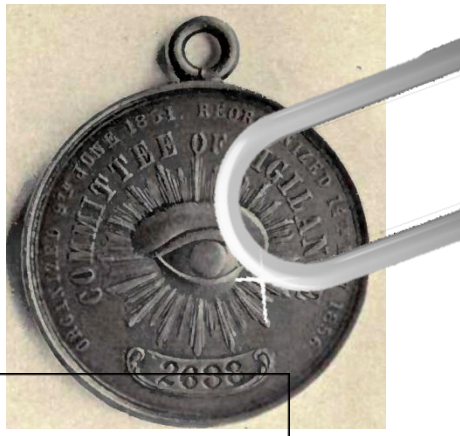
Western Dossiers

How to:

- 6 “packets” with copies of one dossier in each packet. Give one to each group and give them 5 minutes to review that one document. Then, pass to the next group until all 6 are examined.
- Complete the final analysis sheet.



Name: San Francisco Committee of Vigilance

Formed: 1851

Occupation: Crime-fighters

Actions

- An organization formed in response to rampant violence and corruption in San Francisco.

- Blamed Australian immigrants for the violence and started kidnapping and deporting them.

- Hanged 8-12 people and forced many government officials to resign after exposing their corruption.

- Greatly reduced the crime in San Francisco and were seen an heroes throughout the west leading to more vigilante groups to form.

- Often worked in defiance of the local government.

- Ignored the Bill of Rights constantly by arresting suspects without proper cause and searching without warrants.

- At one point the local police force tried to protect two accused criminals but the Committee overran the police by storming the jail where they were being held during Sunday Church. The two men were then hung by the Committee without a trial.

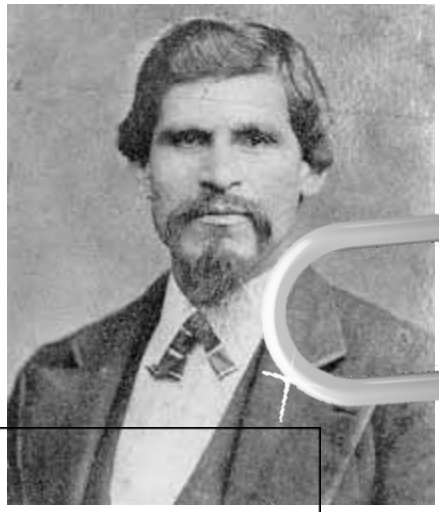
- Gained political power after exposing the corruption of many in the government.

- They terrorized a suspected criminal so badly that he killed himself to avoid further harassment.

- Stole 3 shipments of weapons that were supposed to go to the state militia. The militia didn't care and in fact greatly supported the Committee.

Testimony

"They controlled the press, they wrote their own history, and the world generally gives them the credit of having purged San Francisco of rowdies and roughs; but their success has given great stimulus to a dangerous principle, that would at any time justify the mob in seizing all the power of government; and who is to say that the Vigilance Committee may not be composed of the worst, instead of the best, elements of a community?" – General W.T. Sherman



Name: Tiburcio Vazquez

Born: 1835, Alta California, Mexico (at the time)

Occupation: Outlaw

Actions

-Well educated, speaking and writing both English and Spanish.

-Was present at the killing of a lawman and ran with his known-criminal cousin for fear that he would be punished even though he wasn't involved.

-Became a horse-thief stealing hundreds of horses from American settlers.

-Spent 5 years in prison and almost immediately returned to crime upon his release. He went from stealing just horses to robbing stagecoaches, stores and banks.

-Led a gang in a robbery of a store in which 3 innocent bystanders were killed.

- Arrested again in 1874.While in jail he became a hero to many Mexican Californians. Many came to visit him and he raised money for his defense by selling photographs of himself from his cell.

- Admitted to many of his crimes during trial but insisted he never killed anyone.

-Claimed that his crimes were a result of discrimination by American settlers and insisted he was just defending Mexican rights.

-Had a high school in California named after him in 1993 and an elementary school in 2012.

Testimony

"A spirit of hatred and revenge took possession of me. I had numerous fights in defense of what I believed to be my rights and those of my countrymen. I believed we were unjustly deprived of the social rights that belonged to us." –Tiburcio Vasquez

"*Vasquez was a folk hero, a revolutionary who was a product of the environment that existed at the time. He represents a time when the people of Mexican descent were treated in an offensive way.*"
-Alisal Union School District Superintendent



Name: Bat Masterson

Born: 1853, Canada

Occupation: Farmer, Buffalo Hunter,

Actions

- Fought in a small militia against the Comanche Indians who felt he was on their

- Killed a U.S. soldier in a gun fight, allegedly over a girl.

- Put in jail for arguing against a local sheriff over his cruel treatment of a prisoner.

- Elected county sheriff of Ford County, Kansas where he captured 4 local gang members who had robbed a train.

- He shot and killed a man who had killed his brother, a Marshall of Dodge City.

- Spent the next several years making a living as a gambler.

- Worked with Wyatt Earp in Tombstone until he received a telegram saying one of his friends was going to be killed.

- He returned to Dodge City and was immediately involved in a massive gun fight and was arrested again. Since many people were shooting he was not convicted but was let out with an $8.00 fine.

- Served as a Marshall and Sheriff in Colorado.

- Helped his friend Doc Holliday avoid jail in Arizona by pretending to arrest him in Colorado.

- Joined up with a known gang member, Soapy Smith, with whom he was involved in election fraud and corruption.

Name: Wyatt Earp

Born: 1848

Occupation: Marshal, Sheriff



Actions

-Arrested for horse theft in 1871.

