Standard 8.97 and 8.98 Lessons, Primary Documents and Study Island

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Chapter 1

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8.97 Examine the development and life of the iconic American cowboy, including his skills, clothes and daily life and work. (C,H)

8.98 Explain the concepts of the Open Range, Long Drive and cow towns in the development of the American ranching industry. (E,G,H)

The Ways of the Cowboy

Pictured Above: Courtesy of Grant-Kohrs National Historic Site - For a dollar a day and "found" (board and room, where it existed), a young man worked long hours–occasionally risking life and limb–to tend the cattle of another.

The American Cowboy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRRRldWkfB8

Home on the Range -https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_YK7ebcZ2o
Strawberry Roan - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_yfmKMK4mo
Last Cowboy Song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08LWD3L_tfU
and...a more modern Willie Nelson :)

My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMko5LelBdA

Mining was not the only bonanza to be found in the West. Millions could be made in the CATTLE INDUSTRY. A calf bought for $5 in Southern Texas might sell for $60 in Chicago. The problem was, of course, getting the cattle to market.

In 1867, JOSEPH MCCOY tracked a path known as the CHISHOLM TRAIL from Texas to Abilene, Kansas. The Texas cowboys drove the cattle the entire distance — 1500 miles. Along the way, the cattle enjoyed all the grass they wanted, at no cost to the RANCHERS. At Abilene and other railhead towns such as Dodge City and Ellsworth, the cattle would be sold and the cowboys would return to Texas.

Pictured Above: Trails of the cattle drives

No vision of the American West is complete without the cowboy. The imagery is quintessentially American, but many myths cloud the truth about what life was like on the long drive.

**Myth vs. Reality**

Americans did not invent cattle raising. This tradition was learned from the vaquero, a Mexican cowboy. The vaqueros taught the tricks of the trade to the Texans, who realized the potential for great profits.

The typical COWBOY wore a hat with a wide brim to provide protection from the unforgiving sunlight. Cattle kicked up clouds of dust on the drive, so the cowboy donned a bandanna over the lower half of his face. CHAPS, or leggings, and high boots were worn as protection from briars and cactus needles.
Contrary to legend, the typical cowboy was not a skilled marksman. The lariat, not the gun, was how the cattle drover showed his mastery. About a quarter of all cowboys were African Americans, and even more were at least partially Mexican. Some cowboys were Civil War soldiers who wanted to start a fresh life. To avoid additional strain on the horses, cowboys were usually smaller than according to legend.

The lone cowboy is an American myth. Cattle were always driven by a group of DROVERS. The cattle were branded so the owner could distinguish his STEER from the rest. Several times per DRIVE, cowboys conducted a roundup where the cattle would be sorted and counted again.

Work was very difficult. The workdays lasted fifteen hours, much of which was spent in the saddle. Occasionally, shots were fired by hostile Indians or farmers. Cattle RUSTLERS sometimes stole their steers.

One of the greatest fears was the STAMPEDE, which could result in lost or dead cattle or cowboys. One method of containing a stampede was to get the cattle to run in a circle, where the steer would eventually tire.

Upon reaching Abilene, the cattle were sold. Then it was time to let loose. Abilene had twenty-five saloons open all hours to service incoming riders of the long drive.

**Twilight of the Cowboy**

The heyday of the long drive was short. By the early 1870s, rail lines reached Texas so the cattle could be shipped directly to the slaughterhouses. Ranchers then began to allow cattle to graze on the open range near rail heads. But even this did not last. The invention of BARBED WIRE by JOSEPH GLIDDEN ruined the OPEN RANGE. Now farmers could cheaply mark their territory to keep the unwanted steers off their lands. Overproduction caused prices to fall, leading many ranchers out of business.

Finally, the winter of 1886-87 was one of the worst in American history. Cattle died by the thousands as temperatures reached fifty below zero in some parts of the West. The era of the open range was over.

Pictured Above: American cowboys

Spanish and Mexican culture had a great affect on the development of the “cowboy”. Much of the way the cowboy dresses, the spurs, saddles and hat, comes from the Mexican vaqueros, the predecessor to the cowboy.

Here are some "cowboy" terms that have direct Spanish origin:

- Lariat: From la reata (the rope)
- Lasso: From lazo (rope)
- Ranch: From rancho (land for raising cattle)
- Rodeo: From rodear (circling the herd)

http://resourcesforhistoryteachers.wikispaces.com/USII.4

**Open Range in the West**
In the Western United States and Canada, open range is rangeland where cattle roam freely regardless of land ownership. Where there are "open range" laws, those wanting to keep animals off their property must erect a fence to keep animals out; this applies to public roads as well. Land in open range that is designated as part of a "herd district" reverses liabilities, requiring an animal’s owner to fence it in or otherwise keep it on the person’s own property. Most eastern states and jurisdictions in Canada require owners to fence in or herd their livestock.

