



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Homework

## Understanding Settler Colonialism

**Directions:** Actively read the excerpt below and answer the questions that follow.

**Source:** *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States (For Young People)*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Beacon Press, 2019, pages 10-14.

1 Today in the United States there are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous nations composed of nearly three million people. These are the descendants of the fifteen million original inhabitants of the land...

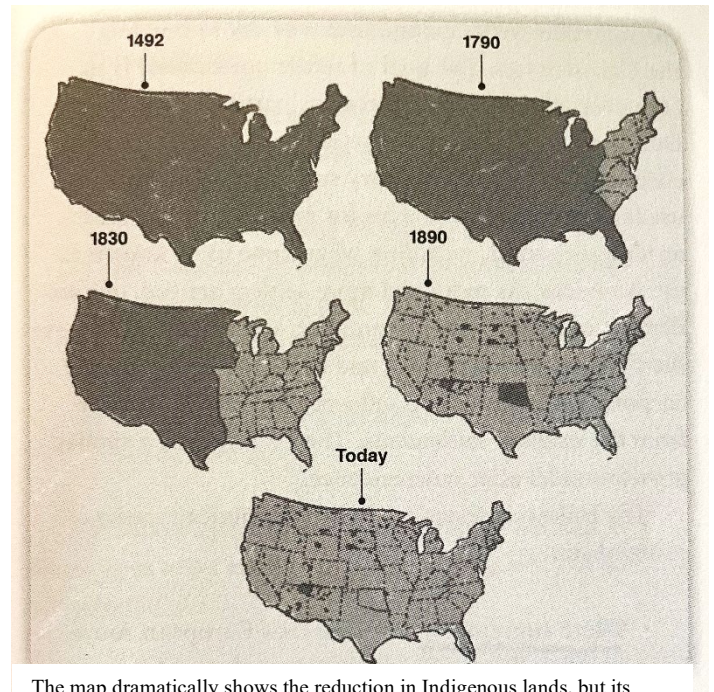
2 The Indigenous peoples' land base has also been drastically reduced since first contact with Europeans... Much of that remaining land consists of more than three hundred federally recognized reservations. The concept of **reservation**—confining an Indigenous group to a reserved land base in exchange for US government protection from settlers—arose during the era of US expansion and treaty making that spanned the years from [prior to] independence to 1871.

3 Although Native historians and scholars have written at length about how events in US history have impacted Indigenous peoples, their perspectives are often not included in history courses. Instead, students are taught another origin story, one about the US as a nation of immigrants. Native peoples, to the extent that they are included at all, are conveniently renamed “First Americans,” which casts them as immigrants (usually from Asia across the Bering Strait), undermining their claims to the land.

4 The “nation of immigrants” framework obscures the US practice of **settler colonialism** [which] was key to building the United States. The goal of settler colonialism is to take over all resources in a region, particularly the land. During the colonial era, for example, European business corporations received military support to take over and use land and other resources for profit in foreign areas around the world, including what came to be known as the Americas. As more and more settlers arrived, one settlement paved the way for another, and another. This gave the European governments and the government-backed corporations control and influence farther and farther from the original settlements. The US followed a similar growth model after independence.

5 The following ideas are basic to American settler colonialism:

- **White supremacy:** The idea that European American “civilization” is superior to those of the American Indians and of the Africans who were enslaved for economic gain is called white supremacy. At the individual level, this means that “white” lives are seen as more valuable than those of darker-skinned people.



The map dramatically shows the reduction in Indigenous lands, but its scale does not allow the “today” map to accurately depict all existing tribal offices and land holdings across the country.



- **African-American slavery.** Although slavery is [inappropriately and mistakenly] mostly associated with the American South, the entire country, as it grew, benefitted from the enslavement of people, primarily Africans and African Americans.
- **A policy of genocide and land theft.** The United Nations now defines *genocide* as an act, or acts, “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” These acts are:
  - a. Killing members of the group;
  - b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  - c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  - d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
  - e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

6 The continued influence of settler colonialism and genocide show up when history is retold in a way that celebrates settlers and makes Indigenous peoples disappear from the historical record. This practice is sometimes called “firsting and lasting.” You may have seen examples of it. All over North America are places that are described as “the first” settlement, building or school. Invariably this means the first settlement, building, or school created by white settlers, as if no one lived there before they came. On the other hand, stories of the US are also full of instances of the “last” Indians or last tribes—“the last of the Mohicans,” “Ishi, the last Indian,” and *End of the Trail* (a famous sculpture created by James Earle Fraser).



James Earle Fraser’s *End of the Trail* was exhibited at the 1915 World’s Fair. It is an example of imagery created by non-Native artists that incorrectly suggests Indigenous people had come to the end of their existence and are no longer here.

7 Settler colonialism requires violence or the threat of violence to attain its goals [but] Native nations and communities have fought for their survival. After all, people do not hand over their land, resources, children, and futures without a struggle! Modern Indigenous nations and communities are societies shaped by their resistance to colonialism.

**1. Define settler colonialism.**

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**2. How has settler colonialism impacted Indigenous peoples, both in the past and in the present?**

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