Mining & The West

The Main Idea

- Mining and the discoveries of Gold & Silver attracted many Americans to move West and get rich.

Major Mining Strikes in the West, 1849–1880*

Mining

- Attracted Young, single men
- Desire to strike it rich
- Are there any comparisons to today?

Mining in the West

- A few small prospectors made large fortunes
- Most money made by large mining corporations.
- Mining towns had high populations of foreigners.
  - Mexico, England, Ireland, China

Economic Impacts

- The added gold (and silver)
  - Boosted U.S. economy
  - Increased foreign investment
  - Stimulated U.S. involvement in global economy

California Gold Rush

- By the mid 1850s, the California Gold Rush had ended and miners began looking elsewhere.
- Pike's Peak - Gold found in 1858 and by 1859, 50,000 miners were there
- Lodes - veins of rich minerals in the soil dug by machines and companies, not individuals

Discovery of Gold & Silver

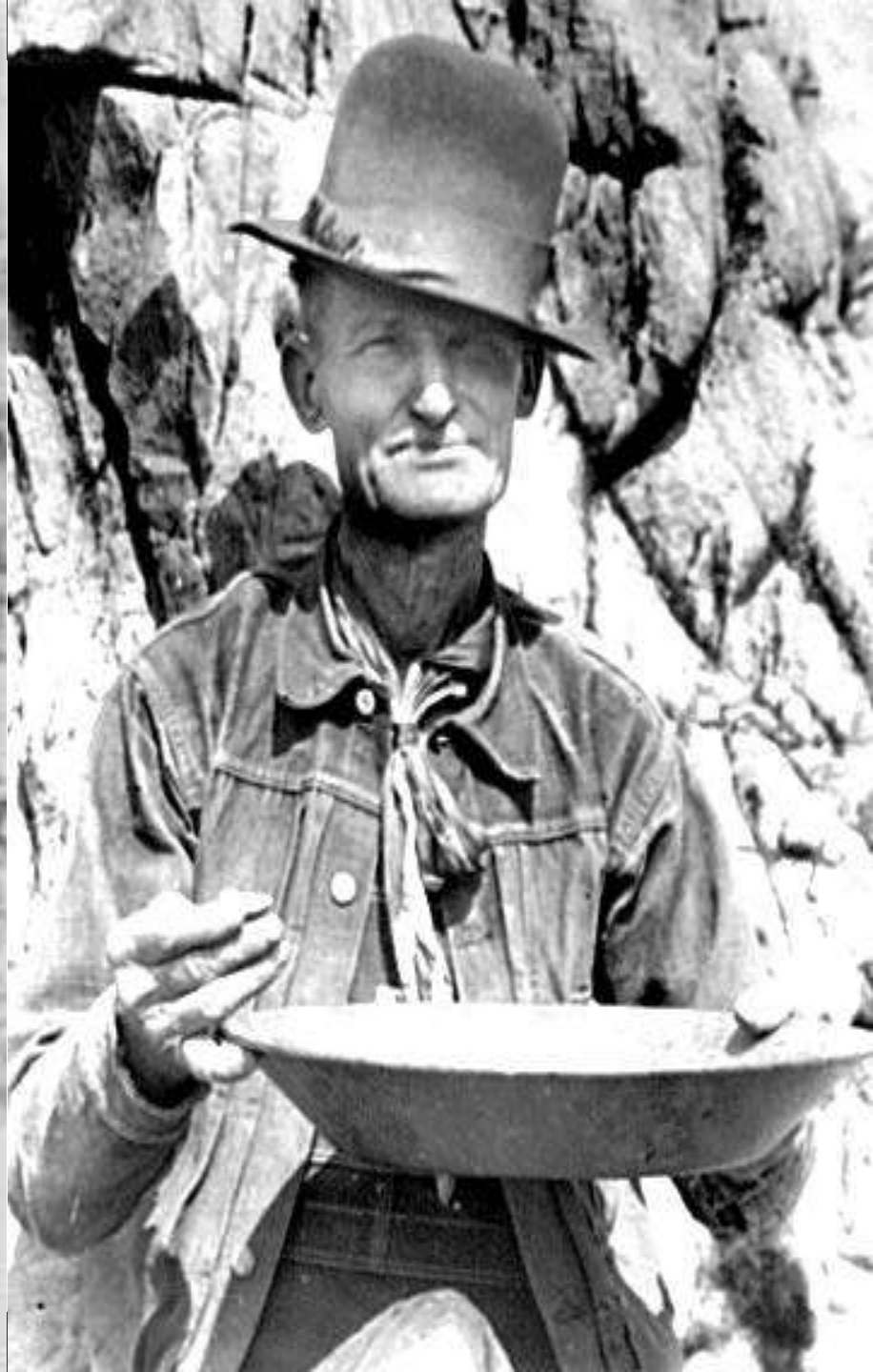
- Comstock Lode - Largest silver mine in US, $700,000,000 in silver brought out in 20 years from a depth of 3200 feet
- Klondike Gold Rush➔ 1897➔ Gold Strike along the Klondike River in the Yukon Territory➔ 100,000 Americans headed that way➔ Did not find much gold when they got there.

