

COWBOY ORIGIN TOUR – TEACHER GUIDE



DESCRIPTION

Students will explore the foundations of the cattle industry and the role of the American cowboy from the era of early cattle drives, the evolution of the working cowboy into a performing artist to the popularity of professional rodeo athletes, all of which honor and preserve the uniqueness of the cowboy culture, Western values and principles.

THEMATIC CONCEPTS

Cultural traditions, strong character and hard work define the cowboy way of life.

- The cowboy's origin story comes from African and European herding traditions.
- The American Cowboy is an iconic figure, based on reality and embellished by myth and legend.
- American rodeo is the living legacy of the working cowboy.

OK ACADEMIC STANDARDS [2019]

Grade 8 United States History

8.12.5 Evaluate the impact of federal policies including: A. Homestead Act of 1862 and the resulting movement westward to free land.

Oklahoma History

OKH.3.2 Assess the impact of the cattle and coal mining industries on the location of railroad lines, transportation routes, and the development of communities.

OKH.5.8 Describe the contributions of Oklahomans including the political and social commentaries of Will Rogers.

OKH.6.2 Analyze the impact of economic growth in various sectors including the C. continuing role of agriculture.

OKH.6.3 Describe the artistic contributions of Oklahomans in the fields of music, art, literature, theater, and dance.

United States History

USH.1.3 Analyze the impact of westward expansion and immigration on migration, settlement patterns in American society

High School Social Studies Practice Standards for Social Studies

2.2 Develop skills which demonstrate an understanding of historical events and the people who shaped our history.

2.3 Demonstrate a mastery of geographic concepts and the use of geographic tools to understand the impact of geography on the past and present.

KEY WORDS AND TERMS

Anti-Establishment Westerns – recent forms of entertainment whose protagonists are often defiant of social norms; a subgenre of Western films that challenge traditional ideals of the Classic Western, particularly those depicting a romanticized and often simplified version of the American West.

Barbed wire – a type of fencing wire with sharp edges spaced along the strands, providing inexpensive and easily constructed fences that transformed property boundaries by enclosing land and controlling livestock.

Bullfighters – essential personnel and highly experienced athletes who protect bull riders from injury by distracting the bull, acting as a human shield, and providing a safe area for the rider to escape.

Bulldogging – a technique in steer wrestling which involved biting the steer's upper lip to hold the animal down that would later be omitted in favor of leverage and brute force.

Cattle baron – a powerful landowner in the late 19th century American West who controlled vast herds of cattle and exerted significant influence over the industry and local affairs.

Cattle drive – the process of moving a herd of cattle, typically on horseback, over long distances, often to markets or new grazing lands; historically, these drives connected Texas ranchers with eastern markets, playing a significant role in the development of the American West and its economy.

Charreada – a competitive equestrian event that showcases the skills of charros (Mexican horsemen and women) in various ranch-style activities; considered the national sport of Mexico and is deeply rooted in the country's history and cultural heritage.

Pulp magazine and dime novels – popular forms of inexpensive, mass-produced fiction; dime novels were a precursor to modern paperbacks and focused on adventure stories with Western themes; pulp magazines contained multiple short stories and serialized novels. Both forms played a significant role in shaping popular culture, influencing genres like Westerns.

Silent film – motion pictures produced without recorded sound or spoken dialogue, relying on visual storytelling, physical acting, and text cards to convey the narrative. Silent cowboy movies, a popular genre during the silent era (roughly 1894-1927) depicted the American West and the clash between civilization and the frontier.

Singing Cowboy – a figure in Western films, radio, and music who combines the image of a cowboy with musical talent, often singing songs about the cowboy lifestyle and the American West; becoming popular in the 1930s and 40s, helping to romanticize the cowboy image and contributing to the popularity of country and Western music.

Vaquero – Spanish term for a cowboy, specifically one with origins in Spanish and Mexican ranching traditions; skilled horsemen who managed cattle on horseback, their techniques and equipment heavily influenced the development of the American cowboy.

Wild West shows – traveling theatrical productions that depicted scenes and events from the early history of the American West, including dramatic re-enactments, displays of horsemanship, trick shooting, and interactions with wild animals, creating a romanticized and entertaining version of frontier life.

Working cowboy rig – refers to the saddle and related equipment used by cowboys for their daily tasks on the range, including the rigging system (straps, buckles, and cinches).

MUSEUM GALLERIES

Cowboy Gallery

Western Performers Gallery

Rodeo Gallery

Tour may be modified to accommodate group size, time constraints, and/or gallery availability.
