

Section

3

Ranches, Ranchers, and Cowboys

Main Ideas

1. Ranching was a major industry in both South Texas and in the Panhandle.
2. Cowboys and ranchers had to fill many roles on a ranch.
3. Western novels and shows helped spread the myths of a carefree cowboy life.

Why It Matters Today

Cowboys worked hard on Texas ranches. Use current events sources to learn more about modern-day cowboys or other farmworkers.

Key Terms and People

- Cattle Kingdom
- King Ranch
- windmills
- JA Ranch
- XIT Ranch

The Story Continues

Molly Goodnight, the wife of Texas rancher Charles Goodnight, loved to entertain. But visitors were rare on the isolated JA Ranch in the Panhandle. One evening a visiting cowboy brought three live chickens as a gift. He wanted Mrs. Goodnight to cook them, but she decided to keep them as pets. In a letter to her sister, she wrote, “You’ve no idea how much company a chicken can be.”



TEKS: 6A, 6B, 9B, 10A, 10B, 19C, 20C, 21A, 21B, 22A, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on ranching and cowboy culture in Texas.



Ranching in South Texas

During the 1800s the cattle ranches that arose on the open range from Texas to Canada formed the **Cattle Kingdom**. The **King Ranch** in South Texas was one of the most important cattle operations in the state. Richard King and Gideon Lewis established the ranch in Nueces County in the early 1850s. King died in 1885, leaving his wife to run the ranch.

Henrietta King and her son-in-law, Robert Kleberg, built the King Ranch into a thriving operation. By 1925 it included more than 1 million acres of land. King used her wealth to develop South Texas. She gave land for the towns of Kingsville and Raymondville, and she donated land and money for churches and schools. King also helped establish Texas A&M University–Kingsville.

★ Texas Cities ★



Amarillo and Lubbock

History: Businesspeople established Amarillo in 1887. It boomed as a large cattle-shipping location. Ranchers and farmers settled the general area of present-day Lubbock in the 1870s. The town was formed in 1890.

Amarillo population in 2012: 195,250 (est.)

Lubbock population in 2012: 236,065 (est.)

Relative location: Northwest Texas

Region: Panhandle

County: Amarillo is the county seat of Potter County, and Lubbock is the county seat of Lubbock County.

Origin of Name: Spanish herders called the area Amarillo *amarillo*, or “yellow,” to describe the local soil and flowers. The county of Lubbock was founded in 1876 and named for Thomas S. Lubbock, a Texas Ranger and Civil War veteran.

Economy: Amarillo relies on ranching, oil, and manufacturing. Lubbock has industrial, technological, and agricultural businesses. Lubbock is the home of Texas Tech University. Lubbock is also a leading cotton producer.



Other large ranches developed in South Texas, where the climate was well suited to cattle ranching. Manuel Guerra owned a large ranch in Starr County. Like King and other big ranchers, Guerra was an important leader in South Texas. Another successful South Texas rancher, Margaret Borland, owned more than 10,000 cattle by 1873. That same year she led a trail drive to Kansas. Borland is believed to be the only woman ever to head up a trail drive.

Reading Check Analyzing Information How did cattle ranchers like Henrietta King affect the social development of Texas towns?

★ Ranches in the Panhandle

By the early 1880s cattle ranching was a thriving and profitable industry in many parts of Texas. As Plains Indians were removed from West Texas, the Panhandle was opened up for ranching. The grass that covered the plains provided plenty of food for the cattle. In addition, the region’s flat open land was well suited for cattle ranching because it allowed ranchers to keep close watch on the livestock. Although there were not enough rivers to water the cattle, the Ogallala Aquifer lay underneath the region. Ranchers adapted to the environment by using **windmills** to reach this huge supply of water. Windmills operate on a simple principle. The wind blows against a vane that turns the blades into the breeze. The wind then hits the blades, creating power to operate a pump. This power brings underground water to the surface.

In the mid-1870s Charles Goodnight and John Adair established one of the first ranches in the Panhandle—the **JA Ranch** in Palo Duro Canyon. Goodnight and Adair had moved their herd into the canyon soon after Colonel Ranald Mackenzie and his forces cleared out the Comanches and Kiowas during the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon in 1874.

Palo Duro Canyon had a good supply of grass and offered shelter from the harsh winds that swept across the region. The JA Ranch became large and successful. By the mid-1880s it covered more than 700,000 acres and supported about 40,000 cattle. Other pioneers also established ranches in the Panhandle. Thomas Sherman Bugbee built the Quarter Circle T Ranch in

Hutchinson County. Another large ranch, the Matador, was founded in 1878. These ranches helped bring prosperity to the Panhandle.

Corporations, often funded by investors from the northern United States and from Great Britain, moved into the Panhandle along with the ranchers. The **XIT Ranch** was established in 1885 when the state gave the land to the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company. This company was funded by investors from Chicago and Britain. In return, the investors agreed to construct a new state capitol building to replace the one that had burned in 1881. The new capitol was completed in Austin in 1888 and is still the seat of Texas government.

Over time, the XIT Ranch became one of the largest and most famous ranches in Texas. The XIT covered about 3 million acres, extending nearly 200 miles along the Texas–New Mexico border—an area almost the size of Connecticut. At its peak, the XIT employed about 150 cowboys to care for roughly 150,000 cattle.

Reading Check Summarizing Why did ranching develop in the Panhandle, and what are some of ranching’s political legacies?

That’s Interesting!

