

The American Cowboy
8th Grade United States History
Jennifer Cunningham
Bartow Middle School

After the Civil War, many Americans began moving west looking to begin new lives. Among these settlers were young soldiers that had no skills other than fighting. The rough life of war prepared these young soldiers for life as a cowboy in the rapidly growing cattle industry.

Directions:

1. Analyze the documents and pictures below.
2. Answer the questions about each document.
3. Complete the Wrap-up Activity described here and at the end.

Imagine you own a cattle driving company in the year 1875. You are hiring cowboys to drive your cattle from Texas north to Kansas to be sold. Write a letter to be published in the local newspaper the Texas Daily persuading young soldiers to work for you as cowboys. Be sure to include information from the documents in your letter.

Document #1:

Read the following excerpt from *The American Cowboy* written by Jun Joseph Nimmo. Then answer the 4 questions below.

The life of the [cowboy](#) is always one of excitement and of romantic interest. His waking hours when riding on trail are spent in the saddle, and at night he makes his bed upon the lap of mother earth. The great herds which are yearly driven out of [Texas](#) to the northern ranges usually embrace from 2500 to 4000 young cattle each, and the movement has since its beginning, about eighteen years ago, amounted to about 4,000,000 head, worth nearly \$50,000,000. Each herd is placed in charge of a boss, with from eight to ten [cowboys](#), a provision wagon, and a cook. Four horses are supplied to each [cowboy](#), for the duty is an arduous one. The range cattle when away from their accustomed haunts are suspicious and excitable, and need to be managed with the greatest care to keep them from stampeding. When on trail they are close herded at nightfall, and all lie down within a space of about two acres. The [cowboys](#) then by watches ride around them all night long. The sensible presence of man appears to give the animals a feeling of security.

The American Cowboy was written for *Harper's Magazine* by Jun Joseph Nimmo, Volume 73, Issue 438, November 1886.

1. What does a cowboy do during his "waking hours?"
2. Where does a cowboy sleep at night?
3. How many cows are in a herd?
4. How many horses are supplied to each cowboy?

Document #2:

Read the poem *The Cowboy's Life* (from Jack Thorpe's *Songs of the Cowboys*, 1908). Then answer the questions below.

The bawl of a steer
To a cowboy's ear
Is music of sweetest strain;
And the yelping notes
Of the gray coyotes
To him are a glad refrain

And his jolly songs
Speed him along

And he thinks of the little gal
With golden hair
Who is waiting there
At the bars of the home corral.

For a kingly crown
IN the noisy town
His saddle he wouldn't change;
No life so free
As the life we see
Way out on the Yaso range.

His eyes are bright
And his heart as light
As the smoke of his [campfire];
There's never a care
For his soul to bear,
No trouble to make him fret.

The rapid beat
Of his bronco's feet
On the sod as he speeds along,
Keeps living time
To the ringing rhyme
Of his rollicking cowboy's song.

Hike it, cowboys,
For the range away
On the back of a bronc of steel,
With a careless flirt
Of the raw-hide quirt
And the dig of a roweled heel.

The winds may blow
And the thunder growl
Or the breeze may safely moan;
A cowboy's life
Is a royal life,
His saddle his kingly throne.
Saddle up, boys,
For the work is play
When love's in the cowboy's eyes,
When his heart is light
As the clouds of white
That swim in the summer's skies.

1. What is music to a cowboy's ear?
2. A cowboy would not change his saddle for what?
3. What kind of life is the cowboy's life?
4. How did the author of the poem feel about being a cowboy?
5. How does the poem make you feel about the life of a cowboy?

Document #3:

Read the recipes below. Think about the ingredients and directions.

Ash Cakes

- 1 cup white cornmeal
- 1/2 cup flour (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Water

Mix dry ingredients. Add enough cold water to make a firm dough. Form the dough into thin cakes. Clear coals from an area of the campfire and lay the cakes on the hot earth. Rake coals and ash over the cakes and let them bake for about five minutes. Test for doneness by thumping the cake with a spoon handle or stick. A hollow ringing sound indicates doneness.

Skirlie

- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 strips bacon
- 1/2 C oatmeal
- salt and pepper

Chop bacon into 1-inch chunks and fry. When grease coats the pan, add sliced onion. Cook until transparent. Add oatmeal to absorb the fat, keeping the mixture thick. Stir for 7-10 minutes, till cooked. Serve with mincemeat roasted poultry, or as a main dish when the larder is bare.

1. What do you notice about the ingredients?
2. Imagine eating the foods above for several days in a row. Would you like eating these foods? Explain your answer.



Document #4:

Analyze the Cattle Trails of the Western U.S. map to the left. Answer the questions below.

1. Where did the cattle trails start?
2. Name two cities the cattle were driven to?
3. What railroad were the two cities located on?
4. Why were the cattle taken cities located on railroads?
5. Why were the cattle taken past the Cheyenne Union Pacific Railroad as far north as the Dakota and Montana territories?

Document #5:

Analyze the photographs of the cowboys below. Pay close attention to the way the dress and the equipment they care. Also look closely at the cowboy at work.



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1. What do you notice about the cowboy's clothing?
2. How much equipment does he carry? He does he not have more luggage with him?
3. What is the cowboy in the picture on the right doing?
4. After view all the documents, what is your general impression of life as a cowboy?

Wrap-up Activity:

**Use the space below and the back of this page to complete the activity.
Correct grammar and structure are necessary.**

Imagine you own a cattle driving company in the year 1875. You are hiring cowboys to drive your cattle from Texas north to Kansas to be sold. Write a letter to be published in the local newspaper the Texas Daily persuading young soldiers to work for you as cowboys. Be sure to include information from at least 3 documents in your letter.

Documents	Number of Questions	Points Value	Total Points
"American Cowboy" excerpt	4	2	8
"Cowboy's Life" poem	5	2	10
Recipes	2	2	4
Cattle Trails Map	5	2	10
Photos	4	2	8
Total	20		40

Essay Requirements	Points Value
Responds to prompt thoroughly	20
Uses at least 3 documents	15
Correct sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, grammar	10
Total	45

Total DBQ	Points Value
Document Questions	40
Letter to Editor	45
Total	85