

## Reading Homework

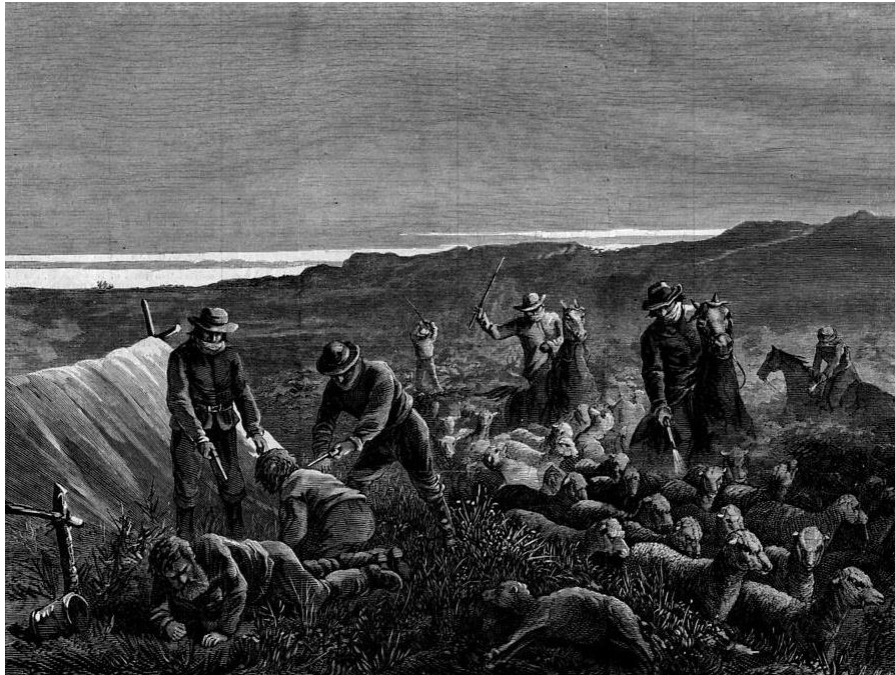
### The Range Wars



The Range Wars were a series of conflicts over the use of Western lands that began the early in the 1870s and ended...well, they never really ended! There is still considerable conflict over land use in the west and even as recently as 2016 there has been violent armed conflict! The issues have been over who gets to use the land and water and how they use it. Much of the land in the west was “open range”, that is, land that was free for anyone to use. Ranchers could claim large tracks of land as their own but they shared the open range. That is why they had to brand their cattle so they would know which animals were theirs as they mixed on the open range. In the 1850s and 1860s this was not much of a problem since land and water were plentiful and settlers were few, but as more and more people came west serious conflicts over land use began occurring.

For example, today in Japan, if you want to eat lamb it almost certainly comes from Australia or New Zealand, but *not* America. Why? The answer is that cattle ranchers wiped out the sheep herding industry. Sheep tend to overgraze the land

killing the grasses. To protect the grasses the cattle ranchers resorted to killing the sheep...and eventually killing the sheep herders, too! Between 1870 and 1920, approximately 120 engagements occurred in eight different states or territories. At least 54 men were killed (mostly sheep herders) and some 50,000 to over 100,000 sheep were slaughtered. This ended the large-scale raising of sheep in America.



Sheep raid in Colorado

Even more serious fighting occurred between rival cattle ranchers, usually large Cattle Barons (like Tom Dunson in *Red River*) and small ranchers with only a few hundred cattle (like Mr. Tunstall in *The Left Handed Gun*). Another kind of conflict arose between the cattle ranchers and farmers. The film *Shane* is loosely based on the infamous Johnson County War of 1889-1893, last of the great cattle wars.