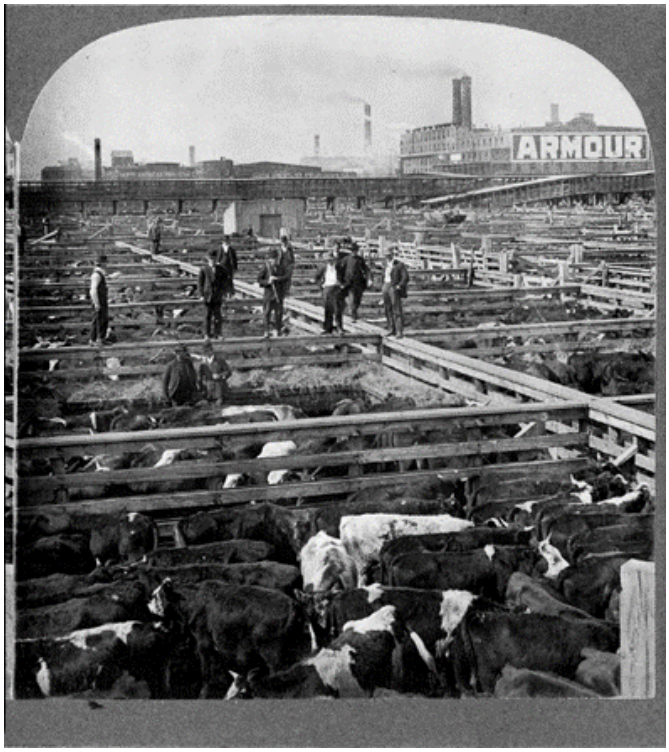
# Cows and Cowhands

## OKLAHOMA HISTORY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Feeding the growing northeastern cities became increasingly difficult during the 1800s. With little room to maintain cattle within city limits or nearby, the long drive emerged as a way to feed everyone. The long drive began in Texas, where cattle would roam freely. Cowboys, or **drovers**, needed to escort, or drive, cattle over 600 miles to railroads in Kansas. Railroads began to expand into the **interior** parts of the country during the growth of **industrialization**, creating the foundation for a push towards an **integrated** national food market. Western lands offered more space for cattle and crops than the Northeast. In Texas and Indian Territory, cattle sold at low prices. If drivers could transport the cattle to Kansas or Missouri, the price would increase considerably. From the 1860s to 1890s, groups of twelve to fifteen men transported herds of cattle to **railheads** in Kansas. From there, railcars transported cattle to slaughterhouses in large eastern and midwestern cities. The journey could take fifteen men up to three months to move a typical herd of 2,500 head of cattle to the railroads. The work of driving cattle was incredibly difficult and exhausting. Those who worked in this industry came to this work for a variety of reasons. As cowboys, they found a work culture with strong traditions and high expectations. This work culture soon moved beyond the industry and influenced many other aspects of American life, such as live entertainment, sports, and movies.

Bill Pickett, legendary cowboy and entertainer (image courtesy *Huffington Post*).




The Great Union Stock Yards, Chicago (courtesy of the Library of Congress).

These trail crews were among the most **diverse** workforces in the United States during the 1800s. The crews were often made up of any combination of white, African American, Mexican, **Tejano**, or American Indian drovers. With an average age of 24 years, these men came from all walks of life and would often spend long periods of time away from their families. Some came from families without means and were forced to go out into the world on their own. Others were leaving the difficult conditions in the South following the Civil War. Many non-white riders faced tremendous discrimination in other walks of life.

Texas longhorn, photo by Jim Argo, June 26, 2000 (23389.346.55, Jim Argo Collection, OHS).

Although some enjoyed the harsh environment, few lasted very long as trail riders. After an average of seven years on the trail, many saved enough to purchase land of their own or to pack up and return home.

Cowhands in Texas (image courtesy King Ranch).

These trail riders were not the only ones on the drives. Horses, to this day, are deeply connected to the modern cowboy; however, on the trails, riders did not own a specific horse. Horses were expensive to purchase and maintain. For that reason, the majority of the horses used on drives actually belonged to the person who owned the cattle. Also, a rider who owned their horse could easily abandon the drive and leave the trail boss shorthanded. The ***remuda*** would follow alongside the drive and serve as substitutes for the riders when their horse would get tired. The *remuda*, the Spanish word for exchange, also serves as a reminder of the Mexican ***vaquero*** origins of these large cattle drives. At the completion of the drive, the rider was usually paid, and could purchase their favored horse.

During breaks, the drovers corralled the *remuda* behind a rope fence (image courtesy University of North Texas Libraries).

Drover and horse (image courtesy Texas State Historical Association).

## Preparing for the Ride

Drovers would earn about $100 (roughly equivalent to just under $3,000 in today's money) per trip in addition to the free food provided by the trail cook. The trail boss and cook earned more, but the average hand would make about $1 a day. Initial expenses for the rider included work clothes, such as underwear, socks, shirt, bandana, vest, and pants. A pair of boots would be an additional $3.75, and a new hat cost $3. While spurs were only $0.50, chaps could be as much as $8. Lastly, the saddle, one of the most important pieces of equipment for cattle driving, was usually the most expensive piece at $30. Luckily for the drovers, items like chaps, boots, and spurs could last a few years. The saddle could last a lifetime with proper maintenance and care.

A basic saddle for working (image courtesy American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming).

## Life on the Open Range

During the drive, a trail rider had to cross much of Texas, the entire Indian Territory, and part of Kansas. However, there were a few instances where they would go even further. Throughout the journey, they faced physical and mental exhaustion, loneliness, isolation, and were exposed to nature with little to no protection. With such conditions, it is no surprise that some trail riders gave up and ran away.

Cows and cowhands on the Western Trail (image courtesy *Dodge City Daily Globe*).

Cattle branding (image courtesy ND.gov).

Cattle crossing a river at night (image courtesy Wyoming Tales and Trails).

**Stampedes** were dangerous and feared by everyone in the crew. Stampedes could happen anytime and without warning. Horses and cattle can weigh up to two thousand pounds and easily cause devastating damage to riders and other animals. With over two thousand head of cattle, a stampede could become deadly very quickly. Anything from a snake startling a calf to **rustlers** attempting to steal cattle during the night could start a stampede. Rustlers would use stampedes as opportunities to run off with as many cattle as they could handle. A couple of riders would stand guard overnight, but even they could not be at all places at once, especially when guarding so many head of cattle.

