

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS – *Causation..the Environment’s Impact on Development of the West*

Reminders About Causation

Historians often debate the causes and effects of events, because history is complex and filled with multiple variables. Some facts are facts: black and white. But most of history is gray: up for interpretation. When analyzing causation, we must remember that we are making a judgment and defending our viewpoint. And, remember... every viewpoint has an opposing or differing viewpoint. Analyzing the effects of historical events requires similar skill. It is not only listing ways the event impacted the nation, for example, it is analyzing historical significance of those effects. Did the effect stem directly from the event? Or, was it simply a coincidence in time and place? Was the effect short term or long term? Which cause was most significant? Which effect was most significant? Etc.

Reminders About the Geography-Environment Theme

This theme examines the role of environment, geography, and climate in both constraining and shaping human actions. Questions about environment require you to analyze the interaction between the environment and Americans in their efforts to survive and thrive. Explore efforts to interpret, preserve, manage, or exploit natural and man-made environments, as well as the historical contexts within which interactions with the environment have taken place.

Key Terms

- Climate
- Geography
- Environment: natural and man-made
- Interaction with environment – how humans shape and are shaped by environment
- Natural resources
- Exchanges: plants, diseases, animals, technologies

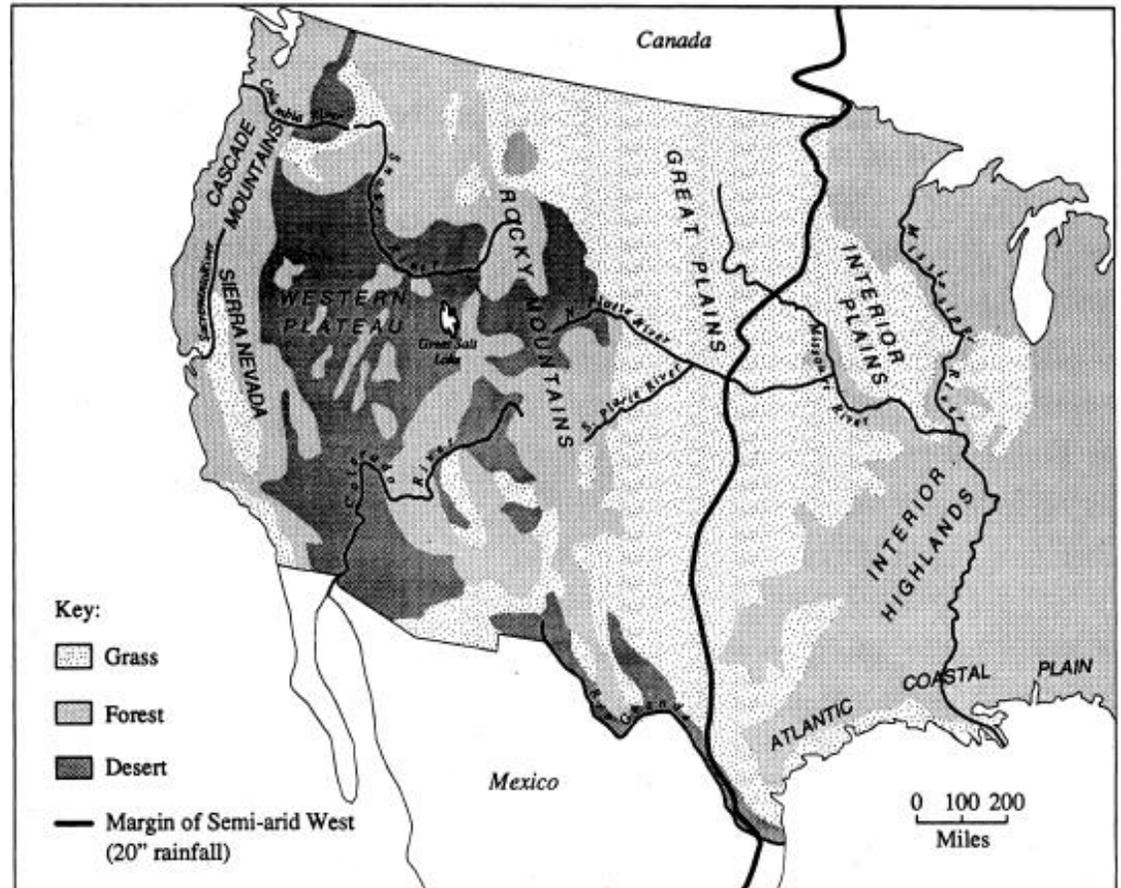
Overarching Questions

1. How did interactions with the natural environment shape the institutions and values of various groups living on the North American continent?
2. How did economic and demographic changes affect the environment and lead to debates over use and control of the environment and natural resources?

GEO Objective from Period 6

GEO-1.0:

Explain how geographic and environmental factors shaped the development of various communities, and analyze how competition for and debates over natural resources have affected both interactions among different groups and the development of government policies.



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From the 2015 Revised Content Outline

Key Concept 6.2: The migrations that accompanied industrialization transformed both urban and rural areas of the United States and caused dramatic social and cultural change.

- II. Larger numbers of **migrants moved to the West** in search of **land** and economic opportunity, frequently provoking competition and violent conflict.
- A) The building of transcontinental railroads, the discovery of **mineral resources**, and government policies promoted economic growth and created new communities and centers of commercial activity.
 - B) In hopes of achieving ideals of self-sufficiency and independence, migrants moved to both rural and boomtown areas of the West for opportunities, such as **building the railroads, mining, farming, and ranching**.
 - C) As migrant populations increased in number and the **American bison population** was decimated, competition for **land and resources** in the West among white settlers, American Indians, and Mexican Americans led to an increase in violent conflict.
 - D) The U.S. government violated treaties with American Indians and responded to resistance with military force, eventually confining American Indians to reservations and denying tribal sovereignty.
 - E) Many American Indians preserved their cultures and tribal identities despite government policies promoting assimilation, and they attempted to develop self-sustaining economic practices.

We often focus on how migration westward (and human interaction with the environment) impacted the nation and/or impacted American Indians. In the image at right, the impact of the railroad and westward migration on the buffalo/bison population is illustrated. Impact on bison and American Indians is heavily emphasized in this unit, however... in the analysis activity on the next page, remember to consider the environment first. How did the geography (land, resources, climate) impact those living there.



Complete the prewriting activity and write a thesis in response to the following prompt:

To what extent did the environment of the West beyond the Mississippi shape the lives of those who lived and settled there? How important were other factors? Confine your analysis to the 1840s through 1890s.

[Refer to your writing guidelines if you do not remember the formula.]

(LC) Local Context of question's main topic:

Environment of the WEST

The most significant impact the Western environment had on those who lived and settled there was:

Because...

Theme #1 (A)

Theme #2 (B)

Theme #3 (C)

Effect & Evidence for A...

...to what extent?

Effect & Evidence for B

...to what extent?

Effect & Evidence for C

...to what extent?

Although X, Y because ABC - Thesis: