

Broken Promises & The Plight of the Bison (1840–1900)

Topics Covered:

Massive decline of the bison population, commercial slaughter, destruction of Plains Indigenous cultures, and forced starvation of Native peoples.

Part I: Multiple Choice (Choose the best answer)

1. What animal is most associated with the Plains Indigenous peoples' way of life?
 - a) Elk
 - b) Bison
 - c) Deer
 - d) Moose
2. What was the primary reason for the near extinction of the bison in the late 1800s?
 - a) Disease outbreaks
 - b) Overhunting for commercial trade
 - c) Climate change
 - d) Predators
3. By the late 1800s, the bison population had declined to:
 - a) Millions
 - b) Hundreds of thousands
 - c) Nearly zero in the wild
 - d) Unchanged levels
4. What was one major use of bison hides by commercial hunters?
 - a) Food storage
 - b) Railway braking systems
 - c) Clothing and industrial products
 - d) Currency
5. Which industry greatly contributed to the mass killing of bison?
 - a) Fishing
 - b) Railroads
 - c) Timber
 - d) Mining only
6. Why did the U.S. government allow or encourage bison slaughter?
 - a) To protect wildlife
 - b) To force Native Americans onto reservations
 - c) To increase farming land
 - d) To stop railroad expansion
7. What happened to many Indigenous communities when the bison disappeared?
 - a) They became wealthier
 - b) They migrated to Europe
 - c) They faced starvation and cultural collapse
 - d) They moved to cities and prospered
8. The destruction of the bison most directly impacted:
 - a) Urban merchants
 - b) Plains Indigenous cultures
 - c) Eastern farmers
 - d) European monarchies

9. What term best describes agreements between the U.S. government and Native nations that were often broken?
- a) Contracts
 - b) Treaties
 - c) Alliances
 - d) Decrees
10. What was a common hunting method used in the commercial slaughter of bison?
- a) Poisoning water supplies
 - b) Driving herds off cliffs
 - c) Long-range shooting from trains
 - d) Trapping with nets
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Part II: True or False (T or F)

11. ____ - The bison population increased dramatically between 1840 and 1900.
12. ____ - Native peoples relied on the bison for food, clothing, and tools.
13. ____ - Commercial hunters only killed bison for food.
14. ____ - Railroads made it easier for hunters to access bison herds.
15. ____ - The U.S. government always protected Indigenous hunting rights.
16. ____ - The disappearance of the bison contributed to forced relocation of Native peoples.
17. ____ - Entire Plains cultures were unaffected by the loss of the bison.
18. ____ - By the late 1800s, bison were nearly extinct in the wild.
19. ____ - The bison was central to both the economy and spirituality of many Plains tribes.
20. ____ - Conservation efforts to save the bison began during the height of the slaughter.
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Part III: Matching

Match the term to the correct description.

Terms:

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| 21. ___ Commercial Slaughter | A. Agreements b/w Native nations & U.S. gvrnmt that were not honored |
| 22. ___ Broken Treaties | B. Large-scale killing of bison for profit, hides, and trade |
| 23. ___ Railroads | C. Loss of food supply leading to hunger among Indigenous peoples |
| 24. ___ Forced Starvation | D. Expansion system that allowed easier access to bison herds |
| 25. ___ Cultural Devastation | E. Destruction of Indigenous ways of life, traditions, & survival systems |
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