

The Cowboy's Gear

Grade Level: 4 - 5

Subject: Social Studies, Information Literacy, Language Arts

Duration: 1 hour

Description: The purpose of this lesson is to give students an awareness of cowboy life and the clothing and equipment he used.

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 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)

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-Writing/Grammar/Usage and Mechanics 3.4.a Create interesting sentences using words that describe, explain, or provide additional details and connections, such as adjectives, adverbs, appositives, participial phrases, prepositional phrases, and conjunctions. (Grade 4 - 5)

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

Goals: Students will gain knowledge of a cowboy's way of life by learning about clothing and equipment.

Objectives:

- Students will learn how a cowboy's work and environment affected his choice of clothing and equipment.
- Students will write an original story describing cowboy life.

Assessment:

Students will complete "A Cowboy's Gear" worksheet and crossword puzzle.

Students will write a brief story, including cowboy gear, using the "Four Part Story" worksheet.

Primary Materials:

- Photographs of cowboys, historic and current.
- *Storm and Stampede on the Chisholm*, Autobiography of Hubert E. Collins, published by University of Nebraska Press in 1998, page 36. Passage is included in the "A Cowboy's Gear" worksheet.
- Dictionaries for each student.
- Collection of non-fiction books with photographs of cowboys for students to use in class.

Additional Resources:

- *Cowboy: An Album* by Linda Granfield (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994).
- *Cowboy Gear: A Photographic Portrayal of the Early Cowboys and their Equipment* by David Stoecklein (Ketchum, ID: Dober Hill, Ltd., 1993).
- *The Cowboy at Work* by F. E. Ward (New York: Hastings House, 1976).
- History of the Stetson hat at www.stetsonhat.com/history.htm
- History of Levi Strauss blue jeans at www.levistrauss.com/about/history/jeans.htm

Procedure:

Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Provide students with photographs of cowboys and ask them to brainstorm what they know about cowboys. Have them create a list during 5 minutes of discussion. Compare the lists and ask students how they would learn more about cowboys and what resources they would use to gather this information.

Have students look at photographs of cowboys and identify each item of the cowboy's clothing and equipment. Discuss each item of the cowboy's clothing or equipment individually. Consider what purpose each item would have served on the early cattle drives from Texas to Kansas during the late 1800s. Note that cowboy clothing was designed to be sensible and sturdy.

Have students use a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words and have them find the origin of the word. Note that many of the words used to describe the cowboy's gear come from Spanish, such as chaps-from chaperejos, meaning leather leggings or lariat-from la reata, meaning the rope. Other words derived from Spanish frequently used by cowboys include: corral, lasso, pinto, ranch, remuda, rodeo, stampede, chili, and bronc.

Remind students that cattle drives often took several months and that cowboys needed to pack carefully. They had to consider what they might need for all types of weather. The land they traveled was sparsely populated, so they could not easily "stop by the store" to pick up what they needed.

Have the students complete "A Cowboy's Gear" worksheet and crossword puzzle.

Ask students to write a brief story using the "Four Part Story" worksheet. Encourage them to use as many descriptive words as possible. Share the stories with the class by reading them aloud or posting them on a bulletin board.

Cowboy Clothing and Equipment:

