

Learning Objectives

- 1) Know the twelve states that make up the Middle West Region
 - a) **Great Lakes States:** These states border the Great Lakes; they include Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.
 - b) **Plains States:** These states do not border the great Lakes; they include North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri.
- 2) Know about the Native Americans who inhabited the Middle West Region before the pioneers. Ancestors of the Native Americans came to North America over 15 thousand years ago. Many tribes with different languages and customs lived in the region. One group of natives, called the Lakota (part of the Sioux tribe) lived on the Great Plains. Since natural resources were scarce in this area, the Lakota had to travel in order to find the things they needed to survive. For example, they followed buffalo herds from place to place. The Lakota found a use for every part of the buffalo: The hide was tanned and made into cloth for clothes or shelter. The meat was used for food; it was either cooked or dried, to be eaten later. The horns were made into spoons or headdresses. The hair was made into rope. The bones were made into arrowheads or needles. And the tail was often used as a flyswatter. The Lakota used teepees for shelter because they could be put up and taken down easily. This feature allowed the Lakota to follow the buffalo herds.
- 3) Understand why settlers came to the Middle West region. The United States government encouraged settlement in the Middle West by selling the land for a low price and by developing the area with roads and canals. People who wanted to farm fertile soil or start new communities, but who could not afford to buy the high priced land in the eastern states, came to the Middle West.
- 4) Know about pioneer life. Some pioneers traveled to the Middle West on foot, while many others traveled by wagon. However, traveling by wagon was very slow; the trip could take months. Consequently, many pioneers settled closer to the East in the Ohio River Valley. As the Ohio River Valley became crowded, pioneers were forced to move farther west. Once the settlers reached their land, they built shelters and cleared the land for farming. The Plains States had very few trees, but they had a lot of sod. So instead of building their shelters with wood, the pioneers used sod. These homes were called "soddies." Pioneer families had to survive on their own, so they hunted for food and made their own furniture and

clothing. In the 1880's the Mennonites brought the practice of growing wheat to the Middle West. Wheat was, and still is, a successful crop because it can survive in a dry climate. Wheat made it possible to make bread and other products that helped the pioneers survive.

- 5) Realize that settlement of the Middle West had a negative impact on the Native Americans who lived there. The settlers overran the Sioux land and used much of it for farming. The settlers also hunted the buffalo almost to extinction. This depleted the food supply of the Sioux tribes. In addition, many Sioux became ill and died from diseases like smallpox, which were brought to the Middle West by the pioneers. The Sioux and the pioneers began to fight over the land. The government's solution to the problem was to place the Native Americans on a reservation. The Sioux were not allowed to travel freely and they had to ask the government for food. The Native Americans were not happy with reservation life.
- 6) Know about the Battle of Little Bighorn (Custer's Last Stand). In 1874 gold was discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota, which was part of the reservation given to the Sioux. The United States government wanted the Sioux to return this valuable land, but Sitting Bull, a Lakota chief, refused. In 1876 Lieutenant Colonel George Custer led troops to the Black Hills. They were supposed to scout the area. Instead, Custer ordered an attack. The Sioux killed Custer and all of his troops. The government sent more troops into the area, and soon, the Sioux were outnumbered. They were forced to give up their land, and they had to move to another reservation in Nebraska.
- 7) Understand that technology led to population increases in the cities. Near the turn of the century, machines started doing a lot of farm work, so displaced workers moved from the farms to the cities in order to find jobs in the factories. Thousands of people from all over the country and many immigrants came to the cities to work in manufacturing jobs.
- 8) Know about the industries that developed in the Middle West region.
 - a) **Automobile:** In 1896 Henry Ford, an engineer in Detroit, designed his first gas-powered automobile. Ford set up an assembly line to produce his cars. The assembly line allowed Ford to produce many automobiles in a short amount of time. Many other industries used the assembly line to improve efficiency.
 - b) **Technology:** Today, computers and robots do much of the work in an assembly line, so there are fewer jobs in factories.

However, many jobs are available for those who design computers and robots.

- c) **Agriculture:** Agriculture is a key feature to the region's economy. Today, very few people in the Middle West rely on farming to make a living. Large farms owned by companies have purchased most family farms; these are called agribusinesses.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Ask each student to choose one person or group of people in the history of the Middle West region that he/she believes made a significant impact on the region. Encourage students to use the video, textbook, and library resources to support their argument. Have each person present his or her argument to the class.
- 2) Have students pick one period in the history of the Middle West. Ask them to prepare a journal of the day-to-day activities of someone their age during that period. Include information about school, chores, food, clothing, etc.

Vocabulary

Assembly Line — An arrangement of machines and/or people where the work passes from one operation to another in a line

Mennonites — A Christian group of people who emigrated from Russia

Pemmican — Dried buffalo meat that was pounded and combined with melted animal fat

Reservation — An area designated for Native Americans

Sod — A piece of soil covered in grasses with many shallow roots

Teepee — A cone-shaped shelter made of cones and animal hides