Community Development

- Mining camps and towns
  - Thousands of men poured into mining areas. Camps were hastily built and had no law enforcement. Vigilante justice was used to combat theft and violence.
- Camps become towns
  - Some camps developed into towns, with hastily constructed buildings of stores and saloons.
  - As towns developed, women and children came to join the men, making the towns more respectable. Townspeople established churches, newspapers, and schools.

WESTERN MINING HISTORY.COM

WesternMiningHistory.com



Cowboys & The Great Plains

Warm-Up

- What comes to mind with the following words?
  1. Cowboy
  2. Ranch
  3. Beef
  4. West
  5. Guns
  6. Bandits

Cowboys & Cattle Drives

- Post Civil War:
  - Eastern cities are left stripped of resources.
  - The country's growing population needs food.
  - In Texas, cattle run wild.
    - Very valuable

Cowboys & Cattle Drives

- The Cowboy emerges
- The drive (guide) cattle to the railroads
- Big Business

Barb Wire

- Used in making fences. (CHEAP!!!!!!)
- Allows farmers to mark their land & keep wild cattle out.
- Brings about the end of the cattle drives & cowboys on the open range.

Video

Farming the Plains

White Settlers

- Came from the South
- Looking for cheap land.
- Middle-class farmers and businesspeople.

African-American Settlers

- Called Exodusters
- From the South
  - Trying to avoid the post Civil War South.
  - Ku Klux Klan
- Tried to build their own communities.

European Settlers

- Sweden, Finland, & Russia
- Helped develop a distinct culture in the area

Chinese Settlers

- Came for the gold rush or to help build railroads.
- Turned to farming.
- Helped build the California fruit farm industry
- Banned from owning land.

Chinese Settlers

- Why do you think that Chinese settlers were prohibited from owning land?

Farming Grows

- Farming became a business.
- Improved farming technologies.
- Led to Bonanza farms:
  - Specialized in a single cash crop
  - The rise of ‘agribusiness’.