-Escaped from a jail once by climbing through the roof before his trial.

-In 1876 his gun fell out of his pocket when he leaned back too far. It went off a shot a hole in his coat.

-Arrested for getting in a fight with the town marshal while running for election as… town marshal.

-Fired his pistol at a criminal who was riding away on his horse. He hit him in the leg and the criminal bled to death.

- Stood alongside his brothers and Doc Holliday in the shoot-out at the OK Corral. The Earp brothers had been threatened by a gang of cowboys and planned to take their guns from them. Shots rang out and in the end three cowboys were dead.

- A court found that Earp acted in self-defense and within the law as a deputy.

- One of the cowboys attacked his brother Virgil but was set free when seven other cowboys testified at trial that he was in another state at the time.

- After his other brother was killed by the cowboys Wyatt decided the law could not help him and decided to kill the cowboys himself. He hunted down and killed 4 of them. He fled Arizona before he could be arrested for the murders.

Testimony

"I killed over a dozen stage robbers, murderers, and cattle thieves in my time as a lawman."
– Wyatt Earp

"*For my handling of the situation at Tombstone, I have no regrets. Were it to be done over again, I would do exactly as I did at that time. If the outlaws and their friends and allies imagined that they could intimidate or exterminate the Earps by a process of murder, and then hide behind alibis and the technicalities of the law, they simply missed their guess."* – Wyatt Earp



Name: Johnny Ringo

Born: 1850

Occupation: Farmer

Actions

-Served alongside his friend and former-Texas Ranger Scott Cooley in a war against a local German group that had murdered two Americans suspected of stealing cows. Local police did nothing to protect the suspect and did not bring charges against the murderers.

-Two of his good friends were killed by an ambush set up by the local Sheriff.

-Ringo then killed one of the Germans who was unarmed and had invited Ringo into his house.

-He rode up to another vigilante's house with the same plan. This man came out with a gun and Ringo ran away.

-Ringo was put in jail, broke out, was captured and put on trial again but was found not guilty.

-Then he became a constable, a legal lawman in Texas,

-Moved to Arizona where he shot a man for offering him a free drink of whiskey since he only liked beer. The man survived.

-Arrested in Arizona for carrying a gun illegally and robbery. He was let out after a weekend.

-Joined up with The Cowboys, the gang famous for killing members of the Earp family of lawmen. He was not present for the big shootout at the OK Corral, however.

-He later was suspected for the murder of Morgan Earp.

Testimony

"*Ringo was a surly, bad-tempered man who was worse when he was drinking. Still, his main claim to fame was shooting the unarmed Louis Hancock in an Arizona territory saloon in 1879*

for ordering beer after Ringo told him to order whiskey. I do not understand how Ringo earned such a strong reputation as a "bad man" in legend." -Louis L'Amour, historian.

"He was recognized by friends and foes as a recklessly brave man, who would go any distance, or undergo any hardship to serve a friend or punish an enemy." - Ringo's Tombstone



Name: Doc Holliday

Born: 1851

Actions

-in 1873 he is reported to have killed up to three African-American youths who were swimming in his favorite bathing spot and refused to leave.

- He was arrested in Dallas in January 1875 after trading gunfire with saloon keeper Charle Austin, but no one was injured and he was found not guilty.

-Got involved in an altercation with a gambler named Henry Kahn, whom Holliday beat with his walking stick repeatedly. Both men were arrested and fined.

-In duels he would often shoot the hand of his opponents to avoid killing them.

-In a newspaper interview Holliday was once asked if his conscience ever troubled him. He is reported to have said, "I coughed that up with my lungs, years ago."

- Assisted Marshall Wyatt Earp during a barroom confrontation. A gang had come to town to assassinate Earp. They came upon him and yelled "Pray and jerk your gun! Your time has come, Earp!" Holliday retaliated by drawing his pistol at the gang leader's head and said, "No, friend, you draw or throw your hands up! Any of you pulls a gun and your leader here loses what's left of his brains." Earp was saved.

-Deputized (made an official lawman) by Earp years later. Participated in the fight at the OK Corral where he and Earp won a massive gunfight with a large gang that refused to follow the town laws. After the fight he returned to his room, wept and said "that was awful – awful." A 30-day long investigation found he and Earp had acted within their authority as lawmen.

-Spent the next few years of his life hunting down the other members of the gang. Arrested multiple times but never convicted of anything major.

Testimony

"Tales were told that he had murdered men in different parts of the country; that he had robbed and committed all manner of crimes, and yet when persons were asked how they knew it, they could only admit that it was hearsay, and that nothing of the kind could really be traced up to Doc's account." – Virgil Earp

Western Dossiers

You are an investigator during the time of the old West. Due to a lack of organized law there are gangs of criminals and vigilantes running rampant. You have been called in to determine the intentions of some of these groups. Were they heroes out to help others or were they criminals taking advantage of the situation?

Name: Doc Holliday

# of good things he did	# of bad things he did

The best or worst thing he did was:

Did he do more good or more bad? Explain.

Name: Johnny Ringo

# of good things he did	# of bad things he did

The best or worst thing he did was:

Did he do more good or more bad? Explain.

Name: Wyatt Earp

# of good things he did	# of bad things he did

The best or worst thing he did was:

Did he do more good or more bad? Explain.

Name: San Francisco Committee of Vigilance

# of good things he did	# of bad things he did

The best or worst thing he did was:

Did he do more good or more bad? Explain.

1. Which of these six men/groups did the most good in your opinion? Support your answer with evidence.