

Learning About Cowboys Using Primary Sources

Grade Level: 4 – 5

Subjects: Social Studies, Information Literacy

Duration: 1 hour

Description: The purpose of this lesson is to make students aware of the various types of primary source documents that can be used to learn about the cowboy's way of life.

PASS—Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills

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| 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 5.1 | Identify major historical individuals, entrepreneurs, and groups, and describe their major contributions. (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) |
| Information Literacy 1.3 | Identify and use a range of information sources. |

Goals:

- Students will gain an appreciation of the cowboy way of life during long trail drives during the years of 1866 -1890.
- Students will be introduced to primary sources of information, such as photographs, diaries, letters, journals, etc.
- Students will gain appreciation for the unique perspective primary sources offer.

Objectives:

- Students will examine photographs and other primary resources related to cowboy life.
- Students will explain the significance of these documents to a researcher.
- Students will analyze and evaluate the documents.
- Students will learn the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Assessment: Students will complete the "Primary or Secondary Source" worksheet, analyze a photograph using the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet and answer questions about a newspaper article using the "Cowboys in the News" worksheet.

Primary Materials:

- Photographs of cowboys, their equipment and cattle.
- Classroom display of books with photographs of cowboy life.

Optional Resources:

- "Using Primary Sources in the Classroom" provided on The Learning Page by the Library of Congress at www.memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/primary.html
- "The Historian's Sources" provided by the Library of Congress at www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html
- "History of the Ranch Cattle Industry in Oklahoma" by Edward Everett Dale, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1920* (USGPO, 1925).
- "New Perspectives on the West" at www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/. Site includes timelines, maps, and additional lesson plans.

Procedure:

Have students discuss what they know about cowboys. Ask them how they know what they know. Have students list the various sources of information they use to learn about topics, such as books, diaries, letters, journals, speeches, interviews, oral histories, autobiographies, biographies, newspapers, television, magazines, the Internet, etc.

Distinguish between primary and secondary sources. Have students identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of each. Explain that some sources may include either primary or secondary information, such as a television report of an event after the fact or a newspaper report and interview with a participant in an event.

Primary sources, such as a letter or diary, offer an individual's unique thoughts and impressions about their experiences, not someone else's interpretation or analysis of them. Primary sources allow us to get close to a person or event and help us see and understand what happened from a particular perspective.

Present photographs of cowboys and cattle drives to the students or have students find photographs from books in the book display or library. Ask them to tell you what they see in the pictures. Use the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet. Also consider the following questions:

- What is the date of the photograph?
- Who created the photograph?
- Why was it created?
- Was this photograph posed or taken in a studio?
- Are there distinguishing marks on the photograph or captions with notes or dates?
- What does this photograph tell about the life of a cowboy?

Ask students if they think these photographs are an accurate representation of what was happening at the time they were taken. Ask students what questions they would want to ask the photographer or subjects.

Ask students to imagine what a cowboy's life was like in the time of the trail drives of the late 1800s. Have them name the different tasks cowboys might perform, such as riding, roping, branding, eating, sleeping, etc. Consider what types of primary sources a cowboy might have or create, such as a diary or letter, a photograph, a map or drawing, a receipt or bill of sale.

Have students discuss the information they could learn from these items, such as the cost of a product at a given time, the current style of clothing, or an individual's personal account and opinion about an important event. Ask student to identify places where they might find historical records in their community, such as a museum, historical society, or library.

Discuss what primary sources students have or create that provide clues about their lives. Examples include birth certificates, baby books, photographs, report cards, medical records, letters, emails, diaries- handwritten or on the Internet, etc. Consider what other evidence exists, such as items in their desk or objects in their house, such as trophies or art work. Have students discuss how people will know in 10 years or 100 years what happened today.

Ask students to identify organizations that create primary sources. Discuss with students the places in the community that keep records, both current and historical, such as city and county offices, schools, libraries, museums, businesses, newspapers, historical societies, etc.

Have students complete the "Primary or Secondary Source" worksheet. Note: Several of the items, can be either primary or secondary sources. Have students select a photograph about cowboys and complete the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet. Ask students to read the newspaper article and answer the questions on the "Cowboys in the News" worksheet.

Vocabulary:

Autobiography	The history of a person's life written by that person.
Biography	The history of a person's life written by another person.
Diary or Journal	A daily written record of a person's experiences and observations.
Cattle drive	The movement of a large group of cattle from Texas to Kansas in the late 1800s. Cattle were sold in Kansas, where the railroads were located, to meet the demand for beef back East. Cattle drives often took 2 – 3 months.
Cowboy	A young man, usually 15-25, that worked large numbers of cattle on cattle drives. One third of the early cowboys were Mexican or African American. Many were Native American, former soldiers or slaves.
Oral History	An interview with an individual who participated in or witnessed an important event. Interviews are often taped and transcribed.
Primary Source	An actual record that has survived the past, such as a diary, letter, photograph, film of an interview, etc. Primary sources may be published, such as books, advertisements or government reports or unpublished, such as personal letters, wills, deeds or report cards.
Secondary Source	A record that was created after an event occurred, such as a textbook or encyclopedia. Secondary sources often offer interpretation or analysis of events using information gathered from primary sources.

