

Cowboy Lesson Plan Packet

Topic: Cowboys and cattle drives

Description: Students will learn cowboy culture through a mixture of lecture/lesson, critical thinking, analysis, games, and/or creative writing activities. Choose the order of activities that best suites your classroom needs (**See page 2**).

Age Level: Middle School/High School

Objectives: Students will...

Compare, contrast, and analyze cowboy songs.

Learn about cowboy culture through an extensive power point lesson.

Fill out a Venn Diagram while going through the power point lesson.

Discuss lesson and activities.

Integrate lesson information to creatively write a resume for a cowboy position in 1870's.

Divide into teams and play a jeopardy cowboy game.

Experience the cowboy culture at the Woolaroc Museum.

This packet includes:

1. An opening activity: including worksheet and necessary literature pieces.
2. Venn Diagram Worksheet
3. Background information on cowboy culture.
 4. Power Point lesson outlining the background information.
 5. Venn Diagram Worksheet
 6. Jeopardy Power Point game

(Explanations of the items listed above are found on **Page 3**.)

Lesson Plan Options

A: 1-2-3-4

B: 1-2-3-5

C: 2-4

D: 2-5

E: 1-2-3

Opening Activity

1

Lesson/Power Point

2

Venn Diagram/
Discuss Opening Activity

3

Cowboy Resume

5

Jeopardy

4

Opening Activity:

Have the students work in pairs or groups. Hand out the two cowboy songs: “The Cowboy’s Life” and “The Dreary, Dreary Life.” Once they have completed reading the poems have them discuss/answer the questions on the “Cowboy Songs” worksheet. This activity gets them thinking about what life was actually like for cowboys on a drive. Pass out the “Venn Diagram” worksheet. Without discussing the worksheet as a class, transition into lecture using power point or background information.

Venn Diagram Worksheet:

In replace of taking notes (or in addition to taking notes) the students will fill out the Venn diagram throughout the lecture, noting the positive and negative aspects of being a cowboy. Once the lecture is complete discuss the opening activity worksheet and the Venn Diagrams. Note: some answers might be different now that the students know more information on cowboys. Discuss question six.

Teacher Background Information:

This information is provided for the teacher to use along with the power point. This is not intended for students to read.

Power Point outlining Background information:

The power point briefly outlines the Teacher Background Information. It is not word for word. This allows the teacher to pause, discuss, and add conversation to each slide. Using the provided Teacher Background Information will be helpful. Be sure to check out the hyperlinks on a few of the slides. Note: Students will be filling out their Venn Diagrams during this time.

Jeopardy Power Point Game:

Instructions for the game are provided on the first slide. Have the students divide up into teams of three or four. Have them work together in the allotted time to answer the questions. Be sure to keep of your score. Questions on the game come directly from the power point and background information.

Cowboy Writing Assignment:

Once the lecture is complete have the students integrate what they have learned in a resume. Students must pretend they live in the late 19th century. A Wanted Ad has been placed in their town looking specifically for cowboys, wranglers, and cooks. Have each student pick one of these positions. They must write a pretend resume which outlines their characteristics and job qualifications. In order to apply for this position, students must know what kind of characteristics and qualifications they need to be a cowboy. For further instructions take a look at the worksheet. This creative writing assignment will help students understand cowboy culture, and how to write a resume.

Cowboy Songs

Directions: Read the two songs “The Cowboy’s Life” and “The Dreary, Dreary Life.” Then write the answers to the following questions.

1. Find the two words below in the songs. Without using a dictionary, or any other source, define these words as best as you can.

Puncher:

Rowel:

2. What metaphor is used to describe the cowboy in “The Cowboy’s Life?” Why does the author use this metaphor?

3. Briefly describe what life is like for the cowboy in the “The Cowboy life.”

4. Briefly describe what life is like for the cowboy in “The Dreary, Dreary Life.”

5. List differences and similarities between the two poems.

6. Are both of these poems an accurate depiction of a cowboy’s life? If not – which poem is more accurate? Explain your answer.