River crossings are not naturally dangerous, but during the springtime, rivers swell up and contribute to cattle drowning, or turning back. With deep and wide rivers, the cattle would exhaust themselves, and they might turn around or drown. Turning around would lead to a backup and cause more cattle to tire, worsening the problem. The movement of so many heavy animals in a short time and space caused serious softening of the wet riverbanks, causing the banks to become unstable. This led to injuries for the animals because they were unable to find solid land and move out of the river.

Trail cooks got little sleep on the drive (image courtesy *True West* magazine).

Cowhands constantly handled these dangers and tried to keep the animals and themselves safe. By the nature of the drive, the riders often were hundreds of miles away from the nearest doctor, so if an injury or illness occurred, the only option they had was to visit the cook, who served as a doctor.

Even before daybreak, the cook would be busy preparing breakfast for the crew. With **haste**, the riders had to get dressed and prepare to go. Riders would get positioned relative to the herd to protect it from any possible threats. Around noon, everyone would stop for lunch. The riders took turns eating so that the herd would not be left unattended at any point. The herd and riders would cover around 12 to 15 miles every day. The trail boss limited the distance traveled to allow the cattle to gain weight as they grazed along the drive. As the evening approached, the trail boss would have already found a location to set up camp for the night. The ideal campsite would have plenty of grass and a water source for the cattle.

Cowboys gather for a photo after a meal (image courtesy *True West* magazine).

## From Vaqueros to Cowboys

Following the **colonialization** of Mexico, the Spanish quickly established an ***encomienda*** system headed by ***conquistadores.*** The *encomienda* system granted large areas of land to the patriarchs with the responsibility of **converting** and providing for the **Indigenous** people who populated the conquered lands. In doing so, they established a racially-based **caste** system. The caste system divided individuals into classes that resembled the **feudal** class systems seen in Europe. The caste system established social rules and expectations for each class. There were regulations and restrictions on the lifestyles of those towards the lower levels of the system. This system's social order placed Spanish-born individuals at the top.

However, as time progressed, landowners established *haciendas*, and Catholic **missions** began to raise cattle as a source of income and food. The raising of cattle at the *haciendas* led to a demand for men skilled in horseback riding. Originally seen as an activity only for Spanish **nobles**, horseback riding quickly spread among the working men of the *haciendas* by necessity. Some of these working men were ***campesinos***. A *campesino* is a small farmer that owns no land, many of whom were Indigenous or ***mestizo***. *Mestizo* is a racial classification from the caste system that includes those of both Indigenous and Spanish descent.

These early *vaqueros* developed many of the early roping techniques, which can still be seen today. These techniques can be traced back to the *jinetea* riding style imported by the Spanish. This riding style allowed the *vaqueros* to move the cattle miles at a time easily. With no readily accessible markets in Mexico, the *vaqueros* began moving the cattle north into French Louisiana. As time progressed and markets began to open elsewhere, driving cattle over long distances became a prominent economic activity from Mexico to Kansas.

These working *campesinos* would become the earliest *vaqueros,* or cowboys.

*Vaqueros* in the nineteenth century (image courtesy of *True West* magazine).

## Charros

"While the *vaquero* worked the range, the *charro* played."—Richard W. Slatta

***Charros*** also influenced the drovers that moved through Indian Territory. *Charros* developed from ***haciendados***, or wealthy landed **elite** with both military and horseback riding skills. During colonial rule in Mexico, these landed elites often oversaw cattle counting as commissioned by the king. *Haciendados* and hired *vaqueros* would gather the cattle together. The counting was extensive, very detailed, and took a considerable amount of time to complete. In the meantime, the *haciendados* would often participate in ***alardes***, or military drills. These were often used to demonstrate military ability. The landed elite and *vaqueros* would also hold competitions to pass the time. These competitions often showcased horseback riding and roping skills that were used when herding and driving cattle.

Over the centuries, these friendly competitions would become ***charreadas***. *Charreadas* are made up of various events that mirror situations *vaqueros* would encounter on the drive or while working at a ranch. Contestants were judged on their roping and horseback riding skills. *Charreadas* place an emphasis on showmanship and style; as such, their dress was yet another part of the competition.

The tools and clothing of cowboys and ranch hands in the southern US originated among *vaqueros* (image courtesy Museum of Northwest Colorado).

There are multiple versions of the charro outfit indicating different levels of formality. The working outfit is called the *faena.* The others are *media gala, gala, gran gala,* and *etiqueta,* with the *etiqueta* being the most formal (image courtesy Mexican government).

Mexico gained its independence in 1821. Although Mexico was no longer under European rule, their influences left lasting legacies. The black gala *charro* suit is one such legacy: this suit still continues to be a symbol of Mexico and its people to this day.

*Charro* suits have several other styles depending on the occasion in which they are being used. Brown *charro* are the most common when participating in actual *charreadas* while the black gala suit is usually reserved for formal events. *Mariachis* across the world famously wear the black gala suit.

Left: Detail of *charro* suit (image courtesy Mexican government). Above: Mariachi performers wear charro suits (image courtesy *The Buzz* magazine).

While the *charro* has become one of the most well known Mexican symbols, *vaqueros* were the workforce that allowed many of the early *charros* to enjoy leisure time and elevated status. *Vaqueros* had to be extremely skilled to manage and maintain the cattle properly. *Vaqueros* had their own set of clothing, which consisted of coarse wool clothing and tight-fitting pantaloons. The food eaten by *vaqueros* would be considered undesirable by most. At times, *vaqueros* would have to rely on catching food while out during the drive.

One of the most difficult aspects of the cattle drives was the loneliness and solitude. ***Corridos***, or narrative ballads, were a great way for cowhands to pass the time and entertain themselves. These *corridos* were also used to tell stories about significant figures, well known racehorses, myths, and folk tales. Many of the *vaqueros* were **illiterate,** and these *corridos* were their only way to learn such stories. *Corridos* are still incredibly popular in Mexico and increasingly popular in the United States and across the world.

**A quick search online for "Oklahoma" and "*corrido*" will produce several ballads dedicated to the state of Oklahoma!**

During the nineteenth century, United States received large swaths of land from Mexico following the Mexican-American War. These large land tracts make up states like Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico, and even parts of the Oklahoma Panhandle. This drastically increased Anglo-settler migration into the area. Cattle raising and driving quickly became a **lucrative** endeavor. However, due to little know-how or previous experience, many were quick to hire experienced *vaqueros* to assist on Anglo-led cattle drives. As the century progressed, the modern American cowboy came to be. Cowboys maintained a close connection to the traditions of the *vaquero.* This can easily be seen in with the crossover of Spanish words into English, such as *lazo* (lasso) and *rodeos* (roundups).