Hat	Hats are worn as a shade from the sun or an umbrella from the rain. They protect the head and the back of the neck. Hat styles have changed over the years. Brims and crowns vary in height and width. Styles vary from region to region as well. Hats may have a leather chin strap or strings with slides, known as "stampede strings," to keep them from blowing away in the wind. A cowboy might use his hat like a bucket for gathering water or food (for the cowboy or his horse), for fanning a fire, chasing flies, and covering his face while he sleeps. Many early cowboys wore hats made by John Stetson, who started his company in 1865. Hats are often made of felt or straw. Straw hats are worn in warm weather. Felt hats were made from wool or fur.
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Shirt	These were long-sleeved, made of cotton for summer or wool for winter. Long sleeves protected the arms. Early shirts had a button placket at the top of the shirt. Cowboys often wore their shirts buttoned up to the neck.
Underwear	Long johns or one piece underwear, covering the body from neck to ankles, were worn beneath clothing. They buttoned down the front and were worn during the day and at night.
Vest	Since shirts and pants often did not have pockets, cowboys wore vests with pockets for extra storage space for tobacco and money. Vests, which were often made of wool, provided an extra layer of clothing that helped keep the cowboy warm in cold weather.
Bandanna	A square piece of cloth, also called a neckerchief or face mop, that was folded in half into a triangle and tied to hang loosely around the neck. The cowboy could use the bandanna to protect his nose and mouth from dust and wipe his brow. In hot weather, he would wet the bandanna and use it to cool his neck or place it under his hat to cool his head. In case of injury or snake bite, it could be used as a bandage or a tourniquet. Bandannas originated in India and were first imported in the 1700s. Silk or cotton in solids or calico prints were popular fabrics. Bandits also used bandannas as masks.
Gloves	Made of leather, these protected the cowboy's hands from rope burns, blisters, hooves, horns and hot branding irons.
Pants	These were often made of canvas or wool and were usually brown, black or tan. Pants had one small waist pocket or no pockets. Pockets were not used because cowboys found it difficult to reach items in pockets and uncomfortable to sit in a saddle all day with full pockets. Denim work pants were used, but the pants we call jeans were not created until 1873, when a patent was received by Levi Strauss and his partner for the rivets used to strengthen the pants at the pockets and other points of strain. Pants were made to fit tight at the waist, so belts were not necessary.
Chaps	Leather leggings that were worn over pants for protection from rocks, branches, horns. They also helped to keep the cowboy warm in cold weather. There are several varieties of chaps. Shotgun chaps are made of leather and have narrow legs. Batwings are long chaps with wide legs. Woolies are long chaps made of Angora goat hair or sheep's wool.
Boots	Cowboys preferred boots over shoes because they provided better protection from brush, stickers, and rattlesnakes. Boots were made of leather and designed for riding. The narrow toe fit through the stirrup and the high heel kept the boot from sliding forward. Boots with higher heels kept the spurs clear of the ground. Boots often have "mule ears" or leather straps on the sides that make them easier to pull on. In the 1880s, a pair of boots might cost a cowboy \$10.00 - \$25.00. This was an expensive purchase, since the cowboy only made about \$30.00 per month. Cowboys "slept with their boots on" to be able to get on their horses quickly if there was a stampede.
Oil Skin Coat	This lightweight coat is also called a duster or a slicker. The coat provided protection from wind, rain, dust storms, etc. Dusters are long and are designed with a split up the back to be worn while riding. The coat was long enough to protect the rider and his horse.
Spurs	Spurs are made of a piece of U shaped metal that fits around the heel of a boot. Spurs are fastened with a leather strap across the front. The spurs have a small spiked wheel or star with dull edges, called a rowel. As the cowboy touches the horse, the rowel turns, but does not injure the horse. The cowboy uses his spurs to encourage the horse to go faster.

Quirt	A riding whip used to get the horse's attention. These were made of hand braided leather, rawhide, or horse hair.
Lariat	A long rope, also called a reata or lasso. Lariats were first made of braided rawhide or hemp. New ropes are often stiff and need to be "broken in." To make it easier to use a new rope, a cowboy might tie one end to his saddle horn and drag it on the ground for several days.
Saddlebags	A pair of pouches hanging across the back of a horse behind the saddle used to store food, utensils, extra clothing, pistol and bullets, medical supplies, tools for repairing equipment, books, money, maps, etc. These were made of leather and were closed and fastened with leather straps and metal buckles.
Canteen	A container for carrying drinking water for the cowboy and sometimes his horse. Canteens were made of metal, wood or animal skins covered with wool cloth or canvas.
Bedroll	A canvas covered blanket or quilt that served as a mattress. These were usually tied to the saddle during the day or carried in the chuck wagon. Cowboys often kept extra clothes in their bedroll.
Firearms	A short, light-weight rifle, also known as a carbine, might be carried on the saddle for use on the trail. The rifle would add up to 7 pounds to the saddle weight. Revolvers might be worn in a holster around the cowboy's waist. Because ammunition was expensive, cowboys avoided using these weapons when possible. Cowboys might also carry handguns, but handguns were only accurate at short distances.
Knife	A cowboy's knife consisted of a thin, sharp-edged metal blade with a handle.
Saddle	A wooden and leather seat placed on the back of a horse. Each saddle had a horn at the front that was used to tie one end of a rope. Saddles, like boots, were very expensive, costing a month's pay or more. At night, cowboys often used them as headrests while they slept. Saddles might last as long as 30 years and may weigh as much as 40 pounds. Because cowboys might ride up to 15 hours a day, it was important that the saddle be comfortable for both the cowboy and the horse.

