



***Teaching with Museum Collections***  
**Lesson Plan**  
**A Brand is Forever**

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❑ **Overview of the *Teaching with Museum Collections* initiative**

The National Park Service [NPS] *Teaching with Museum Collections [TMC]* introduces lesson plans for teachers to use NPS museum collections in student-centered activities. NPS museum collections tell the story of America, its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. Collections are located in the very places where people and events shaped the nation's history and environment. *TMC* emphasizes the links between the 'real things;' the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. NPS collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens and archival documents and photographs. *TMC* lesson plans contribute student-centered learning while increasing understanding of park themes and resources. *TMC* has the potential to be incorporated into over 320 NPS sites. Lesson plans will be developed for history, social studies, math, and language and visual arts. They will be linked to national education standards.

**Lesson Plan Elements**

❑ **Title: A Brand is Forever**

- Lesson "A brand is a cow's only return address."
- By Karin Flint Linda, Giammona-Eggers, Wilma Tabaracci

❑ **Grade Level: Middle School**

❑ **Lesson length: 1-5 days**

❑ **Overview of Object-based Lesson Plan**

- *Topic:* Cattle Branding.
- *Park:* This lesson plan was developed using Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site collections.
- *Goal:* Teach students about branding cattle on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch, Montana.

▪ *Background and Context*

"For at least 4,000 years man has marked cattle with red-hot branding irons to prove his ownership. Literally millions of designs have been originated-some romantic, some dignified, some even comical-to distinguish herds. And there have been the robbers of the ranges, the despicable cattle rustlers, gifted at altering brands and claiming the cattle as their own. Some of the rawest stories to come out of the West deal with the crime of cattle rustling, when men often "shot out" justice. There is a true story behind every brand, frequently a tragedy, a comedy, a



tender romance, more often a proclamation of hope.” (From *Irons in the Fire-Cattle Brand Lore* by Oren Arnold)

❑ **National Educational Standards**

Thematic Standards

- Culture and Cultural Diversity
- Time, Continuity and Change
- Individual, Development and Identity
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Science, Technology, and Society

Disciplinary Standards

- History
- Geography

Pedagogical Standards

- Learning and Development
- Differences in Learning Styles
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Performance Skills
- Active Learning and Motivation
- Inquiry, Collaboration, and Supportive Classroom Interaction
- Planning Instruction
- Assessment
- Reflection and Professional Growth
- Professional Leadership

Montana Standards

- Social Studies Content Standard 1: Students access, synthesize and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.
- Social Studies Content Standard 4: Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

❑ **Student Learning Objectives**

- Learn the history of branding
- Read, understand and identify various brands
- Create their own cattle brand
- Listen to stories and songs from the “Cowboy Era”

❑ **Materials: Museum Collections and Similar Non-Museum Objects**

- Branding Irons, Official Brand Certificates.
- Photos of branding, branding books, branding stove, film footage of Cattle and Branding
- Brand That Critter handout, Cow handout, Bingo handout, Branding Symbol handouts, bag(s) of small plastic farm animals, pipe cleaner OR hangars OR paperclips, tempera paint.
- Books:
  - Duncan Emrich. *The Cowboy’s Own Brand Book*



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- Andy Adams. *The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days*
- Oren Arnold. *Irons in the Fire-Cattle Brand Lore*
- CDs: Yodel the Cowboy Way with Riders in the Sky, 1998 (Rounder Records Corp. One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140),
- Cattle Call: Early Cowboy Music and its Roots, 1996 (Rounder Records Corp., One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140).
- VHS Movies: “The Cowboy” (starring John Wayne, Warner Bros. Westerns, A Mark Rydell Film), “The Scarlet Brand” (1932 starring Bob Custer, director: JP McGowan), “Vengeance of Rannah” (1936 Bob Custer)

□ **Vocabulary**

Create a word/concept list with students as lesson unfolds. Post the list on large chart in the classroom. Write definitions with student input as words come into use during the lesson.