The vocabulary of the cattle drives was largely in Spanish or derived from Spanish words. This photograph shows vaqueros in Texas (image courtesy Bullock Museum).

# African Americans and the Cattle Industry

African Americans comprised up to 25 percent of those employed by the cattle industry. Factors like experience in kitchens and with livestock during enslavement contributed to their presence, as the did the fact that working cattle drives was hard, undesirable work.

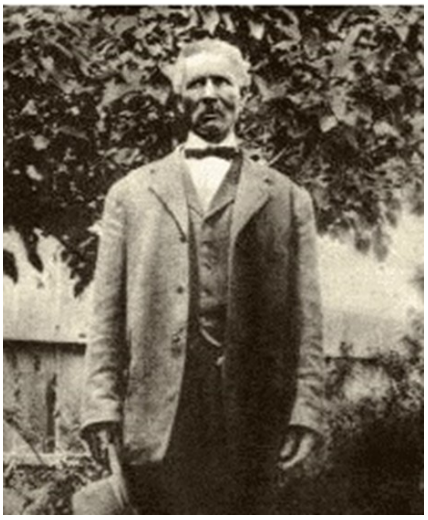
During the early nineteenth century, many enslaved African Americans of the Five Tribes traveled to Indian Territory on the Trail of Tears. They contributed to the development of the large-scale ranching operations members of the Five Tribes built prior to the Civil War. Since 1819, white slaveholders moved into what would become Texas and set up ranching operations. African Americans quickly picked up roping and horseback riding skills. During the Civil War, many slaveholders left to fight for the Confederacy and the enslaved African Americans were left behind to tend to the ranching operations. Following the Civil War, African Americans in the West could move with more freedom. Some of these individuals took this experience and began working on ranches and cattle drives for wages.

Black cowboys participated in all aspects of the long drive. Being a cowhand was not an easy task, and not everyone could keep up; however, cattle driving would prove to be far more profitable than **sharecropping**, which was largely the only occupation for Freedmen in the south during the Jim Crow era. In contrast, Black cowboys were paid the same as white cowboys as opposed to Mexican *vaqueros* and *Tejanos*, who made approximately a third less. Hierarchies often were more influential during the drive than race. Wranglers, often young teens, held the lowest status while the cowboys, regardless of race, would ride drag in the rear of the herd because of their lack of experience. Cooks regularly held the highest status among the riders except for the trail boss. As a Black cook, one could have a significant say about disputes or other matters that may arise on during the drive. Along with the additional respect, cooks also received a significantly higher wage. Unfortunately, race still heavily impacted life on the range, and there is little evidence of Black men obtaining the position of trail boss.

Cowboys, c. 1900 (image courtesy of the University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections).

This had nothing to do with skill. It was because the trail boss needed respect from the crew and other individuals throughout the route. Black men in positions of authority were not guaranteed respect from whites. Cattle owners were reluctant to hire a Black trail boss because of their unequal social standing of the day. The towns along the cattle trail were segregated. Many bars had separate entrances based on race but would often allow for intermingling in "neutral points." Restaurants would refuse service but would allow for take-out orders. The situation was heightened if white women lived in the town in which the drovers stopped.

There are many well known Black cowboys and ranchers. Bose Ikard was born enslaved in Mississippi but found work with Charles Goodnight for many years after the Civil War. Goodnight said that he "trusted Ikard that any living man." Nat Love became famous in Deadwood, South Dakota, after easily winning a rodeo. He wrote a famous **memoir** titled, *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love.* Born enslaved in South Carolina, John Ware came west. After working as a drover, he became one of the wealthiest ranchers in Alberta, Canada. Johanna July was a Black Seminole who became a renowned horse trainer. Jesse Stahl was a famous rodeo performer while Bill Pickett worked as both a rodeo performer and a rancher. Bill Pickett would become the first Black man to be inducted into the Rodeo Hall of Fame.



Bose Ikard (image courtesy PBS).

Bill Pickett, c. 1902 (image courtesy North Fort Worth Historical Society).

Nat Love, aka Deadwood Dick (image courtesy PBS).

Johanna July (image courtesy Texas State Historical Association).

Jesse Stahl (image courtesy BlackPast).

John Ware with his wife Mildred and their two of their eight children (image courtesy Library and Archives Canada).

## Cattle Ranching in Indian Territory

Cattle ranching quickly became one of the leading economic activities in Indian Territory following the removal of the Five Tribes from their lands in the Southeast. Even before the Civil War, Indian Territory was a central part of the national agricultural market, and tribal nations would sell their **surplus** to the growing cities. However, once the **Reconstruction Treaties of 1866** were signed, the Five Tribes lost much of their land, which was then used for the relocation and concentration of Plains tribes.

Many tribes and individuals joined the cattle ranching industry. They faced incredible obstacles, but were able to establish a foundation of cattle ranching as a central economic industry in Oklahoma. The cattle industry survived through the territorial period into the modern-day. Many Indian agents, working with different tribes, believed establishing successful ranching operations would assist in the long-range goal of **assimilation**. The Five Tribes established large and profitable operations, while many of the Plains tribes had a troubling introduction into cattle raising and ranching.

*Cherokee Farming and Animal Husbandry* by Olga Mohr, US Post Office, Stilwell, Oklahoma (image courtesy Smithsonian National Postal Museum).

The Five Tribes raised livestock on a large scale in their ancestral homes in the Southeast. The Choctaw in particular were quite successful. None of the Five Tribes originally had individual land ownership, but individuals could own the resources that were developed from the land. Among those resources were foodstuffs or livestock. One Seminole rancher owned up to 20,000 cattle before the Civil War.

The Civil War greatly disturbed all economic activity in Indian Territory. Tribal conflicts worsened by the Confederacy's secession, constant violence, general lawlessness, and a **refugee** crisis did nothing but disrupt economic growth and material wealth. By 1869, the Seminole only had around 4,000 head of cattle remaining. The Civil War devastated Indian Territory in terms of direct destruction, land seizure, and further restrictions.

At the same time, the cattle industry grew steadily. Cattle drives nearly always crossed into Indian Territory to get to the markets and railroads. In some ways, tribal nations were able to benefit from the increased traffic through the territory. Tribal nations would often charge fees when the drives came into Indian Territory. Cattle moved very slowly and consumed a significant amount of natural resources like grass and water. These **grazing fees** and even **leasing** fees quickly became a relatively reliable source of income. However, it was not always without conflict. There were many reasons why conflict might arise. Mostly commonly, **belligerent** trail bosses refused to pay grazing fees, or small groups of Native people might harass and attempt to make off with cattle.

