding the line, more comfortable living conditions, more regular hours and ranch rules. The end of the open range and the increased use of smaller ranches.</li> <li>The continued settlement on the Plains. The impact on other settlers of the Exoduster movement of Black Americans into Kansas following the Civil War. The Oklahoma Land Rush, which opened up land to settlers that had previously been promised to</li> </ul>

## 2. Content guidance

Key topic 3: Later developments in the West, c1876–c1895		Exemplification
		the Cherokee Nation. The impact of the closure of the 'Indian Frontier' for settlement.
2 <b>Conflict and tension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with law and order, including sheriffs and marshals, including the significance of Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp, the OK Corral (1881).</li> <li>The range wars, including the Johnson County War of 1892.</li> <li>Conflict on the Plains: the Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876) and its impact; the Wounded Knee Massacre (1890).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The continued growth of crime in the West and the general response to this, including that of the US Government. The roles of town marshals, sheriffs, and US Marshals. The role played by Billy the Kid in lawlessness in the West. The role played by Wyatt Earp in contributing to law and order as well as lawlessness in the West, including the gunfight at OK Corral (1881).</li> <li>The role of the range wars. The background and tensions to the Johnson County War and the spark that ignited the conflict, the conflict itself and the subsequent trial and its consequences.</li> <li>The growing tensions between the US Government and Indigenous peoples over land in the West. The impact of the discovery of gold in the Black Hills of Montana and the subsequent Gold Rush and growing tensions between the US Government and Indigenous peoples. The reasons why the Sioux went to war, the events that followed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876) and the subsequent consequences for Indigenous peoples and the US Government. The Wounded Knee Massacre (1890) and its impact on Indigenous peoples.</li> </ul>
3 <b>Indigenous peoples of the Plains: the destruction of their ways of life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hunting and extermination of the buffalo.</li> <li>Indigenous peoples' lives on the reservations.</li> <li>The significance of changing government attitudes to Indigenous peoples, including the Dawes Act (1887).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hunting and extermination of the buffalo and its effect on Indigenous peoples.</li> <li>Indigenous peoples' lives on the reservations and the impact of these changes on them.</li> <li>Changing attitudes of the US government towards Indigenous peoples. The effectiveness, and impact of, the different policies that the US Government used in relation to Indigenous peoples, for example territorial, political, economic, religious, and educational.</li> </ul>

## 3. Student timeline

---

The timeline below could be given to students, and could be further edited and added to by them. Inclusion of dates and events in this timeline should not be taken as an indication that these are prescribed: the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

c1834	'Permanent Indian Frontier' set up
c1836	Oregon Trail established
1843	First settlers arrive in Oregon encouraged by government legislation – the 'Great Emigration'
1844	Mormon persecution in Nauvoo
1846	Donner Party head west but meet with disaster and death Mormons travel to the Great Salt Lake having been driven out of Nauvoo
1848	Gold discovered in California
1850s	First settlers started to move to the Plains
1851	Indian Appropriations Act First Fort Laramie Treaty
1858–59	Gold discovered in the Pikes Peak region of the Rocky Mountains
1859	Gold mines opened in Colorado and Nevada
1861	Start of the American Civil War between North and South
1862	Homestead Act Little Crow's War Pacific Railroad Act passed and work begins on the transcontinental railway
1864	Sand Creek Massacre
1865	End of the American Civil War Slavery abolished in the US
1866	Group of US army soldiers wiped out at Fetterman's Trap by Indigenous peoples Red Cloud's War begins Goodnight and Loving reach Fort Sumner with 1,700 cattle

### 3. Student timeline

1867	Medicine Lodge Treaty Abilene becomes the first cow town 'The Beef Bonanza' begins
1868	President Grant's 'Peace Policy' 'The Winter Campaign' Second Fort Laramie Treaty
1869	First Transcontinental Railroad completed despite opposition from some Americans
1870	Cattle Ranching began on the Plains, leading to the 'Open Range'
1873	Timber Culture Act
1874	Barbed wire begins to be mass-produced Wind-powered water pump introduced Custer leads expedition to the Black Hills, ignoring the Treaty of Fort Laramie
1876	The Great Sioux War begins between the US Army and the Sioux Battle of the Little Big Horn
1879	Exoduster movement to Kansas
1881	Sitting Bull and followers surrender to the US government Gunfight at the OK Corral
1885	All Indigenous peoples had been forced to resettle on to reservations; northern herd of buffalo is completely destroyed
1886	Severe winter with consequent impact on the cattle industry
1887	Dawes Act
1890	Wounded Knee Massacre US government closes the 'Indian frontier'; further dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples
1892	Johnson County War
1893	Oklahoma Land Rush

## 4. Resources

The sections below list a range of resources that could be used by students and teachers for this topic.

