6.11 Explaining Success and Failure in Settlement of the Great Plains: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 1HI0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. You are advised to spend about 30 minutes on this pack.

1 State two reasons why the Homestead Act encouraged settlement of the Plains.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 State one technological improvement that helped settlers break the tough prairie sod and cultivate crops.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Explain two consequences of the collapse of the open range after the winters of 1886-87 and the spread of barbed wire.

(Total for Question 3 is 8 marks)

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4 Write a narrative account analysing how and why efforts to settle different parts of the Great Plains proved more successful in some cases than others between c1835 and c1895.

You may use the following in your answer:
- Mormon irrigation and cooperative settlement at Salt Lake City
- the Homestead Act of 1862 and the experience of homesteaders

You should also use information of your own.

(Total for Question 4 is 8 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.11 Explaining Success and Failure in Settlement of the Great Plains: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

it offered free or very cheap land (typically 160 acres) to claimants **B1**

it allowed many ordinary citizens, including immigrants, to own land and settle **B1**

Answer: It offered free or very cheap land and allowed ordinary citizens and immigrants to claim land and become farmers.

Question 2

the steel plough (sodbuster) **B1**

supporting detail, e.g. it was stronger than wooden or iron-tipped ploughs and could cut through dense prairie roots **B1**

Answer: The steel plough, which could cut through tough prairie sod more effectively than earlier ploughs.

Question 3

Level 1 Identifies one or two simple consequences of the open range collapse with little supporting detail. **1-2**

Level 2 Identifies and begins to explain one consequence, supported by some accurate detail. **3-4**

Level 3 Explains two consequences, supported by accurate and relevant detail and some analysis of how they followed from the collapse. **5-6**

Level 4 Explains two consequences in a well-developed way, showing clear links between the environmental and economic causes and the outcomes, supported throughout by precise and accurate detail. **7-8**

Indicative content:

- Many ranchers suffered catastrophic stock losses in 1886-87, forcing the sale of land or a shift from large ranching to smaller, fenced farms, so the scale and organisation of the cattle business changed.
- Barbed wire and enclosure reduced the need for long cattle drives and for shared grazing on public land, so the cattle trade became more localised and reliant on fenced pastures and feed, changing transport and market arrangements.
- The collapse encouraged investment in mixed farming and hay production to feed cattle in winter, so some parts of the Plains diversified economically rather than depending solely on open range beef production.
- Conflict increased between ranchers who wanted open grazing and farmers who fenced land, leading to legal disputes and sometimes violence before courts and state laws settled property rights in favour of private enclosure.

Question 4

Level 1 Simple, generalised statements about success and failure with little organisation or sense of change over time. **1-2**

Level 2 Some accurate knowledge organised into a basic sequence, with limited analysis of causes and effects. **3-4**

Level 3 A coherent narrative that explains changes over time and analyses reasons for success and failure, supported by accurate detail. **5-6**

Level 4 A well-organised, analytical narrative that links events and developments across the period, explaining why particular settlements succeeded or failed with precise and accurate supporting detail. **7-8**

Indicative content:

- Mormon settlements succeeded because central leadership under Brigham Young organised migration, land division and cooperative labour to build canals for irrigation, enabling agriculture in an arid region where isolated homesteads often failed.
- The Homestead Act encouraged many families to settle by granting land, but success depended on local conditions: homesteads near reliable water, on good soils, or where settlers used adapted crops and improved ploughs had better chances than those facing drought, insects or unbroken sod.
- Environmental shocks, such as drought and insect infestations, and the difficulty of ploughing prairie sod, could turn a promising homestead into failure within a few seasons, whereas organised communities that shared resources and knowledge could withstand setbacks better.
- The cattle boom provides contrast: the open range allowed rapid expansion of the industry but left ranchers vulnerable to extreme weather; after the winters of 1886-87 and the adoption of barbed wire the industry restructured, showing how both technology and weather shaped which settlement strategies were viable.

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