The Western open-range tradition originated from the early practice of unregulated grazing in newly acquired western territories, which was codified in the laws of Western US states as they developed written statutes. Over time, as the Western lands became more developed (railroads, mining, farming, etc.) the open range laws started to be challenged and were significantly curtailed, but they still exist in certain areas of most western states. Open range conditions also existed in Western Canada prior to amendments the Dominion Lands Act in 1889 which prohibited cattle from grazing on unleased land, though the practice did not disappear immediately. Open range management has also been practiced in other areas, such as Caribbean and even the eastern state of South Carolina during the colonial period.

The practice was used in Mexico, and some argue it may have been the predecessor to the open range practice in the American West, which borrowed many other cattle raising techniques from Mexico.[citation needed]

Unlike the eastern United States, the western prairies of the 19th century were vast, undeveloped, and uncultivated, with scarce, widely separated sources of water. Until the invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, it was more practical to fence the livestock out of developed land, rather than to fence it in. As the United States government acquired western territories, land not yet placed into private ownership was publicly owned and freely available for grazing cattle, though conflicting land claims and periodic warfare with Native Americans of the Great Plains placed some practical limits on grazing areas at various times.

Free-roaming range cattle calved, were moved between grazing lands, and driven to market by cowboys. Branding was used to identify cattle belonging to different owners. Unbranded cattle were known as "mavericks" and could become the property of anyone able to capture and brand the unmarked animal.

The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s allowed cattle to be confined to designated areas to prevent overgrazing of the range. In Texas and surrounding areas, increased population required ranchers to fence off their individual lands. This initially brought considerable drama to western rangeland. Its invention made fencing huge expanses cheaper than hiring cowboys for handling cattle, and indiscriminate fencing of federal lands often occurred in 1880s, often without any regards to land ownership or other public needs, such as mail delivery and movement of other kinds of livestock. Various state statutes, as well as vigilantes (see "Fence Cutting War"), tried to enforce or combat fence-building with varying success. In 1885, federal legislation outlawed the enclosure of public land. By 1890, illegal fencing had been mostly removed.

In the north, overgrazing stressed the open range, leading to insufficient winter forage for the cattle and starvation, particularly during the harsh winter of 1886–1887, when hundreds of thousands of cattle died across the Northwest,
leading to collapse of the cattle industry. By the 1890s, barbed wire fencing was also standard in the northern plains, railroads had expanded to cover most of the nation, and meat packing plants were built closer to major ranching areas, making long cattle drives from Texas to the railheads in Kansas unnecessary. Hence, the age of the open range was gone and large cattle drives were over. Meanwhile, ranches multiplied all over the developing West.

**Cow Towns in American Ranching History**

![Map of the Chisholm Trail](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06P-ERCA17M)

American West: The Cattle Trail - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaHQ2vrt0ak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaHQ2vrt0ak)
Cattle Trails of the Western U.S.

FIGURE 1.4
Cattle drives were a major economic activity in the American west, particularly between 1866 and 1886, when 20 million cattle were herded from Texas to railheads in Kansas for shipments to stockyards in Chicago and points east. The long distances covered, the need for periodic rests by riders and animals, and the establishment of railheads led to the development of "cow towns" across the American West. Because of extensive treatment of cattle drives in fiction and film, the cowboy became the worldwide iconic image of the American. Cattle drives still occur in the American west.

The first large-scale effort to drive cattle from Texas to the nearest railhead for shipment to Chicago occurred in 1866, when many Texas ranchers banded together to drive their cattle to the closest point that railroad tracks reached, which at that time was Sedalia, Missouri. However, farmers in eastern Kansas, still concerned that transient animals would trample crops and transmit cattle fever to local cattle, formed groups that threatened to beat or shoot cattlemen found on their lands. Therefore, the 1866 drive failed to reach the railroad and the cattle herds were sold for low prices. There were other drives northward without a definite destination and without much financial success. Cattle were also driven to the old but limited New Orleans market, following mostly well-established trails to the wharves of Shreveport and Jefferson, Texas. In 1868, David Morrill Poor, a former Confederate officer from San Antonio, drove 1,100 cattle from east of San Angelo into Mexico over the Chihuahua Trail. This event, the "Great Chihuahua Cattle Drive," was the largest cattle drive attempted over that trail up to that time, but the market was much better in Kansas than in Mexico, so most drives headed north.

By 1867, a cattle shipping facility owned by Joseph G. McCoy opened in Abilene, Kansas. Built west of farm country and close to the railroad at Abilene, the town became a center of cattle shipping, loading over 36,000 head of cattle in its first year. The route from Texas to Abilene became known as the Chisholm Trail, named for Jesse Chisholm who marked out the route. It ran through present-day Oklahoma, which then was Indian Territory, but there were relatively few conflicts with Native Americans, who usually allowed cattle herds to pass through for a toll of ten cents a head. Later, other trails forked off to different railheads, including those at Dodge City and Wichita.
Kansas. By 1877, the largest of the cattle-shipping boom towns, Dodge City, Kansas, shipped out 500,000 head of cattle.

11a. Development After the Civil War
11b. Native Americans and Westward Expansion
12. Posttest

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read

excerpts from

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu_disp_textbook.cfm?smid=3&psid=715