The first section lists information on free support materials available on the Edexcel website. On the [GCSE History \(9–1\) from 2016](#) page:

- select the [Teaching support](#) tab, where resources are separated out by Plan, Teach, and Track and Assess;
- or select the [Course materials](#) tab, and then select the appropriate tab for [Specification and sample assessments](#), [Exam materials](#), or [Teaching and learning materials](#).

The table below provides a selection of the free support materials available on the Edexcel website. Details and links for all the free support available can be found in [this document](#). It is updated regularly, so worth bookmarking.

The second section lists publishers who have been endorsed for GCSE (9–1) History. Endorsement means that a resource has been through our quality assurance process to confirm that it meets the teaching and learning requirements a specification is aimed at. Endorsement of a resource doesn't mean it's the only suitable material available, or that it is required to achieve the qualification.

The remaining sections list both endorsed resources and those that have not been endorsed. While these resources – and others – may be used to support teaching and learning, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

There has been a rapid growth in podcasts in recent years, and we have added below links to a few well-known ones. Some may not be suitable for younger listeners, so please check carefully before sharing with students. Similarly, there are plenty of useful videos for History students on online sharing platforms, and any links below have been checked, but please exercise care before sharing social media links with students.

### 4.1 Free support materials

Resource	Details
<a href="#">Specification</a> and <a href="#">sample assessment materials</a>	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History.
<a href="#">Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports</a>	An <a href="#">Edexcel Online</a> login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
<a href="#">Getting Started Guide</a>	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements of the specification. Updated for Issues 5 and 6.
<a href="#">Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026</a>	Summary guidance with links on the changes being made for Issue 5 (first assessment 2025) and Issue 6 (2026).
Content changes for 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Topic guidance</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance for each option on the changes being made to the content for Issue 6 of the specification (first assessment June 2026), and FAQs.



Resource	Details
Assessment changes for 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Guide</a></li> <li><a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance on the changes being made to the assessment model for Issue 5 of the specification (first assessment June 2025), and FAQs.
Specification language changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Track changes on</a></li> <li><a href="#">Rationale</a></li> <li><a href="#">FAQs</a></li> </ul>	Guidance on the language changes made for Issue 4 of the specification (first teaching September 2023, first assessment June 2025).
<a href="#">Paper 2 Guide</a>	Teaching approaches and ideas for the period study and British depth study, with case studies from practising teachers.
<a href="#">Amendments to Option P3 The American West, c1835–c1895</a>	A guide to the changes made to The American West for Issue 3 of the specification (April 2021).
<a href="#">Women in the American West case study</a>	Teacher Nicole Ridley discusses how she has included more women in her teaching of The American West and the positive impact this has had on her students.
<a href="#">Schemes of work</a>	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files.  A digital <a href="#">interactive scheme of work</a> is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.
<a href="#">Mapping documents</a>	Mapping documents to help support teachers in moving to Edexcel GCSE History.
<a href="#">Exemplar student answers</a>	Exemplar student answers, including from the summer 2018, 2019 and 2022 series, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
<a href="#">American West knowledge booster</a>	A set of quizzes to support students with AO1 knowledge and understanding.
<a href="#">Student walkthroughs</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Paper 2P playlist</a></li> </ul>	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
<a href="#">Revision tips</a>	Some useful revision tips for students. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
<a href="#">Command words</a>	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. <i>Updated for 2025.</i>

## 4.2 Endorsed resources\*

**[Pearson](#)** – Designed to help develop confident, articulate and successful historians.

**[Hodder Education](#)** – The Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel students' book helps students achieve their full potential while ensuring pace, enjoyment and motivation.

**[Oxford University Press](#)** – Oxford's Edexcel GCSE History student books help to develop young historians who have the confidence to succeed, with the most up-to-date exam practice and a tried-and-trusted, accessible approach.

**[Zigzag Education](#)** – Photocopiable resources for learning, revision and exam practice.

**[Anglia Tours](#)** – A range of fully-guided History tours which enhance both teaching and learning for the related Pearson qualification.

**[NST Tours](#)** – Guided History tours to support teachers and students with GCSE History.

\* You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.

