

# Summary: The Plains States

## Where People Live

The Plains States are North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri. Iowa and Missouri are in the Central Lowlands, a region with deep fertile soil. The other Plains States are higher, drier, and rockier. They have sandhills and badlands. Wind and water made unusual shapes in the land.

Most major cities formed near rivers. In the past it was easier for people to travel on waterways than across land. Most people in the Plains States live in cities, but most of the land is rural. Rural areas have a low population density. For example, in a city, 5,000 people might live in a square mile. In a rural area, only one person might live in an area twice that size. Small towns have fewer people. They also have fewer services and businesses, such as stores or restaurants. Some rural communities have big fairs where farmers show their best animals. People enjoy horseback riding, fishing, and hunting.

## Rural Lands on the Plains

Much of the Plains States was once a huge prairie. Farmers made farmland by plowing most of the prairie that covered the Great Plains. They use the land for growing crops and raising cattle for beef. Water towers and grain elevators may be the only tall buildings between one town and the next. Tourists visit the area to see Mount Rushmore, a huge sculpture of American presidents, and natural wonders such as Chimney Rock in Nebraska.

American Indians followed buffalo herds on the Great Plains for centuries. As the United States grew, the U.S. army fought the Indians and took their land. The United States broke many promises it made with the Indian nations. The U.S. government created reservations. Indians were forced to live on reservations. The Lakota nation, also called the Sioux, has two large reservations in South Dakota.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**population density** *noun*, a measure of how many people live in an area

**grain elevator** *noun*, a building used to store wheat or other grains



### After You Read

**REVIEW** Where are most major cities of the Plains States located? Highlight the sentence that explains why cities formed near rivers.

**REVIEW** In what ways do people use the rural areas of the Plains States?

Underline a sentence that tells how farmers use the land. Circle three popular activities people enjoy.