Bonanza Farms

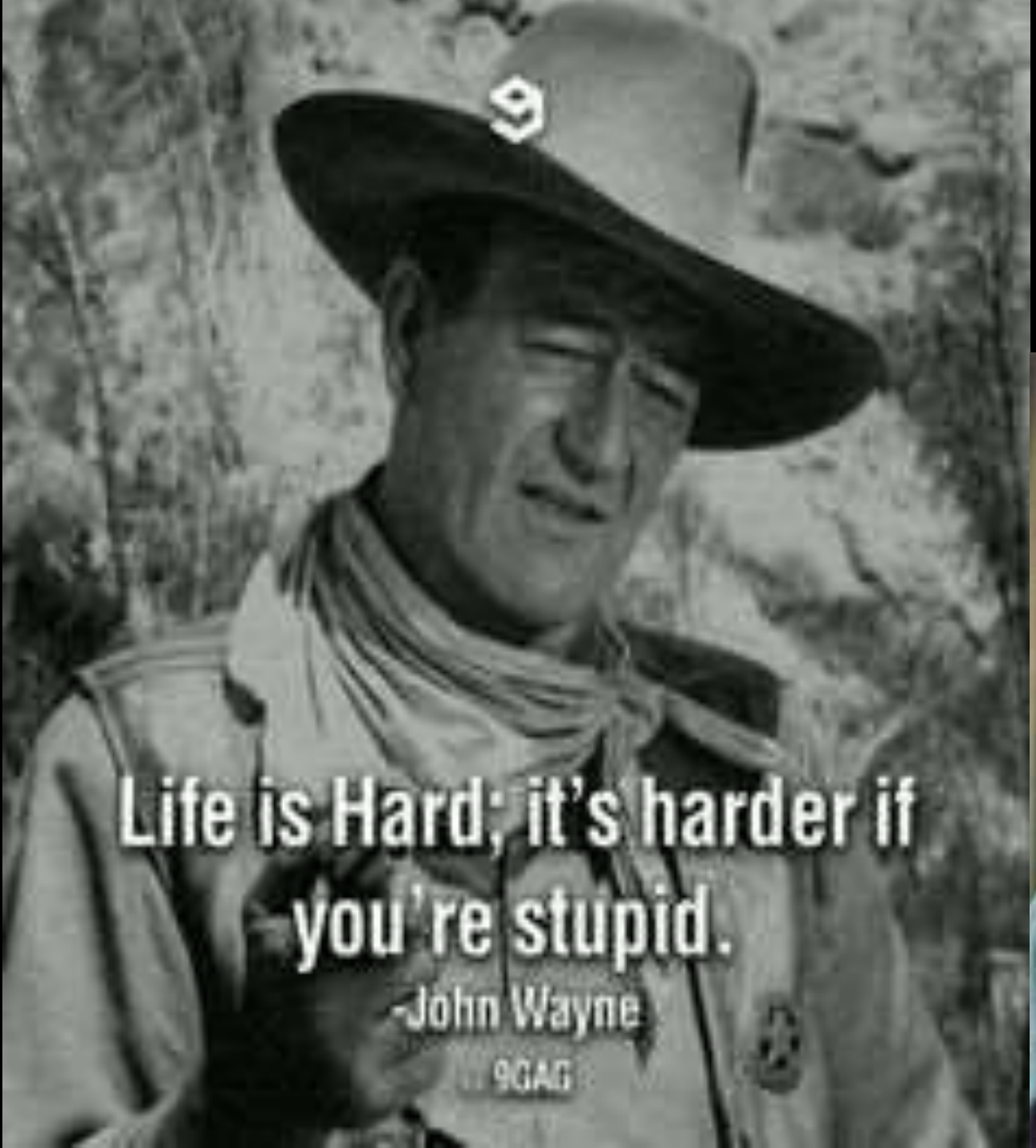
- 10,000 acre farms
- Wheat boom of the 1880s
- Population in Dakotas tripled
- Overproduction, high investment costs, droughts, and reliance on one-crop agriculture brought an end to the boom
- 1890 prices fell, some lost everything

The Wild West

- Gunfights
- Outlaws (Billy the Kid)
- Marshals and Sheriffs (Wyatt Earp)
- Mythical
- Dodge City, KS
- Tombstone, AZ

The West Today

- Still lives in the American imagination
- Depicted in movies
- TV shows (Frontier House, Little House on the Prairie, Gunsmoke, etc.)



- How is this a romanticized vision of the west?

MONTANA
WYOMING
DAKOTA
IDAHO
NEBRASKA
THE VIRGINIAN
FROM AMERICA'S
First Western Novel
WRITTEN BY OWEN WISTER

Activity

- Complete the Rise of the West Source Analysis Assignment.
  - Due at the end of class.