

The Cattle Industry

Explore the life of the cowboy on a cattle drive through pictures and by learning a cowboy song.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- I understand that the Chisholm and Western Trails once brought large numbers of cattle to Kansas
- I know that cattle drives were the start of the cattle industry in Kansas
- D realize that cowboys left a legacy of songs and clothing that remain today

MATERIALS FROM TRUNK

Audio Tape

Kids Sing America

Graphics

#18 - Longhorn

#19 - Chisholm and Western Trails Map

#20 - Cowboy

#21 - Brands

#22 - Chuck Wagon

Objects

Cowboy Hat

Bandanna

OTHER MATERIALS

- ' Audio Tape Player
- ' Guitar or harmonica or jaw harp (if you can play it) OR someone that plays the guitar or harmonica.

TEACHER PREPARATION

- ' Advance the tape to counter number 152, "Git Along Little Dogies."
- ' Practice playing "Git Along Little Dogies" on the guitar if it will be used instead of the tape.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the years following the Civil War, ranchers in Texas found themselves with a surplus of longhorn cattle. These scrawny, tough beasts were practically worthless in Texas but in eastern markets like Chicago or Cincinnati these animals could be sold at thirty to forty dollars a head. The problem was finding a way to get the animals to these markets as quickly and cheaply as possible.

During this same time the Kansas Pacific Railway was being built across Kansas. With little population and good grass between Texas and Kansas it was decided to drive these surplus longhorns from Texas, through Indian Territory (present Oklahoma), and up to the new railheads in Kansas. From there, the cattle would be loaded into cattle cars and shipped quickly to the eastern markets.

In 1867 the first cattle herds arrived in Abilene, Kansas. There, Joseph McCoy had built the first loading station; pens and chutes designed to hold and load the cattle onto the new Kansas Pacific Railway cars. In that first year of the big cattle drives, the herds were driven up an already existing route, the Chisholm Trail. This route extended north out of Texas from the Canadian River to Jesse Chisholm's trading post on the Little Arkansas River near present day Wichita. Originally a route used by Indians, traders, and the army, this route now stretched past Wichita and to the new railroad in Abilene.

Until 1871 Abilene was the end of the trail for these cattle drives. Some 600,000 head of cattle were shipped out of the town. In addition to the profits from the cattle sales was the money the cowboys spent in town. After working fourteen to eighteen hours a day for thirty to forty days, these cowboys were ready for a night on the town. Usually they had to have a haircut, bath, and new set of clothes upon arriving in town. Once these details were taken care of, liquor, women, and a card game became their chief interests.

During the following years towns such as Newton, Ellsworth, and Wichita shared the distinction of being the end of the trail for several reasons. Cattle drives headed to closer railheads as more railroads were built. An increase in the number of farmers and ranchers settling in Kansas brought with it an increased concern about the health problems for local livestock brought by the Texas cattle. Local ranchers sought to protect their animals by setting quarantine lines that Texas could not cross. Problems such as violence and bloodshed also caused the cattle business to lose its appeal in towns such as Abilene. In 1875, Dodge City became the end of the trail and for the next ten years was the "cowboy capital." The introduction of Dodge City as the main shipping point brought a new cattle route, the Western trail. This trail paralleled the old Chisholm but was farther west.

During this ten-year period cattle were not only shipped out of Dodge City but also driven past Dodge City to stock cattle ranches throughout the Central and Northern Plains. The presence of local stock and better breeds of cattle slowly brought a halt to the cattle drives



out of Texas. Cattle were still shipped by rail to markets in the east but they were from local ranches.

Today the cattle industry still plays a major role in the Kansas's economy. Cattle from ranches and farms are brought into feedlots to be fattened on special diets of grain. They are then slaughtered in meat-packing plants to be shipped by refrigerated truck trailers to markets all across the country. Many Kansas towns have feed-lots and meat-packing operations.

