

W.L. Couch was the first Mayor of Oklahoma. However, shortly before the first anniversary of the new State he was shot dead on his Homestead Farm. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people, he was obviously an important man in Oklahoma. Your task is to work out and solve the following issues:

Why was W.L. Couch murdered? Who was to blame?

- 1. After 1825 the Great Indian Nations had been removed from their lands and taken to live on reservations.**
- 2. Many people who raced quickly from the starting line found that the Town Company had already set up its markers on good land.**
- 3. People left the waiting camps and went into the forbidden land the night before. They illegally occupied good land. Many of these were old 'boomers'.**
- 4. Couch had always dreamed of building a large homestead on good land. But he had been involved in a long running dispute over land claims.**
- 5. The Santa Fe Railroad ran right through the heart of the country to be opened to settlement. Railroads were able to influence politicians.**
- 6. Many gambling dens opened up after the Land Rush and were very popular. They were dangerous places and people were regularly robbed or killed.**
- 7. New settlers were allowed to stake out 160 acres of land for themselves. This was a standard amount for settlers set out in the Homestead Act of 1862.**
- 8. The victories of the US Army over Little Crow and the Sioux had reduced the capacity of Indians to resist the destruction of their lands.**
- 9. Once land was opened the US Government showed little interest in setting up proper law and order. They left this to local individuals.**
- 10. Couch helped to set up a Town Company that built the first administrative buildings and stores (shops) in Oklahoma.**
- 11. On 23 March 1889 President Harrison announced that 2 million acres in Indian Territory would soon be opened to settlers**
- 12. Couch had an enemy called J. C. Adams. He was contesting Couch's claim to land and wished to see Couch out of Oklahoma.**
- 13. There was opposition to opening up Oklahoma from the big cattle ranchers, some Indian tribes, and from whites who wanted to protect Indian rights.**
- 14. The idea of Manifest Destiny had been written about and become so popular that people were willing to go to extra ordinary lengths to acquire good land.**
- 15. The US Government provided \$4 million for the purchase of Oklahoma. This was the last of several big purchases of land on the Plains.**
- 16. The Town Company owned some of the richest and most prized lands in the County.**

17. From 1884, Couch had led a party of 'boomers' (early settlers) who lived on the Oklahoma lands before they were officially sold to the Government.
18. Settlers had to register a claim with the authorities and wait until 22 April when the frontier would be opened and people who race across to find land.
19. The Creek Indians and Seminoles felt that they had little choice but to sell their land and move to reservations.
20. The destruction of the buffalo herds meant that the Creek Indians had to turn to farming. They no longer used large areas of Oklahoma
21. The 'boomers' pressured the government to open up Oklahoma and officially recognise it as a white settlement.
22. W. L. Couch was elected the first Mayor of Oklahoma. People thought that he looked after the Town Company more than the people of Oklahoma.
23. There were few lawmen in the new state of Oklahoma. The army had to be called to keep control. Gunfights were a common way to settle disputes.
24. The Oklahoma Land Rush seemed like the last chance for many to get good land. Spurred on by the publicity they were aggressive and determined.
25. Many settlers felt unsafe in the new territory and expressed their right to carry a weapon around all day.