The Cowboy's Life

The bawl of a steer To a cowboy's ear Is music of sweetest strain; And the yelping notes Of the gray coyotes To him are a glad refrain.	The rapid beat Of his bronco's feet On the sod as he speeds along, Keeps living time To the ringing rhyme Of his rollicking cowboy's song.
And his jolly songs Speed him along As he thinks of the little gal With golden hair Who is waiting there At the bars of the home corral.	Hike it, cowboys, For the range away On the back of a bronc of steel, With a careless flirt Of the raw-hide quirt And the dig of a roweled heel.
For a kingly crown In the noisy town His saddle he would n't change; No life so free As the life we see 'Way out on the cattle range.	The winds may blow And the thunder growl Or the breeze may safely moan; A cowboy's life Is a royal life, His saddle his kingly throne.
His eyes are bright And his heart as light As the smoke of his cigarette; There's never a care For his soul to bear, No trouble to make him fret.	Saddle up, boys, For the work is play When love's in the cowboy's eyes, When his heart is light As the clouds of white That swim in the summer skies.

-Author Unknown

traditional, from *Songs of the Cowboys*, 1921

The Dreary, Dreary Life

A cowboy's life is a dreary, dreary life,
Some say it's free from care;
Rounding up the cattle from morning till night
On the bald prairie so bare.

Just about four o'clock old cook will holler out,
"Roll out, boys, it's almost day."
Through his broken slumbers the puncher he will ask,
Has the short summer night passed away?

The cowboy's life is a dreary, dreary life,
He's driven through the heat and cold;
While the rich man's a-sleeping on his velvet couch,
Dreaming of his silver and gold.

When the spring work sets in, then our troubles will begin,
The weather being fierce and cold;
We're almost froze, with the water on our clothes,
And the cattle we can scarcely hold.

The cowboy's life is a dreary, weary one,
He works all day to the setting of the sun;
And then his day's work is not done,
For there's his night guard to go on.

"Saddle up! Saddle Up!" the boss will holler out,
When camped down by the Pecos Stream,
Where the wolves and the owls with their terrifying howls
Will disturb us in our midnight dream.

You are speaking of your farms, you are speaking of your charms,
You are speaking of your silver and gold;
But a cowboy's life is a dreary, dreary life,
He's driven through the heat and cold.

Once I loved to roam, but now I stay at home:
All you punchers take my advice;
Sell your bridle and your saddle, quit your roaming and travels,
And tie on to a cross-eyed wife.

-Author Unknown

from Jack Thorp's 1921 *Songs of the Cowboys*

Positives of Cowboy Life

Negatives of Cowboy Life

Background of the Cowboy

According to the old western movies and novels, the cowboy was a hero of the dangerous and wild American west. He quarreled with Indians, law, and whatever else might hinder him on his way. In reality, however, cowboy life was dreary and difficult. Most cowboys were uneducated men who worked hard for little pay. Their job was to take care of the cattle – which included, herding, rounding, branding, and driving. And even these daily labor challenges were multiplied in difficulty by Mother Nature's lack of mercy.

Bringing the Cattle to North America

Cattle, as well as horses, were first brought over to the United States from Spain. Christopher Columbus brought cattle on his second voyage west in 1494. These cattle would produce the Spanish fighting bull and the famous Texas Longhorns. The conditions in North America proved favorable for both horses and cattle. The cattle soon spread from New Spain (Mexico) to the United States. Explorers transported the cattle north during their quest for cities of gold.

The First Cowboys

After many Spanish explorers failed to discover cities of gold, they returned to Mexico to make profit from raising cattle. Soon the Mexican cowboy, or vaquero, emerged. Originally, the vaquero was regarded as a low-class position. Poorer members of the community, such as, Indians, Blacks, and native Spaniards took on the vaquero position. As mentioned before, the work was hard and the pay was low, but these vaqueros provided the influence and inspiration of the American cowboy, in both dress and dialect.

The Texas Cowboys

By 1830 around 100,000 cattle roamed Texas. But by 1860 over 3.5 million cattle roamed the Texas plains. Although, some herds were moved North prior to 1860, the best known cow puncher days were after the Civil War. The Civil War brought the cattle driving to a halt, and as a result, the thousands of cattle in Texas produced more unbranded cattle. After the Civil War many freedmen and other minorities traveled to Texas to take advantage of any money making opportunity. Approximately 1/3 of all American cowboys in the second half of the nineteenth century were African American, Native American, or Mexican. Many ex-slaves headed to the west in search for a cow punching job. Being a cowboy was a more acceptable job for a black man in those days of discrimination. Native Americans were also trained to become cowboys. The vaqueros who served as cowboys in Mexico were originally Native Americans. When assimilation was stressed in the United States, ranching was taught at many of the boarding schools for Native Americans. Becoming a cowboy was only appealing, or maybe even necessary, for those of the lower social class. Cowboys only made about a dollar a day plus food and a bed in a bunkhouse.