Quapaw Cattle Company, Quapaw, Oklahoma (image courtesy Quapaw Cattle Company).

Various tribes attempted to establish cattle ranching as an economic activity. Particularly, the Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapaho all had difficulties in fully expanding their operations. Government rations were often infrequent and far below the caloric needs of the individuals they were intended to feed. One method of solving the food shortage was hunting, but even then the bison populations were dropping drastically due to commercial bison hunts. Because of these circumstances, many of the tribal members **culled** too many cattle to develop large herds. Cattle could not be grown quickly enough to both immediately feed people and establish a strong foundation for the future.

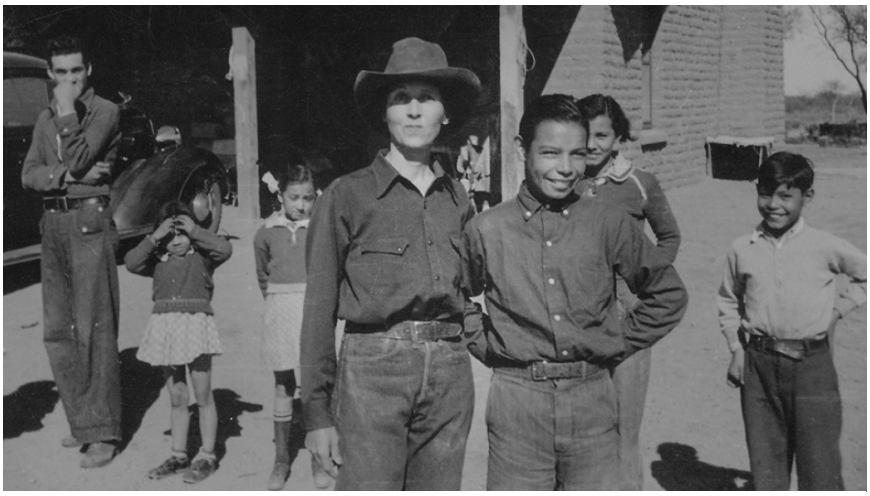
With the number of cattle ranches in Indian Territory increasing slowly but steadily, many associations began to organize and work towards common goals. Native cowboys also made up a large portion of the workforce on the open range as well as on ranches. Instructors at Indian boarding schools offered riding and roping classes that trained Native attendees in the skills needed to become a cowboy. The Dawes Act marked an end to **communal** land ownership and introduced private and individual land ownership. This disrupted life in Indian Territory once more, forcing many tribal members to seek wage work after being **dispossessed**.

Today many Native nations still participate in cattle ranching as an economic activity. The Choctaw Nation has a cattle ranch in Daisy, Oklahoma, and the Quapaw Cattle Company is part of the Quapaw Nation. Both are successful and continue many riding and ranching traditions.

## Women in Ranching

Women were active participants in western industries. Although they were not common on the long cattle drives, women were **indispensable** partners on the small family ranches. Even so, women often were seen as lower in status when compared to the men they worked alongside. Many times women noted that the western frontier was seen as a "man's world." Most women were married and rarely left the ranch unless an unusual reason came up. Women performed tasks that did not match the societal norms back East: women would ride horses, help with the cattle herding, and learn to shoot.

Eulalia Bourne pushed the bar even further. Not only was she a school teacher, but she also had her own ranch. She often managed and worked the ranch herself unless it was absolutely necessary to hire additional hands. She rarely hired due to the frequent pushback and lack of respect from many of men who worked for her.



Eulalia "Sister" Bourne (image courtesy Rosa Ronquillo Rhodes Collection, Postal History Foundation).

While fewer in numbers, African American women still impacted the cattle industry, whether on ranches, participating in rodeos, or offering business services in town. African American women were less directly involved with ranching and cattle work, largely due to the fact that Black ranch ownership was relatively low. However, some Black women worked as cooks, wranglers, or various other roles throughout the ranch. Others opened businesses, working as mail carriers or running newspapers in western towns. They faced substantial discrimination, both because of their gender and their race.

Rodeo provided an ideal platform for African Americans to challenge many of their realities. Black rodeos became incredibly popular as they allowed Black men and women the opportunity to compete and perform comfortably without limitation or discrimination. Local rodeos allowed neighbors and friends to come together and engage in friendly competition. These rodeos have also turned into cultural events that demonstrate African Americans' long participation in western culture and continue today.

"Stagecoach" Mary Fields ran a postal route and had a larger-than-life legacy in the West (courtesy of the National Postal Museum).

# Western Entertainment

## Wild West Shows

Life could get lonesome and quite **mundane** out in rural areas. Wild West Shows were some of the earliest forms of **commercial** entertainment and were often the first exposure of western culture to communities all over the world. Wild West Shows traveled from New York City to Paris, showcasing skilled horseback riders to millions of spectators around the world. Famed Cherokee and Oklahoman Will Rogers learned his exciting roping skills on a ranch in Indian Territory and then traveled the world entertaining audiences. Today, Wild West Shows have declined in popularity, while other forms of western entertainment, such as rodeos, continue to spread awareness for millions. Like many aspects of western culture, rodeos possess an extensive and diverse history. Race and gender once dictated who could participate but now have come to unify communities and open avenues to diversity and inclusion in western entertainment.

Will Rogers learned roping tricks while working on ranches in Indian Territory (image courtesy *Britannica.com*).

Pawnee Bill operated a ranch and Wild West Show after leading the Boomer Movement, which demanded Indian Territory be opened to white settlement (2052, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Renowned for her roping and riding skills, Lucille Mulhall worked for the Miller 101 Ranch Wild West Show (17777, Rose Strothman Collection, OHS).

Wild West Shows have one of the longest-lasting legacies of the western American frontier. These carefully **curated** shows provided engaging and sometimes mesmerizing displays of skills and culture often present within the cattle driving and ranching traditions. They also demonstrated many western hardships, such as harsh living and working conditions, limited resources, and the constant risk of life-threatening situations. Roping, horse riding, and shooting were among the most popular displays of skill. Certain individuals became incredibly well known through their performances at these shows. Buffalo Bill Cody became one of the leading names and trailblazers for Wild West Shows. His Wild West Show traveled throughout the world and took western culture into Europe and other continents. Bill Cody and Annie Oakley are arguably most responsible for creating the idea of the cowgirl. The cowgirl became the feminine stereotype of a western woman. Annie Oakley also pushed boundaries for women, and would often combine horseback riding and shooting skills. These activities were often seen as unladylike, and yet she always performed them in a dress. Given the active involvement of women in cattle ranching, the cowgirl quickly gained much praise from pioneer women and urban women alike.


