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

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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

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.

Part III: Matching

Match the term to the correct description.

Terms:

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

---

LIVEWORKSHEETS