Before the drive

Before the days of barbed wire, the range was a wide open expanse of grassland shared by all the ranchers. As a result, cattle from different ranches were mixed. Branding was important for marking which cow belonged to which ranch. Each spring all the ranchers would work together on the spring roundup. The cattle belonging to each ranch would be sorted out and the young calves, which had no brand would be marked with the same brand as their mothers. Each rancher had a specific brand for his cattle and this brand was not allowed to be used by anyone else. The unique brands helped prevent rustlers from stealing cattle. Some rustlers tried to alter the brands of ton ranch to resemble that of another ranch or brand the young calves with their own brand before the ranchers had a chance.

Positions of the Outfit

Most of a cowboy's work was accomplished on the ranch, but when demand rose for beef in the east, America turned to Texas. Cattle driving became part of a cowboy's life. They moved the cattle from Texas to the railheads, in order to bring the beef to the east. Cowboy's would gather together and make an outfit for a cattle drive. There are four main positions in an outfit: the boss, the cowboys, the wranglers, and the cook. Each position had specific duties.

Boss: The boss, also known as the foreman, was in charge of putting the outfit together. He was in charge of all

the men and equipment. His pay would be around \$125 a month, a pretty good sum of money in those days. He rode at the point, or with the leaders of the herd, ahead of everyone but the cook. He also collected bills of sale for all the animals, and he was responsible for paying the other cowboys when it was time. There was no contract between the boss and the rest of the outfit. They simply went by spoken word. The boss was also the trail guide.

Cowboys: Cowboys were paid from \$20 to \$40 a month. Their job was to work the herd.

There were three different positions among the cowboys. The most experienced cowboy, or the Segundo, rode even with the boss at the point of the heard. On each side of the herd were the swings, and behind them were the flanks. Behind them were the drag riders. The drag riders had it the worst. They were behind the herd where all the dust and stench dwelled. The lazy cattle also walked in the back. It was tough work to keep these slow cows with the rest of the herd.

Wrangler: The wrangler was usually the youngest of the outfit. His job was taking care of the horses. Each cowboy had three or four horses that he took with him on the drive. The wrangler was in charge of feeding, saddling, tying up the horses, and herding them forward during the day.

Cook: The cook usually earned more than the cowboys, and it was well earned. He traveled about a mile ahead of the rest of the outfit on the chuckwagon. He had no security, other than himself. He was in charge of finding camp, preparing breakfast at three in the morning, lunch at noon, and dinner no later than midnight. Often times the cook would take on all the other odd jobs that might come their way such as: tailor, doctor, veterinarian, etc.

The Drive

It took careful planning to drive cattle north. The first few days of the drive, the cattle and outfit would travel roughly twenty-five miles a day. Cattle would try to break free from the herd and head back as long as the home range was still in sight, so getting far in a short amount of time was important. It was possible for the herd to travel twenty-five miles a day all the way to market, but by the time they would reach the railhead, the cows would be too skinny for profit. So once the home range was no longer in sight, the cowboys would travel between ten and fifteen miles a day, providing ample grazing time for the animals. This meant that the trip could take up to four to six months.

Every day could be lonesome for the cowboy. The plains were huge and the company was small. Entertainment became a critical part of life for all cowboys. Cowboy songs and poems were created and performed for the cattle at night and during the day.

There were many trails used by the cowboys to head north: The Western, the Chisholm, the Shawnee, and the Goodnight-Loving trail are just a few. Although they had no compass, each outfit carefully made it to the railheads in Kansas. As long as the rivers were still heading from west to east and not north and south, they knew they were heading north. Many cow towns emerged as a result of the cattle drives. Dodge City and Abilene are just a couple of examples. These cities catered to the cowboy's needs by providing hotels, saloons, and places to park their horses and cattle.