Annie Oakley, the original cowgirl (image courtesy History.com).

The 101 Ranch was very popular in Oklahoma due to its Wild West Show, which ran from 1905 until 1931. Today, the annual Oklahoma State Fair hosts showings of "Oklahoma Frontier Experience," which follows directly in the footsteps of Buffalo Bill Cody and Annie Oakley.

Promotional postcard from the 101 Ranch (10234, W.A. Rigg Collection, OHS).

## *Charreria*

Much like the American cowboy, the American rodeo can be traced back to the Mexican *charreria. Charreria* developed out of competition and boredom. Most of the *haciendados,* wealthy landed elites left most of the work for the *campesinos,* indigenous peasants. In doing so, the landed elite often spent their time practicing their military and horseback riding skills. As time progressed, these once-friendly competitions became more and more structured and they became independent competitions of the wealthy that would be known as *charreria.* Following Mexico's independence, the *charro,* as many of these landed elites would become known, became symbols of Mexico and its heritage. Over the decades, more and more men participated until, in 1933, the *Asociación Nacional de Charros* (National Association of Charros) was created. Once seen as a pastime of the elite, the competitions became popular with *vaqueros*. The competitions served to hone and develop the skills that many would use on a daily basis.

A *charreria* in Oklahoma (image courtesy *The Oklahoman*).

Today, *charreria* is incredibly popular in the southwestern United States as many people of Mexican descent continue to participate. In Oklahoma, *charrerias* grow in popularity every year. While many maintain the idea that *charreria* is a sport of privilege, the sport keeps expanding and becoming more accessible for all. ***Coleaderas****,* for example, have also gained a lot of popularity due to its less formal setting. *Coleaderas,* much like *charreadas,* test a *charro's* roping and horseback riding skills, but they mostly focus on one event.

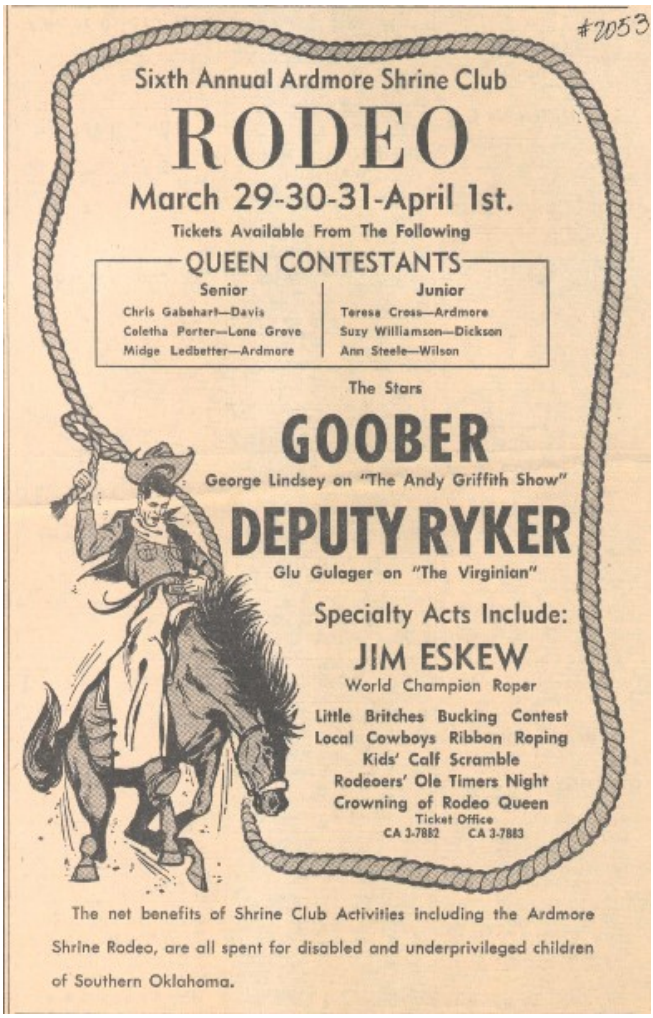
*Charreadas* and *coleaderas* have also become key cultural celebrations. Renowned bands often perform at the larger *charreadas* and entertain performers and audiences alike. *Corridos*, narrative ballads, originally popularized and spread by vaqueros and are now one of the most popular genres among northern Mexican regional music. Many *corridos* tell stories relating to well-known horses and individuals or their love stories.

***Escaramuza*** performers (image courtesy *Mundo Equino).*

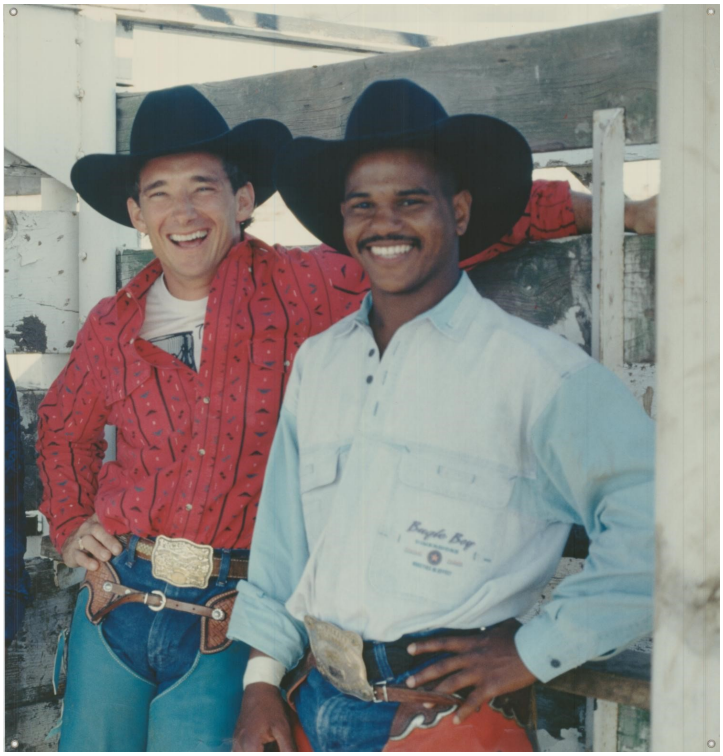
## *Rodeo*

The word "rodeo" is a Spanish word that means round-up. Cowboys would need to gather cattle, sometimes from several ranches, together to count and brand them. Rodeos became popular demonstrations of cowboys' skills and showmanship. Dating back to 1880s, rodeos gained much of their widespread appeal after the turn of the century, following the decline of Wild West Shows. During this period, rodeos were segregated. This barrier and rodeo's enduring popularity produced the creation of separate rodeo associations that highlighted these traditions for African Americans and indigenous communities.

