

Home on the Range

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Introduction: The cowboys' life was a solitary one. On the western range, most cowboys were young, unmarried rovers. The ranch bunkhouse provided a base camp for the cowboys and became their home. During roundups, the chuck wagon served the same purpose. The bunkhouse and chuck wagon developed the cowboy's sense of belonging to the ranch community.

Suggested Grade Level: 7th and 8th

Theme: The historical integrity and intactness of Grant-Kohrs Ranch facilitates a deeper understanding of the myths and realities of cattle ranching and the American West.

Montana Content Standards:

Social Studies Content # 1: Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

Social Studies Content # 3: Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

Social Studies Content #6: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

Goals:

1. Students will appreciate the importance of the bunkhouse and the chuck wagon to the cowboys' way of life.
2. Students will develop an understanding of the necessity of feeding the cowhands well for the success of the cattle ranching.
3. Students will realize the varied skills required of a cook keeping the cowboys on the job.

Objectives:

1. Students will define the vocabulary related to the bunkhouse and chuck wagon.
2. Students will relay the staples needed to cook for many men on a ranch.
3. Students will compare and contrast the bunkhouse and chuck wagon in relation to the emotional and physical needs of the cowboy.

Objects:

Apron, rolling pin, ladle, coffee pot, tin plate and cup, potato sacks, sugar bags, and coffee bags

Vocabulary:

1. Arbuckles: popular brand of coffee, which cowboys drank on the trail or ranch; many cowboys referred to all coffee as Arbuckles.
2. beans: common part of the cowboy's diet, whether for breakfast, lunch or supper.
3. bedroll: bedding that is rolled up for carrying on horseback or in the chuck wagon or hoodlum wagon or stored in the bunkhouse.
4. biscuits: a popular food item cooked in the bunkhouse or along the trail, the cook placed sourdough in a cast iron "Dutch oven" and covered it with hot coals to cook.
5. boot: box attached to the underside of a chuck wagon, which was used to hold pots and skillets.

6. bunkhouse: a building on the ranch where the cowboys resided when not working. The Grant-Kohrs bunkhouse consisted of a kitchen, dining room, social room, sleeping quarters.
7. caboose: a side of dried cowhide, slung like a hammock, underneath the wagon to hold kindling.
7. chew: tobacco used for chewing or as a medical staple. It could be used to treat cuts or, when applied to the eyes, helped keep the tired cowhands awake
8. chuck wagon: the wagon, driven by the cook on the roundup. It was in this wagon that all of the meals were prepared and much of the equipment stored.
9. cowboy: a young man, usually 17-25 years of age, who worked large numbers of cattle.
10. cow chip: pieces or rounds of dried cow dung used as fuel by the chuck cook. (some times referred to as cow pies)
11. chuck wagon: reinforced wagon with a chuck box on back and pulled by horses during a round-up; credit for invention of the wagon is given to cattle pioneer, Charles Goodnight.
12. chuck: a portion of a side of dressed beef; generally, the food on a round up.
13. cobbler: a favorite dessert of cowboys on the trail or ranch.
14. coffee: staple of the cowboy's diet, the drink was made very strong; often it was referred to as Arbuckle's, which was a popular brand during the days of the trail drives and afterward.
15. coffee mill: rotary device used to grind coffee beans or nuts.
16. cookie: name used for the cook. He was often paid more than other cowboys. He drove the chuck wagon and selected campsites. In addition to his cooking duties, he often was called upon to act as banker, barber, dentist, doctor, grave digger, and mediator.
17. Dutch oven: iron kettle for baking, with a rimmed cover to hold burning coals; often used by trail cooks for biscuits and cobblers.
18. hunker down: the position cowboys used to eat, by squatting on the ground.
19. jerky: dried and seasoned meat, usually beef, which was easily carried by cowboys on long trail drives as a snack or when a cooked meal was unavailable.
20. liniment: an oil applied to skin rashes caused by heat and friction like those caused from long stretches in the saddle.
21. dining room: place where the cowboys ate, sometimes part of the bunkhouse.
22. staples: major types of food taken by the cook in the chuck wagon such as beans, coffee, flour, lard, rice, water.
23. starter keg: ceramic pot used to store the sourdough starter.