## 4.3 Resources for students

Resource	Details
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) The American West, c1835–c1895</i> (Pearson, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) Foundation The American West, c1835–c1895</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Foundation version of student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: The American West Revision Guide and Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2017)	A combined revision guide and workbook written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: The American West Revision Cards</i> (Pearson, 2019)	Pocket-sized revision cards covering the key facts.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: The American West Practice Papers Plus</i> (Pearson, 2020)	A skills-focused companion to the revision guide.
<i>Target Grade 5 Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: The American West, c1835–c1895 Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Workbook focused on key skills and barriers for students targeting grade 5.
<i>Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel: The American West, c1835–c1895</i> (Hodder, 2016)	Textbook written for this option in the new specification.
<i>My Revision Notes: Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History The American West, c1835–c1895</i> (Hodder, 2017)	A revision guide featuring key content coverage, exam-style questions, revision tasks, activities and practical tips.
<i>Ben Walsh History: Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1): Superpower relations and the Cold War, The American West and Weimar and Nazi Germany</i> (Hodder, 2021)	Student book written for three of the options in the specification.

Resource	Details
Zig Zag, <i>Edexcel B Unit 2B: American West Revision Guide</i>	Detailed and informative revision guide on the American West, useful for students revising for assessments.
Zig Zag, <i>Edexcel B Unit 2B: American West Ultimate GCSE Activity Pack</i>	Useful range of activities to accompany lessons on the American West.
Zig Zag, <i>GCSE Edexcel B Unit 2B: American West c1845–c1890: Mind Maps</i>	Range of mind maps on the American West, useful for students revising for assessments.
PG Online, <i>Clear Revise: Edexcel GCSE History 1H10 The American West, c1835–c1895</i> (PG Online, 2023)	Illustrated revision guide matched to the specification with exam-style practice questions and practical tips.
Rosemary Rees, <i>Edexcel GCSE: History B – Schools History Project: The American West</i> (Pearson, 2009)	In-depth study of the American West written for the 2009 specification and updated for the 2013 specification.
SHP Essential, <i>The American West 1840–1895: The Struggle for the Plains</i> (Hodder Education, 2005)	Overview of the American West more suited to lower-ability students. Written for previous GCSE specifications.
BBC American West <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/americanwest">www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/americanwest</a>	Overview on the American West and revision materials and quizzes to aid students with their revision. NB webpage currently unavailable.
BBC, <i>How the Wild West Was Won with Ray Mears</i> <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b044md9y">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b044md9y</a>	BBC series, episodes available on YouTube. Good for clips.
American West site <a href="http://www.americanwest.amdigital.co.uk">www.americanwest.amdigital.co.uk</a>	Website with overview of life in the American West through a series of original documents, useful for higher ability students.
Spartacus Educational <a href="https://spartacus-educational.com/USAamericanwest.htm">https://spartacus-educational.com/USAamericanwest.htm</a>	Overview of life in the American West with links to specific examples of key facts and information relating to the West.
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iydRkC0qMZI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iydRkC0qMZI</a>	The California Gold Rush 1849 – very simplified animation on the Gold Rush.
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CdAzizWiyI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CdAzizWiyI</a>	Short video about the Transcontinental Railroad
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9v5pY9300MQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9v5pY9300MQ</a>	'Ten Minute History' Westward Expansion and the American Civil War. Quick talking animated video on Westward Expansion and the Civil War. Quite detailed and perhaps more than needed for GCSE but interesting points for higher-ability students.
Tony Robinson's Wild West	Available on Discovery+, Amazon prime, Apple. A documentary mini-series (3

Resource	Details
	episodes) exploring the legends and the reality of the 'wild West'.

#### 4.4 Resources for teachers

Resource	Details
Dynamic Learning: The American West 1840–95 Teaching and Learning Resources (Hodder)	Digital resource covering the main aspects of life in the American West. Useful teaching and learning resource for use in lessons.
SHP, <i>The American West 1840–1895: The Struggle for the Plains Teachers Resource Book</i> (Hodder Education, 1998)	Range of worksheets to support student activities in the classroom.
The works of Dee Brown, including <i>Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee</i> , <i>The American West</i> , <i>Wondrous Times of the Frontier</i>	Dee Brown is a prolific author on the American West and the Plains Indians, providing commentary and a sense of narrative.
Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, <i>North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2010) Stephen Aron, <i>The American West: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2014)	Oxford University Press, A Very Short Introduction Series An interesting and well-written series covering a wide variety of topics that serve as an excellent overview.
Clyde Milner et al, <i>The Oxford History of the American West</i> (OUP, 1994)	Chapters by various academics this is readily available through second-hand sites.
Robert V Hine et al, <i>The American West: A New Interpretative History</i> (Yale University Press, 2017)	A revised version of an academic text originally published in 2000.
Zig Zag, <i>Edexcel B Unit 2B: American West Definitive Course Companion</i>	Detailed and definitive companion to accompany the American West course. Useful as a starting point for those not acquainted with the course.
Ned Blackhawk, <i>The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of US History</i> (Yale University Press, 2023)	A sweeping and overdue retelling of US history that recognises that Native Americans are essential to understanding the evolution of modern America.
Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones, <i>The Negro Cowboys</i> (Bison Books, 1983)	About the 5000-plus Black cowboys who served on the ranch crews in the cattleman era.
Devon A. Mihesuah, <i>American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities</i> (Clarity Press, 2009)	Lots of information dispelling myths and stereotypes about Native Americans.
Stephen E. Ambrose, <i>Nothing Like it in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, 1863–1869</i> (Simon & Schuster, 2001)	Accessible book on the Transcontinental Railroad with lots of detail.