Trying to hold on. Photo by Jim Argo (23389.142.11, Jim Argo Collection, OHS).




Advertisement for Ardmore Shrine Club Rodeo, 1967 (2053, William A. McGalliard Historical Collection, OHS).



Rodeos continue to attract participants and fans (22642.3036.1, Oklahoma Department of Tourism Collection, OHS).


The annual Boley Rodeo is the largest Black rodeo in Oklahoma. Photo by George R. Wilson, 1982 (2012.201.B1100.0107, OPUB-CO Collection, OHS).

African American cowboys faced racism and discrimination out West, and the situation was no different among the rodeo circuits. Black cowboys were not allowed to participate alongside white cowboys and often competed at separate times, with no audience. The segregation and discrimination eventually led to the creation of independent Black rodeo circuits. Black rodeo stars came to be acknowledged for their skill, including Jesse Stahl, Nat Love, and Oklahoman Bill Pickett. These stars were able to push ahead through the many racial and social obstacles. It is said that African American cowboys made up a third of those in the Chisholm Trail that crossed through Oklahoma. Black rodeos, much like *charreadas*, demonstrate cultural pride and appreciation of excellent skill and showmanship. In addition, Black rodeos educate and bring awareness to the African American western experience that is rarely adequately reflected in many history books or popular culture. These rodeos tour nationally in both rural and urban areas.

A contestant competes in the Ro LeBlanc Rodeo in Okmulgee, the oldest continuously held Black rodeo in Oklahoma. Photo by Sue Ogrocki, 2020 (image courtesy AP).

Indigenous rodeos also serve as cultural events. Many Indigenous rodeo performers and athletes participate to highlight and bring awareness to their long history with cattle and ranching, while others may feel connected to a **nomadic** past and their often spiritual relationships with animals. Jackson Sundown, a Nez Perce rodeo star, took the rodeo world by storm in the early 1900s. He worked very closely with horses; he would breed, raise, break, and sell horses for a living. He was such a dominant rodeo competitor that many would withdraw just at the mention of his name.

The All Indian Rodeo Cowboys Association formed in 1957 to support Native American participation in rodeo competitions. The Indian National Finals Rodeo (INFR) began in 1976 and continues to grow in popularity, sanctioning over 700 rodeos in the nation. INFR rodeos are frequently hosted by Oklahoma's tribal nations, building the state's reputation in the sport and attracting tourists to different parts of the state.

Jackson Sundown (Nez Perce), a famous rodeo star (image courtesy *Cowboys & Indians*).

Keira Simonson (Chippewa), and horse Diesel compete in a barrel race at the Indian National Finals Rodeo in 2019 (image courtesy *The Guardian).*

# Activities

## Citing Evidence from Multiple Sources: How Do You Break a Horse?

Don't be alarmed! "Breaking a horse" is a different way of saying, "training a horse." Believe it or not, horses are not born ready and willing to follow instructions have someone ride on their back. The process of training a horse to be ridden is called "breaking a horse." Different groups and different cultures have their own preferred method of breaking horses. Watch this current example of how to break a horse:

"Breaking Wild Horses: Outback Wrangler" by Nat Geo Wild
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHwGWBJyMSg

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Now, read this account by Johanna July of the method she developed to break a horse. Since people spoke differently during the 1930s, when this interview was conducted, you may have to read it a couple of times:

> "As a girl, Johanna was not required to do a woman's work about the place. Her meals were always ready for her and her clothes were washed. Her job was to break horses, take them to water, cut grass for them, look after the other stock and ride, ride, ride…
>
> The horses were there to break and Johanna, being dextrous and nim-ble, was quite able to accomplish the task, though she devised her own means of doing so...
>
> "I could break a hoss myself, me and my Lawd,' she declared soberly.
> 'Many a narrow scrape I've been through wid hosses and mules. I'll tell you how I broke my hosses. I would pull off my clothes and get into de clothes I intended to bathe in and I would lead 'em right into de Rio Grande and keep 'en in dere till dey got pretty well worried. When dey was wild, wild, I would lead 'im down to de river and get 'im out in wa-ter where he couldn't stan' up and I would swim up and get 'im by de mane an' ease up on 'im. He couldn't pitch and when I did let 'im out of dat deep water he didn't want to pitch. Sometimes dey wasn't so wore out an' would take a runnin' spree wid me when dey got out in shallow water where dey could get deir feet on de ground, and dey would run clear up into de corral. But I was young and I was havin' a good time."
>
> Angermiller, Florence. *Johanna July–Indian Woman Horsebreaker: a machine readable transcription.* Texas. Manuscript/Mixed Material.
> https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh002207/

Now, write steps for breaking a horse from the demonstration video and Johanna July's description:

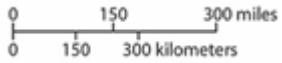
| Outbreak Wrangler Video | Johanna July Description |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Which method do you think you would prefer to try?

Why?

## Using Maps: Measuring Scale and the Cattle Trails

When you look at a map, have you ever wondered what this is?




That line shows the map scale. You can use a map scale to find out the actual distance from one place to another using just the map.

### How to use the scale and measure distance on a map

The easiest way to measure scale is to take a piece of paper or cardstock and mark the length on the paper. Then, take the paper and measure how many of the sections you marked are from one point to another on a map. If it does not come out even, then you can estimate how much of the section is left and add that number as a decimal. Count the sections and multiply that by the length that section represents. So, if you used a scale ruler that showed:

1 section on the homemade rule equals 300 kilometers

And you measured six and a half sections between one point and another, the actual distance would be:

Six and a half (6.5) sections x 300 kilometers

The actual, real-life distance between the two points would be 1,950 kilometers.

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Print the map and make a scale ruler from the scale on the map. Measure the distance for the following cattle trails:

The Shawnee Trail to Sedalia, Missouri

The Chisholm Trail to Abilene, Texas

The Goodnight-Loving Trail to Cheyenne, Wyoming

What are the distances you figured? Don't forget to add the unit of measurement (km, miles)!