Additional Suggestions:

- Invite a member of the Education Staff of the Oklahoma Historical Society to visit the class. Contact Mike Adkins at (405) 522-5248 to schedule a visit. OHS also has a traveling trunk containing equipment that cowboys used that can be sent to a school for a week at a time.
- Invite a local rancher to the classroom to discuss the life of today's cowboy.
- The Diamond R Ranch, sponsored by the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, website includes numerous cowboy activities for students such as games, songs, tours, exhibits, etc. Check it out at www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/diamondr/index.html.
- Plan a field trip to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. They offer the "Cowboy Lifestyle" tour. See www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/m_tour_el.html for more information. The Museum also has a traveling trunk of cowboy items. Contact Sue McCoy at 405-478-2250, Ext. 264 or smccoy@nationalcowboymuseum.org.
- Take a field trip to a local museum or historical society, such as the Chisholm Trail Historical Museum in Waurika, the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan, or the Chisholm Trail Museum in Kingfisher. 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/.
- Provide a saddle (or worksheet of a saddle) and discuss its parts.

A COWBOY'S GEAR

Read the following paragraph written by Hubert Collins. In his autobiography, *Storm and Stampede on the Chisholm*, he tells about moving as a young boy to the Red Fork Ranch on the banks of the Cimarron River in Indian Territory in 1883. Cowboys driving cattle along the Chisholm Trail would often camp near the ranch.

"Cattlemen and cow-boys, tall and short, were all thin, wiry, muscular specimens. Their complexions ranged through every shade and texture of leather. Every time cow-boys came into the store or rode by, I studied them and found their characteristics to be about as follows. There was a certain uniformity in their dress. All of them must have the best Stetson hats that money could buy. These were mostly gray in color, with a leather band. A dark flannel shirt open at the collar was surmounted by a neckerchief. This was knotted hard and had red for the predominating color. Jeans or trousers, buttoned tight about the hips, were tucked into high-heeled boots of the finest leather, with thin soles, and spurs fastened to the heels. Chaps were worn over the trousers and boots for protection from brush while riding. These were fastened loosely at the hips."

From the passage above, describe 3 ways all of the cowboys were similar:

