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The Greater Reconstruction
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[Note: The project manager took these notes during the summer institute. Please check everything for accuracy.]

Intersection of regions

In the West, it seems like the Civil War is not that big of deal
Civil War is an interesting story, but doesn't answer the key question: So What?
What does the Civil War have to do with Bozeman? What does the Civil War have to do with you? If you are a Mexican immigrant, third generation in the Southwest—what does the Civil War have to do with you? If you are the descendent of an Asian immigrant in California—what does the Civil War have to do with you?
If you go to the South, it is much different. “The War the Never Ended”

Expansion westward in the 1840's was an event that was just as important in American history as the Civil War. These two are absolutely bound together. Cannot untangle them, shouldn't try, but do try to understand.

Reconstruction technically ends with the political compromise in 1877.

What was the Civil War about?

Common elements: North and South; urban and rural; slavery; states rights; race; civil rights; constitution; individual freedom; sectional tension.

Often think about these connections only in terms of North and South. Think about in terms of slavery and the expansion of slavery into the West. The role of the West applies only to North and South and slavery. Race only applies to issues of black and white and how it applies to slavery. Always refers back to “the east”—that is where the war was fought.

Bleeding Kansas (1854-1856) Free Soil Issue

Trigger is in the West, but then the focus shifts back to the east.

The Greater Reconstruction: 1845-1877

Begins literally with a physical reconstruction in which the U.S. was fundamentally remade. It was painful and expensive. The U.S. is reconstructed in 1845. Does “somewhat” end in 1877 in both the North/South and West/East. It began with the physical/geographical reconstruction of the nation with the addition of 1.2 million acres between 1845-1848. “The Great Gulp”

Three interconnected events: Annexing Texas, the Northwest, and the Southwest. Louisiana only gained 800,000 acres. This annexation increased the size of the U.S. by 66%. Before had been a few generations, but now within 3 years, the land was acquired.

Land acquired was worth more than anything else acquired beforehand. Land was full of very rich treasures. Land full of peoples and cultures very different than what was established in the East.

Generated enormous energy and the spirit of Manifest Destiny. Gave the country an enormous feeling of confidence and self-righteousness, ego, sense of righteousness. But, it also aggravated older nagging questions for the nation. The questions that came out of it were there from the birth of the republic. Part of the price that was paid for the remodeling was to force those questions to the forefront—demand answers.

Questions:

1. Can the nation hold together? Government and society we have created cannot grow too large. It will not function if the area gets too big. Area begins to split into regions, and each region has certain needs. New land acquired consists of area very different (geographically) than the east.
2. What is the relationship between the federal (central) government and the regions? There are shared powers of regions in the central government. How do they relate to the federal government, and which has more control?
3. Each region has their own economies. How do the nation's economic parts fit together? Which part does what?
4. How do cultural minorities fit into the nation? Has always been a country with cultural and racial majorities and cultural and racial minorities. Who is an American? Who's in and who's out? How do you measure cultural difference? Language has a great symbolic power—How many languages are spoken in a certain place—signifies cultural difference. The U.S. increased in size by 66% and the number of languages doubled.

Step Back (from what we have been talking about for the last 40 minutes). Put your brain back to where you were before you walked into the classroom this morning and ask yourself: Which event in the 19th century forced the nation to ask those questions? Your answers would have been: Civil War. That is true, the Civil War was about all of those things. But, in the middle of the 19th century, TWO great events forced the nation to ask those questions—the West and the South become entangled. It was as much about the West as it was the South. The answers: finding, struggling toward them, unraveling and working them out was also just as much about the West and it was the South.

This helps us deal with the problem that has “be-deviled” western history since its inception. In the 19th century, there were two great stories that defined the time period: Westward Expansion and the Civil War. Typically, it has been taught as two separate events. The story of westward expansion is called the frontier (“f-word” by Patty Limerick). With this story, the frontier ends. With the Civil War, it never ends. But... the questions raised with westward expansion still have not ended. The significance of the West in American history does not stop. Western history is as relevant today as the Civil War and arguably more so.

The West—not the East—had the highest percentages of foreign-born people. In 1900 North Dakota had the highest percentage of foreign born people: 80%. 1860: 65% of people born in Nevada were foreign born. Anomalous because it includes native born people: Mexicans and Indians—their parents were born in that region even though it was not considered the United States.

Racial Lines Drawn:

1. Racial Insiders: They are racially different, but essential to the economy. This includes African Americans. They are defined as the most racially different, but the most like the white majority.
2. Racial Outsiders: Expansion brought in peoples that were vastly culturally and racially different than the white majority. Weren't a part of the American economy. The most different were Indians. Then were the Hispanics. Asians and Chinese were more different and more "alien" to the white majority. At the outset, none had a significant place in the American economy.

Who is an American? How do these cultural and racially different groups of people fit into American society?

Bringing these two together—in our minds and in our classrooms

Almost immediately, two events occur that bring those questions to the forefront and force the U.S. to start dealing with those questions.

1. Bleeding Kansas
Who will take advantage of those new resources out there? Will the racial insiders (slaves) be allowed into the West? Will the West be kept as a "white preserve?"

The greatest coincidence of American history: 200 hours before the signing of the Treaty of Hidalgo—John Marshall discovers gold. Gold discovered the same moment the treaty is being signed. California became the richest state in the world. More gold taken from California b/t 1848 and 1858 than produced in the entire world between 1492 and 1848. Gold discovered in January of 1848. Thousands of 1848'ers: who were they? They were Mexicans, South Americans, Chileans, Australians, Hawaiians, Indians, and others from the Pacific Rim. There were thousands there before the first 49'ers even showed up. The 49'ers get there and all these other people are already there, and they have all the good claims.

2. The Second Conquest of California: 1849-1858. These people were driven out of California. Second Question: Who will be able to take advantage of the new resources in the West? Treatment of Mexicans, Chinese, and American Indians. State authorities are in charge in California from the very beginning—due to the rapidity of California becoming a state. What happens is one of the most brutal and horrible episodes of American history. Indian were hunted and put into slavery. This was genocide. Authorities consciously set out to destroy Indian peoples. This is happening at the same time as Bleeding Kansas.

How many people killed over the issue of Free Soil in Kansas? 53 people died over this question of racial insiders in Kansas.

How many Indians killed during the second conquest of California? In the first two years of the gold rush, nearly 100,000 Indians were killed. By 1900, Indians in California had been reduced in number from 150,000 to approximately 16,000 people.

Battle of Gettysburg—July 3, 1863. In 1863, the country was divided on two axis—North and South and East and West. Country is just a hair away from falling apart. Civil War is the struggle to answer the questions. In the West, the attitude is the same confidence and arrogance as during expansion. Federal government shows its superiority. Steel Treaty with the Nez
Pierce in 1863.