The Shawnee Trail to Sedalia is: _____

The Chisholm Trail to Abilene is: _____

The Goodnight-Loving Trail to Cheyenne is: _____

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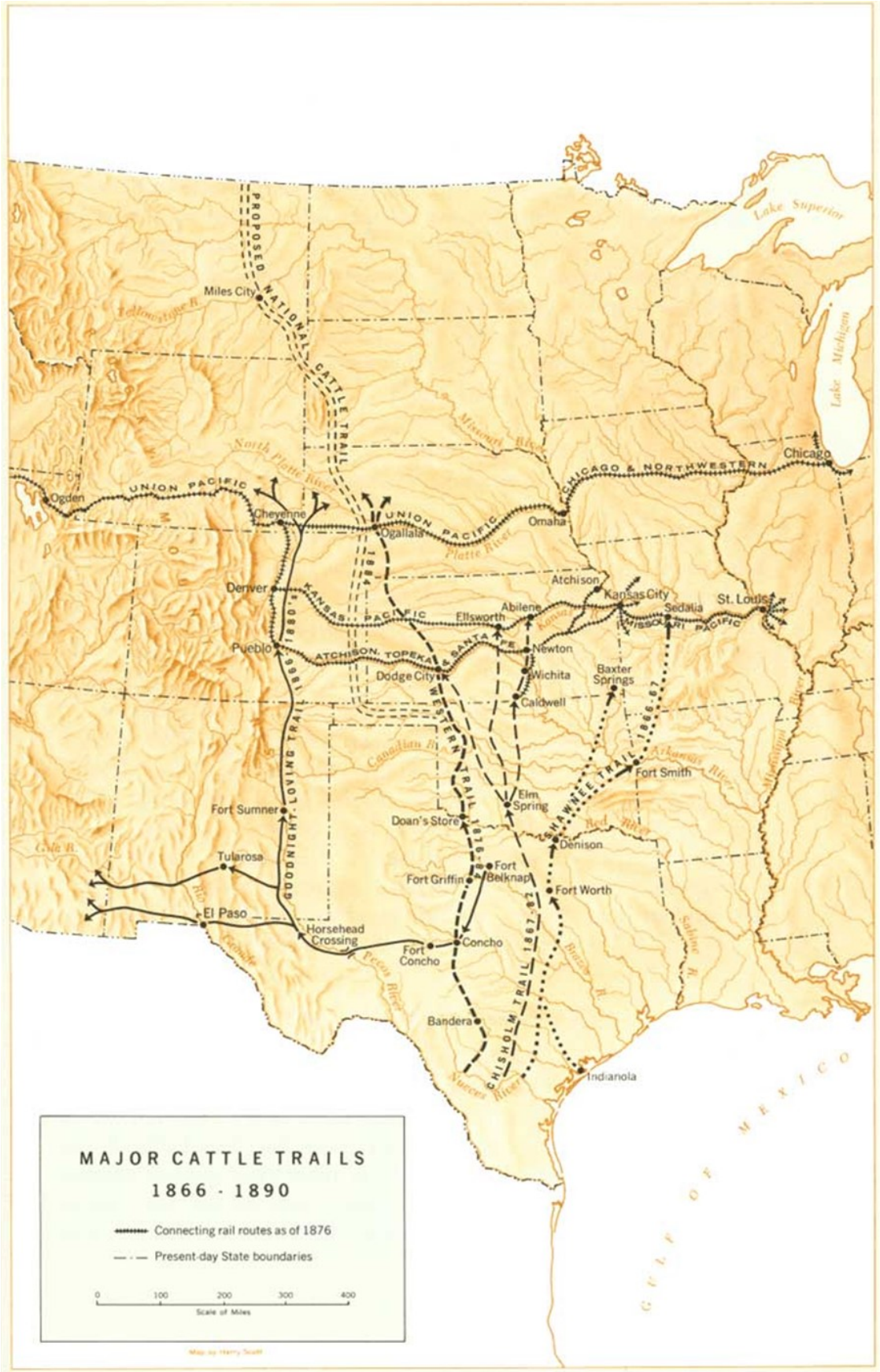
### Take it a step further!

Think about how fast cattle can go and about the distance the drovers had to cover. On most days, cattle would move 15 to 20 miles or 24 to 32 kilometers a day. With that information, you can figure out how many days it took to go that distance. All you do is take the speed and divide it into the length of trail. Try it!

How long did it take to move cattle on the Chisholm Trail? _____

## Using Maps: Measuring Scale




Map courtesy National Park Service

## Interpreting Texts: Music Analysis

Using Yampa Valley Boys' version of "Old Cowboy's Lament," listen to and read the lyrics of the song.

"Old Cowboys Lament"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8BIQZGjDPI

The range's filled up with farmers and there's fences ev'rywhere
A painted house 'most ev'ry quarter mile
They're raisin' blooded cattle and plantin' sorted seed
And puttin' on a painful lot o' style

There hain't no grass to speak of and the water holes are gone
The wire of the farmer holds 'em tight
There's little use to law 'em and little use to kick
And mighty sight less use there is to fight

There's them coughin' separators and their dirty, dusty crews
And wagons runnin' over with the grain
With smoke a-driftin' upward and writin' on the air
A story that to me is mighty plain

The wolves have left the country and the long-horns are no more
And all the game worth shootin' at is gone
And it's time for me to foller, 'cause I'm only in the way
And I've got to be a-movin' — movin' on.

### Answer these questions

- Why do you think the song's name means?
- What do you think was the message of the song?
- How does this song relate to what happened to the idea of the Wild West and cowboys?
- How might writing a song or music in general help people from around the world understand a culture they are unfamiliar with?

## Creating Visual Presentations: *Escaramuzas* in the United States

*Escaramuzas* are increasingly popular in the United States. They are very memorable to watch because of the difficulty in the movements and the eye-catching costumes. Watch this video to learn about *escaramuzas.*

"*Escaramuza* Transcends Borders." *CBS News,* December 8, 2021.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ImqGF37n3w

You have the ability to tell stories in an interesting way. A great way to tell a story is with pictures. The use of pictures or visual elements adds interest and depth to the story you are communicating, but picking the right photograph takes some practice. When selecting a picture, you want to make sure it shows what you are trying to explain to the viewer. If you are trying to explain an action, then you want to make sure your picture shows that action. If you have a lot of pictures in your presentation, make sure you have a variety of subjects rather than the same kind of picture multiple times, like posed portraits of one person.

The most important thing to include when you use material created by someone else is a **citation**. A citation gives credit to the creator. It can also help your viewer know what source to use to find out who the creator is.

In this activity, you will create a visual presentation using presentation software like PowerPoint, Slides, Canva, or Prezi. You will educate your viewer about *escaramuzas.* Below are the captions that you can cut and paste into your presentation, but you will need to find pictures that match the captions. When you find a picture, make sure you include the credit. For this presentation, you will add the credit in the "image courtesy" section. On the last page, you will have a list of images, the sites you got them from, and the links. This page is often called a "works cited" or "bibliography" page. They are very important to include because they show that you are not claiming someone else's work as your own. When people do take credit for other people's work, this is called **plagiarism** or **academic dishonesty**. When you cite something, you want to do your best to find the name of the creator, the title, the website, the date, and the link. Sometimes, you will not find all of that information. If that is the case, do your best. As long as you include a title and the link, the viewer can check out the information on their own; that is the goal of a citation page.