Resource	Details
Dorothy Gray, <i>Women of the West</i> (Bison Books, 1998)	Looking at the lives of women who made their way out west.
Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe (Dame Shirley), <i>The Shirley Letters: From the California Mines, 1851–52</i> (Heyday, 2014)	A portrait by a woman of an era dominated by men, with a vivid picture of Gold Rush life.
Joseph M. Marshall III, <i>The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History</i> (Penguin, 2005)	A vibrant portrait of Crazy Horse, his times and his legacy. Also a good bridge between oral and written history.
Peter Cozzens, <i>The Earth is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West</i> (Atlantic, 2018)	Looking at the American expansion into tribal lands and the battles and negotiations that followed, looking at both sides in comprehensive detail.
David Treuer, <i>The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present</i> (Riverhead Books, 2019)	An exploration of Native American history after 1890, challenging the idea that Native American history ended in the 1890s.
<i>The West</i> (PBS, 1996) <a href="https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-west/">https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-west/</a>	Nine-part series by acclaimed American filmmaker Ken Burns. In-depth programme about life in the American West and the resulting conflicts between the Plains Indians, settlers and the US Government. (Possibly a little dated now but still of value.)
<i>The American Buffalo</i> (PBS, 2023) <a href="https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-american-buffalo">https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-american-buffalo</a>	Two-part series by Ken Burns. A longer history of the buffalo, anchored by the stories of Indigenous peoples.
HA podcast, President Lincoln and the American West <a href="https://www.history.org.uk/podcasts/categories/442/podcast/651/president-lincoln-and-the-american-west">https://www.history.org.uk/podcasts/categories/442/podcast/651/president-lincoln-and-the-american-west</a>	HA podcast by Terry Graham on the role of Abraham Lincoln and major Republican Party figures from the 1850s/1860s and their influence on the American West
<a href="http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/historynest">www.hoddereducation.co.uk/historynest</a>	Free worksheets to support lower-ability student activities in the classroom.
Teachit History website <a href="https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/depth-studies/19th-century-america/tags/3732">https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/depth-studies/19th-century-america/tags/3732</a>	Teachit History website. A collection of resources for nineteenth-century America.
<a href="https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary">https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary</a>	A comprehensive bank of resources for teachers, some free, some paid-for.
School History Website <a href="http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk">http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk</a>	A very comprehensive website with resources for teaching history. GCSE resources are arranged by exam board and cover most modules. Some resources are free but to get the full range available there is a subscription payment.
Podcast series <a href="https://www.historicalassociation.org.uk/">Historical Association</a> , free to members	There are lots of History podcast series available these days through various

Resource	Details
<a href="#">The Rest Is History</a> <a href="#">Dan Snow's History Hit</a> <a href="#">History Extra</a> <a href="#">You're Dead to Me</a>	platforms. We have listed here a few well-known ones, and you can search for relevant episodes. There are also revision podcasts available. Please check they are suitable before sharing with students.

## Educational Recording Agency

### Transform History Teaching with Multimedia Resources from the Educational Recording Agency (ERA)

[The ERA Licence](#) provides seamless access to television and radio recordings, offering a single point of clearance for the rights needed to create and use authentic media resources in your classroom. With [ERA's free video streaming platform](#), licensed institutions can explore a rich library of curriculum-mapped TV and radio clips tailored to GCSE, AS, and A-level teaching.

Engage your learners with curated clips, full-length documentaries, and programmes that bring historical contexts to life. The platform also includes exclusive access to the **BBC Shakespeare** and **Literary Archives**, offering unique cross-curricular opportunities to enrich your lessons with impactful media—perfect for both homework and classroom activities.

To access this free resource [registration is required](#) - but is quick and simple. State schools in England are licensed under a central agreement with the DfE and the vast majority of independent schools also hold a current ERA Licence.