Activity 1:

Students will match vocabulary to definitions through a "Make A Match" game.

Materials:

vocabulary list, note cards, sentence strips, marker, dictionary

Method:

1. Convey the need to develop the group's base knowledge of ranching terminology.
2. Write each vocabulary word on a note card and its' definition on a sentence strip. Pass out word cards and their definition strips to entire group. One to each member of the group.
3. Instruct the group to move about the room until each word is matched to its' definition.
4. Each pair will share with the group their match. A brief discussion of the term should relate any prior knowledge of the group.
5. Continue until all vocabulary have been identified. If any words cannot be defined by the group or in a dictionary, share all information available to gain understanding.

Activity 2:

Students will gather staples and supplies to be into chuck wagon for the spring roundup.

Materials:

sacks, flour, sugar, beans, lard, bacon, yeast, rice, dried fruit, assorted spices, onions, potatoes, whole coffee beans, tobacco, salt, molasses, horse liniment, castor oil, medicinal whiskey, coffee grinder, cooking utensils, pot hooks, pot rack, tin cups, tin plates, pots, skillets, Dutch oven, sourdough starter keg, wash basin, wash tub, metal bucket, ax, dinner triangle, shovel, ropes, stake pins, water barrel, coal oil lantern, kindling, clock, men's bedrolls, straight edge razors, sewing kit, cotton cloths

Method:

1. Label several cardboard boxes as the chuck box. Into these boxes pack: spices, flour, sugar, dried fruit, beans, rice, yeast, molasses, onions, potatoes, lard, bacon, coffee beans, tobacco. Pack into other boxes iron forks, spoons, knives, ladles, tin plates, and tin cups. Pack into another box called the "possible drawer:" castor oil, horse liniment, razors, medicinal whiskey, a sewing kit.
2. Label another box the boot. Place into this box: pots, pot hooks, pot racks, skillets.
3. Label another box under chuck wagon. Pack into this box: large pots and Dutch oven.
4. Label another box left side of chuck wagon. Pack into this box: coffee grinder, water barrel, and ropes.
5. Label another box right side of chuck wagon. Pack into this box: lantern, wash tub, and wash basin.
6. Label another box wagon floor. Pack into this box: ax, shovel, stake pins, men's bedrolls, cotton cloths, dinner triangle, sourdough starter keg next to the cook on the bench on the front of the chuck wagon.
7. Label another box as the caboose. Pack into this box the kindling.

Activity 3:

Compare and contrast, through the use of a vend diagram, how chuck wagons and bunkhouses met the emotional and physical needs of the cowboys.

Materials:

See resource list

Method:

1. Divide the class into 2 groups; Chuck wagons and bunkhouses
2. Instruct each group to brainstorm and research its' topic with resources available.
3. Invite each group to present its' findings to the class.
4. Using a vend diagram on the board, compare and contrast how the chuck wagon and bunkhouse met the needs of the cowboy.

Extension Activities:

1. Making sourdough biscuits
2. Making spotted pup
3. Make cow chips (no bake cookies)
4. Use a picture of a wheel with spokes to teach the different roles the cook played in the lives of the cowboys (i.e. barber, dentist, counselor, banker, mediator, doctor).
5. Students will write a journal entitled "A Day in the Life of a Ranch Cook."

Resources:

<http://www.phudpucker.com/bluebonn/chuck%20wagon.htm>

http://www.lonehand.com/chuckwagon_central.htm

Books:

Freedman, Russell, Cowboys of the Wild West, Clarion Books, New York, New York, 1985.
Helberg, Kristen. Cowboys, Troubador Press, Los Angeles, Cal. 1982.
Kalman, Bobby. Life On The Trail, Crabtree Publishing Co., New York, New York, 1999.

Recipes:

No Bake Clusters

½ cup butter
4 T. cocoa
½ cup milk
2 cups sugar

Mix in a saucepan and boil for 1 ½ minutes. Remove from heat and add:
½ cup peanut butter, 3 cups oats, ½ cup coconut, and ½ cup chopped walnuts. Drop onto waxed paper.

Spotted Pup

4 cups white rice
1 quart water
1 quart milk
1 cup raisins

Mix all ingredients in a Dutch oven and cook over fire until rice is fluffy. Serve warm or cold.