**Text for *Escaramuza* presentation**

- Escaramuza is an all-female team competition where the women ride the horses in very precise patterns (image courtesy _____ ).
- Escaramuza is originally from Mexico (image courtesy _____ ).
- Escaramuza began at Charreadas, or rodeos, in Mexico about 70 years ago (image courtesy _____ ).
- The performers ride their horse side saddle (image courtesy _____ ).
- Some people call escaramuza "ballet with horses" (image courtesy _____ ).
- The escaramuza costume is very specific and elaborate (image courtesy _____ ).
- For many performers in the US, escaramuza is a way to celebrate their Mexican heritage (image courtesy _____ ).
- Competitive escaramuza began in the US in 1991 (image courtesy _____ ).
- Escaramuza is becoming more popular in the US (image courtesy _____ ).

## Slide Example

Slide 1 Escaramuza performers must practice hundreds of hours to learn the routines and train their horses in the routines (image courtesy *The Mesquite*).

## Citation Page Example

**Citations**

Slide 1 Torres, Stephanie. "Behind the Scenes: the oldest Charro association in the US." *The Mesquite*, November 30, 2017. https://mesquite-news.com/behind-the-scenes-the-oldest-charro-association-in-the-u-s/.

## Glossary

**academic dishonesty:** Any kind of deception that is used to advance a student's grade or standing.

**alardes:** Exhibition military drills/parades commonly associated with the colonial Spanish military.

**assimilation:** The process of adopting the language and culture of a dominant social group or nation, or the state of being socially integrated into the culture of the dominant group in a society.

**belligerent:** Inclined to or exhibiting assertiveness, hostility, or combativeness.

**campesino:** Indigenous or mestizo worker that lived within an encomienda or hacienda.

**caste:** Racially based hierarchal system implemented by the Spanish during the colonial era.

**charreada:** Exhibitionary competition made up of various events that demonstrate a rider's skill and showmanship that is derived from alardes.

**charro:** The riders that participate in charreadas, who have become a Mexican cultural symbol recognized throughout the world.

**citation:** Information telling readers where material originated that is not the author's own.

**coleaderas:** A less formal competition that only includes coleando as its main event.

**colonialization:** The act of bringing into subjection or subjugation by colonializing.

**commercial:** Engaging in an activity to sell rather than use.

**communal:** Characterized by collective ownership and use of property.

**conquistadores:** Spanish explorers hired to lay landed claims on behalf of the Spanish crown.

**converting:** Changing religion.

**corridos:** Musical ballads that were commonly used to tell stories regarding famous individuals, horses, or legends.

**cull:** Selectively killing or removing an animal for a purpose.

**curated:** Material selected to tell a specific story.

**dispossessed:** Having one's land taken away.

**diverse:** Differing from one another.

**drover:** The preferred term for those who worked the cattle drives. Drovers considered "cowboy" an insult.

**elite:** The people who have the most wealth and status in a society.

**encomienda:** Labor system implemented by the Spanish landed elites, which established a patriarchal hierarchy within registered land; encompassed all individuals living within encomiendo's land.

**escaramuza:** Translates to "skirmish" but is often used to describe a female rider that partakes in the escaramuza event of a charreada.

**feudal:** A social and political system where a large landholder grants land to tenants, who must stay on the land and give labor and loyalty to the landowner.

**grazing fee:** The payment made to a landowner so they will allow livestock to feed on their land.

**haciendado:** Wealthy landed elite after Mexico's independence from Spain.

**haste:** Swiftness of motion; speed; celerity.

**illiterate:** Unable to read or write.

**indigenous:** Of or relating to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group.

**indispensable:** Absolutely necessary.

**industrialization:** The act or process of industrializing: the widespread development of industries in a region, country, culture, etc.

**integrated:** Mixed together.

**interior:** Inland or inside.

**leasing:** Paying to stay on land owned by someone else.

**lucrative:** Producing wealth, profitable.

**mestizo:** Racial category derived from Spanish caste system to indicate a person of both indigenous and Spanish descent.

**missions:** Christian groups working to gain converts in areas that are not predominantly Christian.

**mundane:** Common; ordinary; banal; unimaginative.

**noble:** A person born with special privileges and power.

**nomadic:** Roaming about from place to place aimlessly, frequently, or without a fixed pattern of movement.

**plagiarism:** Using someone else's work and making it look like one's own.

**railhead:** A point on a railroad from which the track begins.

**Reconstruction Treaties of 1866:** Treaties between the US government and the Five Tribes after the Civil War that required the tribes cede land among other requirements.

**remuda:** Herd of saddle-broken horses that cowboys and ranch hands used for the day.

**refugee:** A person forced to leave a place because of war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**rustler:** A person who steals livestock.

**sharecropping:** A tenant farmer, especially in the southern US, who is provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food, who works the land, and who receives an agreed share of the value of the crop minus charges.

**stampede:** The panicked running of a herd.

**surplus:** The amount that remains when use or need is satisfied.

**Tejano:** A Mexican American living in south Texas.

**vaquero:** Horse-riding laborer who works in the cattle industry.

## Videos

"I'm a Black Cowboy. This is My Story. Op-Docs," *The New York Times*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWlLNIGIbd0

"Black Cowboys: Creole Trail Rides Showcase Growing Culture," *The Christian Science Monitor*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omwZUUN2tj4

"Black Cowboys Saddle Up," CBS Morning News
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR8JpSC6kJQ

"The Life of an African American Rodeo Cowgirl," VOA News
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNusMKgg9Dg

"A Mexican Pastime Takes Root in the U.S.," NBC Latino NBC News
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hngJF9mcqss

"Why These Mexican American Women are crossing the Border into Mexico," Refinery29
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwXvMRNDrHU

"*Escaramuza Charra* Dancing Horses," KrisatWow
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8NS3zXUZ8k

"The Rules of Cowboy Cooking," CBS Morning News
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-At94Iqg_W4

"The Ranch Life," National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5I2y5yJ0Rs

"The Last American Rodeos (Part 1 of 2)," VICE
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYQtsP5NrVM

"Swift Current: A Native American Cowboy," SFO Museum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUXDVEm2EQ8

"Sonya Dodginghorse 2019 INFR Barrel Racing Champion," Sonya Dodginghorse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-V8fgE1aiU

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