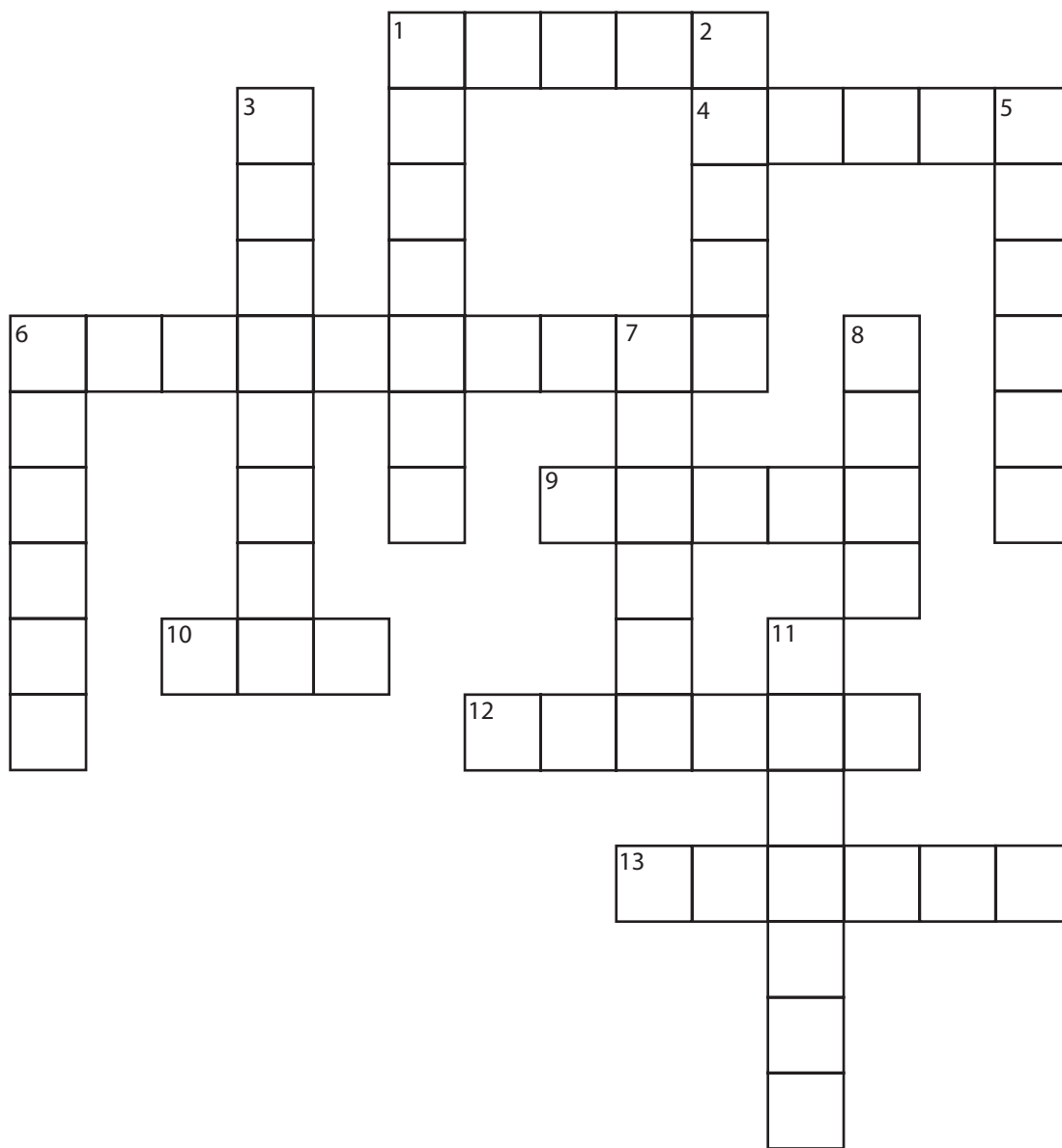
Bandanna is another word for _____

Another word for jeans or trousers is _____

Why would all cowboys wear the same types of clothing? _____

Why does a cowboy wear chaps over his pants? _____

A Cowboy's Gear Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1 Leather leggings worn over pants for protection.
- 4 Often called trousers or jeans.
- 6 A cowboy's luggage.
- 9 Better than shoes for protecting a cowboy's feet.
- 10 Provides protection from the sun and rain.
- 12 A coat split up the back so the cowboy could ride.
- 13 Cowboys used this for roping.

Down

- 1 Used to carry water between watering holes.
- 2 Used to get the horse's attention.
- 3 Protects the face from wind.
- 5 These were usually long-sleeved.
- 6 Might be used as a headrest at night.
- 7 Used to protect a cowboy's hands from rope burns and blisters.
- 8 Used to carry a cowboy's money.
- 11 Canvas covered blanket or quilt.

FOUR PART COWBOY STORIES

Choose and circle one item from each column.

Write a creative story—at least three paragraphs long—and include all four story items (subject, gear, action and description) as part of the story.

Be sure to give your story a title, and use as many descriptive words as you can as you write your story.

SUBJECT GEAR ACTION DESCRIPTION

cowboy	hat	bitten by a snake	in the river
wrangler	vest	stampede	at midnight
thirty cowboys	pants	singing by the fire	during the sunset
herd of cattle	boots	riding a horse	stuck in the mud
trail boss	bandanna	chasing a stray	on the prairie
cook	shirt	eating beans	in the rain
cow	chaps	branding a cow	a mile from camp
rancher	gloves	making biscuits	early one morning
three horses	canteen	drinking coffee	in a hailstorm
two cowboys	bedroll	playing a fiddle	at the water hole
flock of birds	saddle	taking a bath	on the trail
rattlesnake	lariat	driving cattle	by the river
coyote	spurs	sleeping by the fire	in the wagon
horse	saddlebags	watching a hawk	during a dust storm