The Horse

A cowboy used three or four horses for roundups and drives. These horses were allowed to be "wild" for the first two or three years of their lives. Then they were caught, and a bronco buster was appointed to tame them. The rodeo developed from this tradition. The horse was an important figure to the cowboy. On lonely days of driving cattle, it was usually just the cowboy and the horse. If a cowboy just worked on a ranch, the horses usually belonged to the ranch owner. On drives a cowboy would take three to four horses with him, and at the end of the drive the cowboy would sell the horse.

"Another day's easy travel brought us to within a mile of the railroad terminus; but it also brought us to one of the hardest experiences of our trip, for each of us knew, as we unsaddled our horses, that we were doing it for the last time. Although we were in the best of spirits over the successful conclusion of the drive; although we were glad to be free from herd duty and looked forward eagerly to the journey home, there was still a feeling of regret in our hearts which we could not dispel." – **Andy Adams**

Difficulties of the Job

Life on the trail was difficult for the cowboys. The animals have a hard time leaving home. So many of them would try to break away and head back to the home ranch. The ones in the front traveled too fast and the ones in the back traveled too slow. Water would sometimes be hard to find. Dust flew everywhere. The sun beat down on the cow's faces, cracking their lips. If it was too hot, both men and animals would collapse. Night also brought dangers to the herd and the cowboys. The boys would take turns watching the herd to make sure nothing and no one attacked. But their biggest priority was keeping the herd calm in order to prevent a stampede. Stampedes brought danger to the herd and to the cowboys themselves. Anything at night could spook the herd and start a stampede. Often the cowboys would sing lullabies to the herd to keep them calm.

The movies exaggerate the relationships of the cowboy and the Indian. Cowboy's hardly ever carried a gun on the drive. It was too heavy and annoying to carry for a long days work. Often the guns would be left with the cook on the chuckwagon. Crossing into Indian Territory did become an issue for the cowboys though. Indians did not like cowboy's using their grass or parking their cattle on their land. Most of the time the dispute was settled when the boss paid a toll each head. This toll could be from ten cents to a dollar.

Mother Nature also brought problems for the cowmen. Heavy storms, twisters, and hail could send the herd into a sudden stampede. Lightning and thunder also kept the cowmen on their toes. From crossing rivers to dry arid plains, anything or everything could spark problems for the cowmen.

End of the Cowboy Days

There were many things that brought the end to the cattle driving cow puncher. There was also a harsh winter of 1886-1887 that killed thousands of cattle in the northwest. This devastation helped bring cattle driving to an end. Railroads had expanded all across the nation by the 1890's and cattle drives seemed useless. Sheep herders moved from the west mountainous region to the plains, taking over the cattle's grazing land. But it was the innovation of barbed wire that really put a halt to the drives. No longer was the range open for roaming by all ranchers. And it soon became too difficult to drive cattle anywhere without cutting barbed wire. The American cowboy days would never be the same.

By 1830 around 100,000 cattle roamed Texas

PAGE 1

Directions: You are a young man seeking employment in the late 19th century. This “Wanted Ad” has caught your attention. Respond to this advertisement by creating a resume listing your qualifications and expectations for the job. Make sure you know what each of the jobs entail before writing your resume. Include how you can meet those job requirements. Your resume should also include:

Job Objective – (which job you are seeking, and any preferences you might have, and why you qualify for this job)

Employment – (Where you were last employed listed in reverse chronological order and give your work responsibilities)

Education – List schools you have attended, and any diplomas received

Interests/ Hobbies/ Affiliations

References (provide name, address, and how you are affiliated with this person)

If you need help writing your resume, take a look at these websites:

HYPERLINK "http://www.capital.edu/Resources/Files/career-planning/HowToWriteaResume2005.pdf" <http://www.capital.edu/Resources/Files/career-planning/HowToWriteaResume2005.pdf>

HYPERLINK "http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/career/guides/resume.shtml" <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/career/guides/resume.shtml>

HYPERLINK "http://www.capital.edu/1204/" <http://www.capital.edu/1204/>

Click on “Download Capital’s Resume booklet” for instructions on writing a resume.

Cowboys, Wranglers, and Cooks

Qualifications: Mature, strong young men who work hard and sleep little. Don’t mind being away from home for months at a time, and can follow instructions well. Respond to:

Cowboy Bill
125 Ranch Road
San Antonio, Texas