The XIT Ranch

The ranch took its name from the XIT brand that a drover created. The block letters made it difficult for cattle rustlers to change. Some people disagree with this story about the ranch’s name, however. They claim—because the roman numeral X stands for 10—that XIT stood for “ten In Texas,” or the 10 counties that contained the ranchland. Other people argue that it stood for “biggest in Texas.”

★ Ranchers and Cowboys

Most Texas ranches were located far from towns. Ranchers had to rely on their own resources to solve the many challenges they faced. Mary Jaques outlined the skills needed by ranchers. “The ideal ranchman must be butcher, baker, carpenter, . . . blacksmith, plain cook, milker.” Female ranchers handled many tasks. In addition to herding and branding livestock, they raised children and operated households. Mrs. C. C. West helped manage a sheep ranch in West Texas. She remembered “living under a tree, herding sheep with my babe in my arms and using one big skillet for a whole kitchen outfit.”



Image Credit: E.E. Smith Photo Collection, Library of Congress

Interpreting Visuals

Ranch life. Cowboys who worked on Texas ranches had many jobs, including training horses and branding cattle. **What traditional cowboy clothing are these ranch workers wearing?**

CONNECTING TO

The Arts

Western Artists

In this painting, *Roping a Steer*, artist and former cowboy Edward Borein shows a cowboy at work. Roping cattle was an essential skill for cowboys.

How does this painting capture the difficulty of roping a running steer?



Ranchers could never have succeeded without cowboys, who did countless daily tasks on the ranches. Most cowboys were young men, and many were Mexican American or African American. One cowboy remembered his ranch crew. “There were about 50 cowboys at the head-quarter ranch; a few Mexicans, and a few [African Americans] among them.” Although they sometimes faced discrimination, some African American cowboys went on to own their own ranches and farms. For example, Bose Ikard supervised trail drives and directed some of the operations at Charles Goodnight’s ranch. He eventually bought land in Parker County. African American Daniel W. Wallace went on many trail drives as a teenager. Even as a young cowboy, Wallace carefully saved and managed his earnings. He eventually bought a ranch that covered at least 1,200 acres and included some 500 head of cattle.

Texas cowboys wore clothes and used tools that were suited to the state’s environment. Some cowboys wore the familiar cowboy hat, while others wore the vaqueros’ broad felt hat. Many cowboys wore sombreros to protect themselves from the harsh sunlight and rain. Cowboys relied on leather chaps, from the Spanish *chaparreras*, worn over their pants to protect them from thorny brushes. All cowboys used a long light rope called a lariat, from the Spanish *la reata*. Cowboys sometimes called their ropes “lassos” instead of lariats. The word *lasso* came from the Spanish word *lazo*. These and other terms reflect the Spanish heritage of ranching in Texas.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea Identify examples of Spanish influence on vocabulary that originated in Texas cattle ranching.



VIDEO

Cowboy Tech

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Image Credit: ©Christie's Images/Corbis

★ Cowboy Culture

Over time, cowboys became an important part of American popular culture. Inexpensive novels featured countless cowboy heroes such as Arizona Joe, Denver Dan, and Fancy Frank. The novels glorified cowboy life. Wild West shows were also popular, using colorful posters to attract large crowds. Some people believed that western novels and shows accurately portrayed cowboy life. According to the myths, cowboys were fearless, happy, and worry free. They spent their days roaming through rugged but gorgeous landscapes.

The realities of cowboy life were far different from the myths. Cowboys faced many dangers, including blizzards, floods, and stampedes. These hazards injured and killed many cowboys. Cowboys also worked hard for hours on end. During trail drives, some cowboys rode 24 hours at a stretch and slept in their saddles. For their work most cowboys earned salaries of about \$300 per year. Cowboy Charles Siringo worked for the Rancho Grande Company for two years without receiving a regular paycheck. After subtracting his purchases at the ranch store, he earned just 75 cents for two years. Some, like Siringo, found it very difficult to make ends meet after buying what they needed for work.

TEXAS VOICES

“We had unlimited credit at the company store. My credit was stretched almost to the breaking point in purchasing a cowboy outfit, such as saddle, bridle, spurs, pistol, bowie-knife, bedding, sombrero, silk handkerchiefs, slicker, high-heel boots, etc.”

—Charles Siringo, *A Lone Star Cowboy*

Reading Check Contrasting How did the myths differ from the realities of the cowboy way of life?

CONNECTING TO

Music

Cowboy Songs

Cattle were nervous creatures, particularly at night, so cowboys sang to help keep them calm and peaceful. Some trail bosses even auditioned cowboys before hiring them. Cowboy songs were often slow and sad. Cattle seemed to like these soothing tunes. “The Old Chisholm Trail” was one popular song.

“I’m up in the mornin’
afore daylight
And afore I sleep the
moon shines bright.
Oh, it’s bacon and beans
most every day—
I’d as soon be a-eatin’
prairie hay.”

Why might the “The Old Chisholm Trail” have been soothing to cowboys as well as their cattle?



Section 3 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- windmills

2. Identify and explain

the historical significance of:

- Cattle Kingdom
- King Ranch
- JA Ranch
- XIT Ranch

3. Categorizing

Use a graphic organizer to identify some of the myths and realities of cowboy life that became part of Texas culture.

Myths

Realities

4. Finding the Main Idea

- In what parts of the state was ranching a big industry, and why did ranches develop there?
- List examples of the Spanish influence on vocabulary related to cattle ranching in Texas.

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Analyzing Information Write an advertisement that encourages ranchers to establish operations in the Panhandle.

Consider the following:

- the availability of land and water
- innovations such as the windmill