Further Suggestions:

- Ask students to select a family photograph, preferably one taken before they were born. Have them discuss the photograph with a family member using the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet as a guide.
- Invite a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society staff to visit the classroom to talk about cowboy life in Oklahoma. Contact Mike Adkins, Director of Education, at madkins@ok-history.mus.ok.us or 405-522-5248. A Cowboy traveling trunk is available for classroom use.
- Take a field trip to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. For more information, visit their website at www.cowboyhalloffame.org/m_tour_el.html or call 405-478-2250. A Cowboy traveling trunk is available for classroom use. Contact Sue McCoy at 405-478-2250, Ext. 264 or smccoy@nationalcowboymuseum.org.
- See lesson plans and other information from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom at www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/. Topics include Animals in Agriculture, Agriculture and the Environment, Food and Nutrition, and Agriculture in History.
- The Diamond R Ranch website, sponsored by the National Cowboy & 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.
- Take a field trip to a local museum or historical society to see what types of primary source materials are included in the 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 with their families. See the "What To Do" section of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department website for information about historic sites, landmarks and museums around the state at www.travelok.com/.
- Invite a rancher or cowboy to visit the class to talk about their work.

COWBOYS IN THE NEWS

EASTERN YOUTHS

WILL BE TAUGHT THE ART OF
ROPING STEERS ON THE MILLER RANCH

REGULAR COW-BOY LIFE

Young Men Will Be Camped Along the Arkansas River
and Eat From Tail End of Big Wagon

Special to The Oklahoman.

Guthrie, Okla., Dec. 26 —Joe Miller, manager of the "101" ranch in the Ponca country, states that great preparations are being made on the ranch for the entertainment of the eastern youths who will attend the "kindergarten" during the coming summer and learn what a real ranch is like and how to rope a steer, ride a broncho, and shoot straight enough to hit the bulls-eye. The Millers expect to "educate" four hundred such young men during the four months of next summer, or 100 each month. A majority of these will be scions of the wealthiest and best known families of the extreme east, from New York City, Philadelphia and Boston.

"We will furnish them a good mount and a blanket," said Mr. Miller, "and put them in camps down along the Arkansas river. We will let them sleep out of doors, eat from the tail-end of a big wagon, and live the regular cow-boy life, but of course, without much of the work of it, unless they really want to work; then they will be given all they want. We'll send some of the cowboys who are pretty good fellows—good story tellers and all that, over to take care of them, and have a cattle roundup once in a while for their benefit.

"We had a number of applications of that sort last summer, but didn't feel like doing anything of that kind then. Now we're going into it wholesale. The fellow that is rounding up this bunch has been taking a number of good fellows out to a ranch in Wyoming, but I think we can entertain them and give them enough of the real thing on the '101' as any place in the west."

The Millers expect to employ all their horses and cowboys in this line of work during next summer, and the cowboys themselves are expecting a regular circus of a time training the tenderfeet. Cowboys are coming into the "101" from all parts of the west to be assigned places on the faculty, and among those who will "teach" are several ex-Rough Riders and some of the champion ropers and riders of the country.

Read the newspaper article on the left, and answer the questions below.

What is the name of the newspaper that published the article?

When was the article published?

How many young men do the Millers expect to attend their camp?

What will the Millers provide the young men who attend the camp?

List 3 activities the young men will experience.

Who will provide the training?

Sources About Cowboys Primary or Secondary ? ? ?

Identify the following sources of information about cowboys as Primary or Secondary by circling the correct letter— P or S. Remember, some sources can be either primary or secondary.

- P S A cowboy's letter to his sweetheart.
- P S A biography of a cowboy.
- P S A photograph of a chuckwagon.
- P S An interview with a cowboy on television.
- P S An encyclopedia article about cowboys.
- P S A magazine article about the history of cowboys.
- P S A map of cattle drives from Texas to Kansas.
- P S An autobiography of a cowboy.
- P S A textbook about cowboys.
- P S A website about cowboys.
- P S A newspaper article about cowboys.

Explain why you might want to use a primary source to learn about a topic:

Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Select a photograph and look at it carefully. Answer as many of these questions as you can.

What is the subject of the photograph?

What activity or event is shown in the photograph?

When and where was the photograph taken? How can you tell?

Who are the people in the photograph? What can you tell about them from their clothing or their expressions? What relationship do the people seem to have with each other?

What do you think happened before the photograph was taken?

What do you think happened after the photograph was taken?

Why do you think this photograph was taken?

What question would you like to ask the photographer or the subjects?