□ **Lesson Implementation and Procedures**

1. Anticipatory Set(s). Teacher opens lesson with a review of open range philosophy (no fences). Divide class into 4 or 5 groups (dependent on number of bags of plastic cows). Hand out plastic farm cows to groups of students. Have students count, manipulate and divide cattle into groups. Then have the students place the cattle back into the bag. Play “That’s My Cow.”  
Ask students to: Select their cattle from the bag. How can they identify their cattle from the others in the group? How might cowboys identify cattle from their operation? What problems or concerns surface?  
Music from CDs  
Yodel the Cowboy Way with Riders in the Sky  
Cattle Call: Early Cowboy Music and its Roots
2. Present history of brands through lecture OR “Jigsaw”  
Nobody knows just when or where branding originated. The University of Chicago has done research that proves that branding was done 2,000 years before Christ. Tombs in Egypt show ancient brands along with the actual work of branding. The only difference is that the costume of the “cowboy” is quite different. Mostly the name or sign of some god seems to have been chosen for the brand, but there were temple symbols used as brands and one ox pictured has a number 43 on its rump.  
Elsewhere it can be found that early Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, and others fire-branded criminals and slaves. During the same time periods, there is evidence that branding livestock was a common practice. There is biblical evidence that Jacob branded his livestock. Chinese ideographs have been branded on animals so long that probably even Confucius could not have said when the practice started. The crossed hammers of Solingen was burned on animals and stamped on swords in the Middle Ages.

Hernando Cortez brought the first branding irons to the new World. He didn't need to because there were no cattle or horses on this continent at that time. In 1540, Coronado came to what is now Arizona with branded cattle. Later, the Yankee showed his face and due to practical necessity brands were called for and used.



### Branding at Grant –Kohrs Ranch

The history of branding on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch in the Deer Lodge Valley of what is now Montana began in the 1860's with Johnny Grant. Grant used a lower case " " to brand his cattle. Today it might be considered a C, hanging J, as lower case letters are not used in branding. The "g" was probably the first brand used in the Deer Lodge Valley. However, it was by no means the first one in Montana, whatever claims Grant may have to running the first "real" ranch in the Territory. The Mission Cross was used in Montana in the 1830's, and was probably the first in the Territory." (Meikle, 1983)

Conrad Kohrs used a number of different brands, including CK, Y, and K. Today, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch uses the G brand, known as the lazy G, hanging K.

"The peculiar circumstances in his nation, however, foreordained the biggest and altogether greatest cattle enterprise in the history of the world, created a new man - the cowboy - and lifted branding from a mere tagging to a boast of heraldry." (Arnold, p.29)

3. Teach students how to read and create brands.
  - Show brand pictures & demonstrate on board
  - Vocabulary handout ([LINK](#) to handout)
  - The Cowboy's Own Brand Book
  - Websites: [cowboyshowcase.com/brands.htm](http://cowboyshowcase.com/brands.htm)
  - [Barbwiremuseum.com/cattlebrandhistory.htm](http://Barbwiremuseum.com/cattlebrandhistory.htm)
4. Practice Sheet ([LINK](#))
5. Students will create their own brands.
6. Teacher begins lesson by reading Chapter VII "The Colorado" from *The Log of Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days* by Andy Adams.
7. Present information on Rustlers.

Rustlers, of course, had no brands of their own to start with. They simply changed other brands until they were recognizable, and called them their own. They would use a running iron and build on to already existing brands. If a rustler lived near two ranches, and one of the ranches had a Chair brand and the second had an Eleven brand, he could change these brands into a Rocking Chair brand with few lines. Following is an example of how the change was actually done. *Chair Rocking Chair Eleven Rocking Chair* (Emrich, 1954)
8. Students will exchange personal brand papers to
  - identify and read partner's brand
  - attempt to alter the brand as a rustler
9. Form personal brands using pipe cleaners
10. Using tempera paint, brand cattle



11. Closure: Show a scene of a branding from classic cowboy movie. Suggested movies: “The Cowboy,” “The Scarlet Brand” 1932, “Vengeance of Rannah” 1936, Video Clip from Grant-Kohrs Ranch available in the spring 2004

❑ **Evaluation/assessment for Measurable Results**

- Students will be able to identify the components of the history of branding.
- Students will share and explain their brands.

❑ **Extension and enrichment activities**

Follow-up Activities:

- Research: Branding cattle or livestock; today vs. yesterday
- Blacksmiths: 3 types; tools
- Number of brands in your state
- Cost of branding today vs. yesterday
- Stories behind the brand
- Family brands
- Procedures used on cattle at the Roundup
- Invite a Brand Inspector in to discuss aspects of the job
- Invite a ranching family to come into the classroom to share branding stories and expertise
- Explore Brand Certificates-Grant Khors Ranch
- Play Brand Bingo-bank included
- Students write in brands as directed
- Take virtual tour of a branding
- Write a short story about the history of brands
- Write a short story explaining the reasons behind their brand
- Attend a branding
- Create a Venn Diagram comparing Roundups of the pas to today

❑ **Resources**

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