Many legacies remain from the days of the cattle drives. One such legacy is the songs of the cowboy. It has been reported that singing to the herds at night helped calm the cattle. More likely it pacified the bored cowboy who had been in the saddle all day. Nonetheless, many cowboy songs have been passed down to us from those times. One such song is "Git Along Little Dogies." This song tells about moving a herd to new ranges in Wyoming and thus probably originated some time after the late 1870s. The first verse describes a cow puncher (another name for a cowboy) whose "spurs was a jingling." The cowboy wore spurs on the back of his boots to direct his horse. Although they were pointed, he did not use the spurs to torture or punish his horse.

The second verse describes rounding up the "dogies" (pronounced "doe-gies"), a term the cowboys used for a motherless calf. The cowboys would "mark 'em and brand 'em and bob off their tails". Marking cattle was a temporary way of identifying cattle for separation purposes. Sometimes this meant clipping the ears but a less painful way of marking was to "bob off their tails." This was a process of cutting the tassel from the bottom of the tail. A more permanent form of identification was branding. This entailed heating a metal rod called a branding iron formed into a set of symbols at one end. The hot branding iron was applied to a spot near the rear of the calf. This burnt the brand, the symbol on the branding iron, into the hide of the calf. After this was done, one could identify that cow as belonging to a certain ranch.

The second verse also mentions the chuck wagon that went along with the drive. This was a kitchen on wheels. The man who drove the chuck wagon was responsible for feeding the fifteen or so men required to move the herd north.

Although the time span of the great cattle drives was short (less than twenty years), it played a major role in the development of Kansas and the history of the West. Our dependency on beef and our love of the hamburger got their beginnings in the long drive north to Abilene and other Kansas cowtowns.

VOCABULARY

- Bandanna A large colored handkerchief worn around the neck. Also called a wipe.
- Branding The process of marking the hide of a calf with a hot iron to show ownership.



Brands	The trademark design that is burnt into a calf to identify its owner.
Chisholm	A cattle trail used to drive Texas longhorns from Texas to the railroad in Abilene, Trail Kansas.
Chuck wagon	The wagon that was used on a cattle drive or on a ranch to cook meals for the cowboys. A kitchen on wheels.
Cow Puncher	Another name for a cowboy.
Cowboys	Men who work with cattle.
Dogie	A motherless calf.
Drive	As used in the song "Get Along Little Dogies" this means to walk the cattle in a specific direction.
Longhorns	A special breed of cattle named for the size of their horns. They were originally from Texas.
Spurs	A pointy device worn behind the heel of a cowboy's boot, used to direct the horse.
Stirrup	A flat-based ring that hangs from a saddle, used for a footrest for mounting and riding a horse.
Tassel	The clump of hair at the end of the tails of cattle.
Western Trail	Cattle trail from Texas to Dodge City that is a hundred or so miles west of the Chisholm Trail.
Wipe	Another word for bandanna.

ACTIVITY

- 1) Have the students gather around and tell them they are going to listen to a song about cowboys. Tell them that a dogie is another word for a motherless calf. Play "Git Along Little Dogies" on the tape *Kids Sing America*. (Also consider accompanying the class with someone playing the guitar, harmonica, or jaws harp.)



As I was a walkin' one morning for pleasure,
I spied a cow puncher a riding along.
His hat was thrown back and his spurs was a jinglin',
And as he approached he was singing this song

REFRAIN

Whopee tie yi yo, git along little dogies.
It's your misfortune and none of my own.
Whopee tie yi yo, git along little dogies.
For you know Wyoming will be your new home.

It's early in spring that we round up the dogies.
We mark 'em and brand 'em and bob off their tails.
We round up the horses, load up the chuck wagon,
And then drive the dogies out on the long trail.

REFRAIN

After the song is finished explain that the song is about driving longhorn cattle to Kansas from Texas a long time ago. Show them graphic #18, the Longhorn. Explain that
± longhorns are a type of cattle with very long horns, and
± there were a lot of longhorns in Texas at one time.

