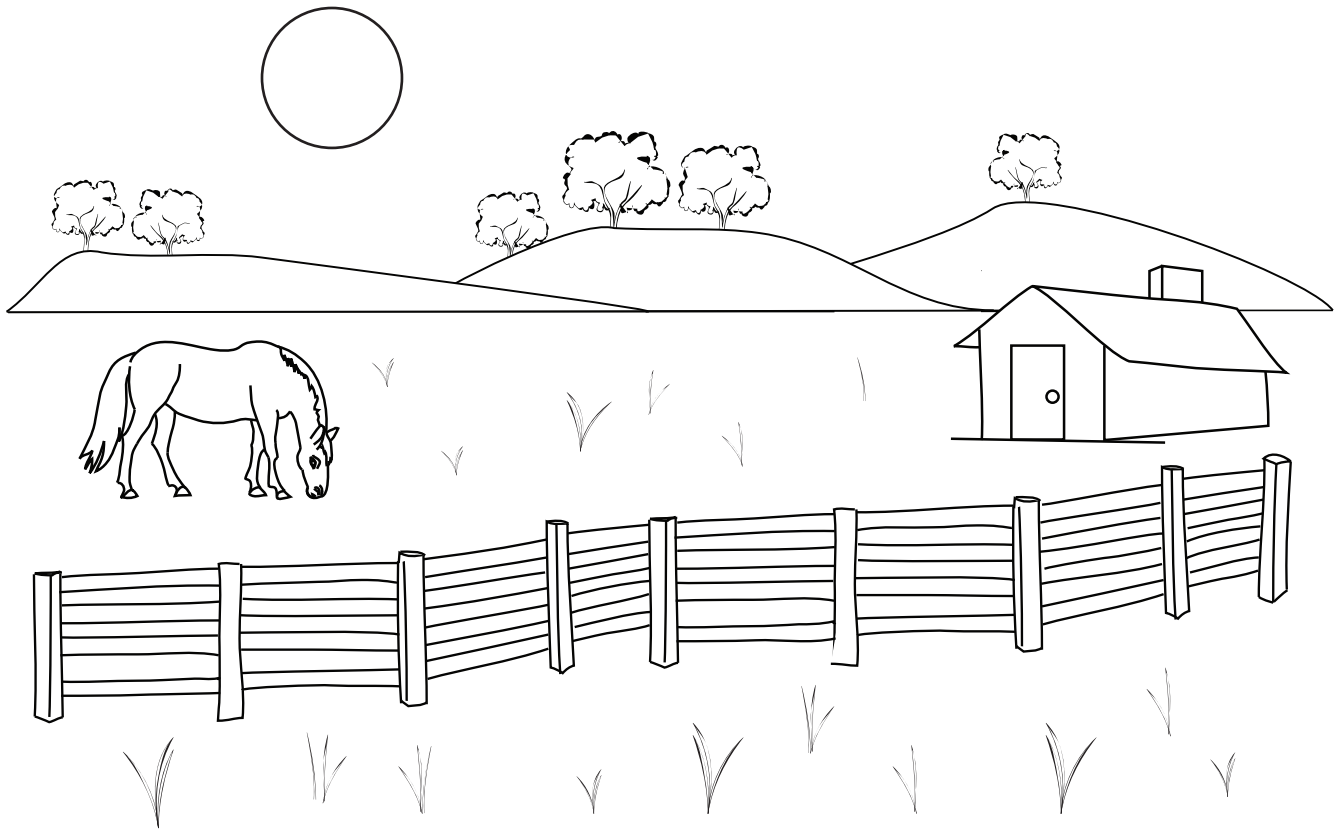


The Homestead Act



The Homestead Act was a document signed in 1862 that allowed settlers to claim land in the west. The Homestead Act turned over acres and acres of public land to private citizens.

Homesteads, the name for the large spaces of land that people could claim, could be up to 160 acres large. Almost anyone could apply to claim land under the Homestead Act – in order to be eligible, a person only had to be 21 or older and the head of a household. This meant that people of all types were afforded the right to claim their homestead. Women, immigrants, African-Americans and other groups of people who did not have many rights at the time were able to legally own the land claimed by the Homestead Act. After living on the land for five years, the land would officially become theirs.

Most homesteads were in **The Great Plains**, in what are now states like Nebraska, Oklahoma and Kansas. Most **homesteaders** (people who claimed land under the act) used their land for farming. People who lived on the homestead often did not have much money, and lived in small, one-room **sod houses**, or houses made of soil and dirt.

The Homestead Act was one of several events responsible for making the western U.S. what it is today. It remained in effect until 1976. In Alaska, laws allowed people to claim homesteads until 1986!

The Homestead Act

Define these vocabulary terms.

The Homestead Act:

Homesteads:

Homesteaders:

Sod houses:

How long did a person have to live on the land before it would become theirs?

How big could a homestead be?

Imagine The Homestead Act was still in effect. What do you think people would use their homesteads for today?

