

# The Devil's Rope: Barbed Wire

**Grade Level:** 4 - 5      **Subject:** Social Studies, Information Literacy, Language Arts

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Description:** The purpose of this lesson is to make students aware of the effects of the introduction of barbed wire on the cattle industry of the late 1800s and the life of the cowboy.

## **PASS—Oklahoma *Priority Academic Student Skills***

**Social Studies 1.1** Demonstrate the ability to utilize research materials, such as encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, newspapers, photographs, visual images, and computer-based technologies. (Grade 4)

**Social Studies 1.1** Locate, gather, analyze, and apply information from primary and secondary sources using examples of different perspectives and points of view. (Grade 5)

**Social Studies 6.3** Relate some of the major influences on westward expansion to the distribution and movement of people, goods, and services. (Grade 5)

**Language Arts-Oral Language 3.1** Show respect and consideration for others in verbal and physical communication. (Grade 4 - 5)

**Information Literacy 1.3** Identify and use a range of information sources.

## **Goals:**

- Students will gain an appreciation of effects an invention can have on an industry and culture.
- Students will be introduced to patents as primary sources of information.
- Students will gain an appreciation for the unique perspective primary source documents, such as a patent, offer.

## **Objectives:**

- Students will learn the effects of the invention of barbed wire on the cattle industry.
- Students will analyze one of the early patents for barbed wire.
- Students will consider the changes that can result from a new invention.

**Assessment:** The students will debate the use of barbed wire from the perspectives of settlers and cowboys on cattle drives. Students will complete the "Change Your World" worksheet.

## **Primary Materials:**

- Photographs of scenes of cowboys, barbed wire and other fenced areas and cattle.
- Joseph Glidden's Patent for Barbed Wire, Patent No. 157,124.
- Map of cattle drives during the late 1800s.

## Optional Resources:

- "Teaching with Documents Lesson Plan: Glidden's Patent Application for Barbed Wire" at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration site at [www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/barbed\\_wire\\_patent/barbed\\_wire\\_patent.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/barbed_wire_patent/barbed_wire_patent.html)
- "A Brief History of the Invention and Development of Barbed Wire" by the Devil's Rope Museum at [www.barbwiremuseum.com/barbedwirehistory.htm](http://www.barbwiremuseum.com/barbedwirehistory.htm)
- "The Historian's Sources" provided by the Library of Congress at [www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html](http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html)
- Books with photographs of cowboy life from the library for display and classroom use.

## Procedure:

Discuss with students how land is divided today, including what types of materials are used for fences. Examples include rock, brick, wood, chain link, shrubs, or other plants.

Review life in Oklahoma in the 1800s and remind students there were no fences on the open range. Remind students of Oklahoma's history and note that Oklahoma was not a state.

Explain how cattle were moved from Texas, through Oklahoma, to Kansas on cattle drives that took several months over the open range. As land was settled, owners began building fences to protect crops and livestock. This made cattle drives more difficult because cowboys would have to go around fenced property, which often included water and the best grazing land.

Lumber was expensive, so often fences were made of barbed wire. Barbed wire was inexpensive to purchase and easy to use. Animals who came in contact with barbed wire found it a painful experience. Some people protested the use of barbed wire because of the injuries to animals. This helped earn barbed wire the name "the devil's rope."

Present the Glidden patent for barbed wire. Patents at that time were filed with the U.S. Patent Office, now called the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. More than 500 patents have been filed for barbed wire. A patent provides exclusive rights to make, use, import, sell, and offer for sale an invention.

Divide students into 2 groups, settlers, and cowboys. Ask settlers to present reasons why they need to use barbed wire. Ask cowboys to talk about the difficulties barbed wire created during cattle drives. Have students consider alternatives and support their opinions with facts.

Have students consider the importance of inventions in their lives. Ask them to identify other inventions, such as automobiles, airplanes, and television that have changed our lives significantly. Ask students to identify inventions created in their lifetime. Have them discuss what inventions they think will be invented during the rest of their lives.

New inventions often lead to new technologies, create new jobs, and improve our quality of life. A patent helps an inventor to make money from the invention by allowing only the patentee or those who get permission to make, use, import, sell or offer to sell the invention. This protection encourages businesses and individuals to invest in research.

Discuss trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. Have students identify examples of each and explain why each is important.

Trademarks protect words, names, symbols, sounds, or colors that distinguish goods and services. The shape of the Coca-Cola bottle is a familiar trademark.

Copyrights protect works of authorship, such as writings, music, and works of art. The Library of Congress registers copyrights. Copyrights last for the life of the author plus 70 years. Books, video games, recordings of songs are all works that are copyrighted.

Trade secrets are information that companies keep a secret to give them an advantage over their competitors. The formula for Coca-Cola is a famous trade secret.

Have students complete the "Change Your World" worksheet.

### **Further Suggestions:**

- Have students prepare a drawing of their invention. Prepare a classroom display or book of the drawings and the descriptions of the inventions.
- Invite a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society to visit the classroom to talk about cowboy life in Oklahoma. Contact Mike Adkins, Director of Education, at [madkins@ok-history.mus.ok.us](mailto:madkins@ok-history.mus.ok.us) or 405-522-5248. OHS also offers a traveling trunk containing cowboy equipment that can be loaned to schools.
- Take a field trip to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. For more information, see [www.cowboyhalloffame.org/m\\_tour\\_el.html](http://www.cowboyhalloffame.org/m_tour_el.html). The Museum also has a traveling trunk of cowboy items. Contact Sue McCoy at 405-478-2250, Ext. 264 or [smccoy@nationalcowboymuseum.org](mailto:smccoy@nationalcowboymuseum.org).
- The Diamond R Ranch website, sponsored by the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, includes numerous cowboy activities for students such as games, songs, tours, exhibits, etc. Check it out at [www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/diamondr/index.html](http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/diamondr/index.html)
- Take a field trip to a local museum or historical society to see what types of primary source materials they include in their collection. If a visit is not possible, ask a staff member to visit the classroom to present information and encourage students to visit the museum or historical society. For more information about museums and historical sites, see the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreations Department's "What To Do" section of its website at [www.travelok.com/](http://www.travelok.com/).
- Invite a local inventor to speak to the class. You may find inventors by calling a local patent attorney or a local inventor's society. Also, some companies have a research and development department that will have a staff member who can visit the class.

# CHANGE YOUR WORLD INVENT SOMETHING!

If you could invent something to make your life easier, what would you invent? Follow these steps:

What problem will your invention solve?

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Describe your invention and how it will work. What will you name your invention?

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Answer these questions too. How will the invention be tested? Is it safe? Will it break easily? Will people use it? What will it cost to make?

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How will your invention affect others? Will other products or services become unnecessary?

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