Hold up graphic #19, Chisholm and Western Trails Map. Point to where Texas and Kansas are on the map. Explain that the longhorns were driven to Kansas from Texas. Two major trails the cattle herds followed were the Chisholm Trail and the Western Trail. Once the cattle reached the end of the trail they were sold, loaded onto train cars, and shipped east to towns like Chicago and Cincinnati. Cowboys traveled on the trains with the cattle in special railroad cars.

- 2) Tell the class that people who work with cattle are called cowboys or cow punchers. These men herded the cattle from Texas to Kansas. The cow punchers rode horses and wore special clothes. Hold up graphic #20, the Cowboy and discuss the following pieces of clothing he is wearing.

± BOOTS

- * The pointed toes make it easy to slide the boot in and out of the stirrup.
- * The high heels lock the boot into place and help keep the foot from sliding through the stirrup. They also help the cowboy dig his heels into the dirt when roping a cow.
- * The high sides protect the cowboy's lower leg from the tall grass and brush.

± SPURS (fastened to the heel of the boot).

- * They help the cowboy direct the horse.



- ± CHAPS (sturdy leather pieces worn over trousers).
 - * Protect the cowboys legs from harsh brush and the weather.
- ± GLOVES
 - * Protect the cowboy's hands from rope burns, cuts, and cold weather.
- ± WIPE (bandanna)
 - * The wipe was worn around the cowboy's neck.
 - * Absorbs sweat and protects the face from dust or cold weather.
- ± HAT
 - * Protects the head from rain and sun.
 - * Waved at other cowboys as a signal or at the cattle as a distraction.

- 3) Remind the class of the song they heard and the words "mark 'em and brand 'em and bob off their tails." Explain that marking a calf means to temporarily tag it in some way so the cowboys could quickly tell where it belonged.

Hold up graphic #18, the Longhorn once again. Point to the long hair at the end of the longhorn's tail. Bobbing off a tail was to cut off this tassel, the very end of the tail. Bobbing was only a temporary way of marking the cow since the hair would grow back.

Explain that a branding iron was used to permanently mark a calf. With a hot branding iron the cowboy burned a symbol into the calf's skin on the upper hind leg. Each ranch had its own symbol or design that no one else was supposed to use. Show the class graphic #21, Brands. Tell them what one of the brands is and help them to guess the others.

Tell the class to pretend they are cowboys and cowgirls. What would their brands look like?

- 4) Remind the class of the line in the song "we round up the horses, load up the chuck wagon." Show them graphic #22, the Chuck wagon and explain that a chuck wagon was a "kitchen on wheels." It went along on all cattle drives and was used by the cook to prepare meals for the cowboys as they moved the cattle along the trail.
- 5) Teach the students the song "Get Along Little Dogies." Use the cowboy hats and wipes (bandannas) to dress up students. Have them act out the song as the class sings. Repeat the process with other students as the cowboy.



EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1) Plan a field trip to your local hamburger restaurant (or make or barbecue hamburgers) and explain that the cattle industry is still important to Kansas and the country.

2) Serve "cowboy" food to the class. Below is a recipe for Cowboy Beans.

- 1 pound dried pinto beans
- 2 ½ cups cold water
- ½ pound lean salt pork, cut up
- 1 red chili pepper
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 can tomato paste, 6 oz.
- 1 ½ tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin seed
- ½ teaspoon marjoram

Wash and pick over beans; put in mixing bowl. Cover beans with cold water and soak overnight. Next morning put beans and water into Dutch oven and bring to a boil; reduce heat. Cover and simmer 1 hour. Stir in remaining ingredients; cover and simmer 3 hours or until tender. Add more water if necessary. Serves 8.

3) Contact a local roping club or community college rodeo club to demonstrate roping for the class.

4) Let the class make stick horses. Use rolled up newspapers for the stick. Cut out heads from brown butcher paper or grocery sacks. Let the children decorate them. Staple the edges, stuff with newspapers, and tape to the "stick."

5) Use the cow mask in the trunk as a pattern. Have students make their own cow masks.

