

Chapter 2

Homesteading

(16:37 minutes)

Synopsis

This 17-minute video surveys the advent of homesteading in Montana with an overarching theme of immigration and its effects on the state. This video can be viewed as two shorter segments if desired. **Segment 1** (7:45) begins by presenting some of the reasons settlers homesteaded in Montana and the effects homesteading had on Montana's Indian populations. **Segment 2** (8:52) explores the story of a woman who homesteaded in Montana at the turn of the twentieth century and links Montana's homesteading history to the present with commentary from the woman's great-granddaughter.

► The video begins with students giving their best answer to the following focus question, which relates to Segment 1: **“How would you describe homesteading in Montana?”** Teachers may wish to ask their students the same question before viewing the episode.

The narrator answers the focus question:

“Immigrants swept into Montana by the tens of thousands to populate its forests, high plains, and prairies. They changed the state's economic, political, and social fabric. They directly affected Montana Indian tribes by taking up non-allotment lands on reservations. The homestead ‘bust’ (1917–1930) proved just as dramatic as the ‘boom.’ Farms were abandoned, markets disappeared and towns died. The bust left a depleted landscape that still displays homestead-era scars. Only the most resilient of settlers adapted to the new conditions and survived. They became the core of Montana's Twentieth Century agricultural community.”

Teachers may wish to stop the video at 7 minutes and 45 seconds and discuss the motivations for and effects of homesteading before watching the second segment. A possible focus question for Segment 2 could be: **“Why do you think an unmarried woman would choose to homestead?”**

Post-viewing Discussion Questions

Engage students' critical thinking skills and elicit their emotional responses with the following four questions, most easily remembered through the acronym DICE: What **disturbed** you? What **interested** you? What **confused** you? What **enlightened** you?

“Getting at the Meaning” Questions

Segment 1

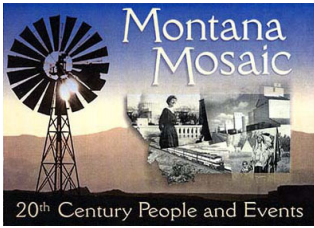
1. How did this video challenge your perception of the homesteading boom?
2. What were some of reasons that people chose to homestead in Montana?
3. How did homesteading affect reservation life?

Segment 2

1. What type of work did women perform on homesteads?
2. Given societal expectations, are you surprised that so many women chose to take out homesteads? Why or why not?

Vocabulary Terms

Prove up: to fulfill certain obligations for land ownership in order to gain full title to the land (for example, by building a house, planting crops, and staying on the land for five years).



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Allotment: the practice of subdividing Indian reservations into privately owned parcels. Once land was allotted, it was owned by the individual, not by the tribe.

Additional Resources

For more information on topics addressed in this episode, see *Montana: Stories of the Land*, Chapter 13, “Homesteading This Dry Land, 1905–1920,” (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter13/Chapter13.pdf>) and Chapter 11, “The Early Reservation Years, 1880–1920” (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter11/Chapter11.pdf>).

Content Standards

IEFA Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

EU 5. There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

- Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492-1800s
- Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871
- Reservation Period – Allotment and Assimilation, 1887-1934
- Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934-1953
- Termination and Relocation Period, 1953-1968
- Self-Determination Period, 1975-Present

Montana State Social Studies Standards

SS.E.6-8.1. Explain how economic decisions impact individuals, businesses, and society, including Indigenous societies.

SS.G.6-8.6. Identify how the historical and contemporary movement of people, goods, and ideas from one area can impact change, conflict, and cooperation in other areas.

SS.H.6-8.2. Analyze how the historical events relate to one another and are shaped by historical context, including societies in the Americas.

SS.H.6-8.3. Analyze how, since European contact, historical events and policies have mutually impacted American Indian and European societies.

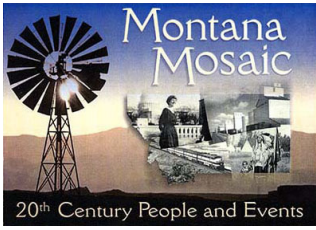
SS.H.6-8.5. Explain how Montana has changed over time and how this history impacts the present.

SS.H.6-8.6. Understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.

SS.CG.9-12.2. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of domestic and international relationships.

SS.E.9-12.1. Analyze how pressures and incentives impact economic choices and their costs and benefits for different groups, including American Indians.

SS.G.9-12.4. Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them, including American Indians.



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SS.G.9-12.5. Evaluate the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental, political, and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.

SS.H.9-12.1. Analyze how unique circumstances of time, place, and historical contexts shape individuals' lives.

SS.H.9-12.5. Explain events in relation to both their intended and unintended consequences, including governmental policies impacting American Indians.

SS.H.9-12.7. Analyze how historical, cultural, social, political, ideological, and economic contexts shape people's perspectives.