

# Stick Horse Rodeo

## Background

Rodeo comes from the Spanish word "rodear" which means "to encircle or to surround." To the Spanish in New Spain (now Mexico) in the mid-16th century, a rodeo was simply a cattle roundup.

It's hard to say when rodeos began. Cowboys working on the ranches would compete against one another at roundups and during their free time. Who could rope a calf the fastest? Who could stay on a bucking bronc the longest? Who could perform fancy tricks while riding a horse at full speed?

In the American West, cowboys were responsible for getting huge cattle herds across the open range from ranches in the west to stockyards in Missouri and Kansas, where the nearest trains were available. From there the cattle went by train to slaughter houses in Chicago.

Once the ranges were fenced, many cowboys were out of work. The Wild West shows gave them a place to show their skills and pick up some pay. Soon rodeos or cowboy contests became part of Western county fairs. Contestants traveled from one competition to another. Some cowboys became rodeo stars, and, later, movie stars. Today rodeo cowboys are professional athletes who compete for a living.

## Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background,.
2. Provide students copies of the explanations of rodeo events included with this lesson.
  - Students will read the information independently or as a class.
  - Student will each select one of the events and develop a poster to illustrate the event and advertise a rodeo.
3. Students will make a book as a class illustrating what they have learned about cowboys.

## Visual Arts

1. Students will make stick horses and western vests to prepare for a rodeo. Students may cut out and use the horse head pattern provided or draw their own horse heads.
2. Students will decorate brown lunch bags to serve as "saddle bags."
  - Provide an assortment of ingredients for trail mix—mini-pretzels, raisins, peanuts, chex cereal, etc.
  - Students will choose what they want in their trail mix.

## P.A.S.S.

### PRE-KINDERGARTEN

**Creative Skills**—1.1,5

**Oral Language**—1.2

**Large Motor**—1.1,4,6

**Small Motor**—2.1

### KINDERGARTEN

**Reading**—1.1,4

**Large Motor**—1.1,3

**Small Motor**—1.1

**Visual Arts**—3.1,2

### GRADE 1

**Reading**—6.3c

**Visual Arts**—3.2

**PE**—1.1,3; 2.1,2

### GRADE 2

**Reading**—7.1

**Visual Arts**—3.2

**PE**—1.1; 2.1,2

### GRADE 3

**Reading**—3.2; 4.1a,2c; 6.1

**Visual Literacy**—3

**Visual Arts**—3.2

**PE**—1.1,3

### GRADE 4

**Reading**—2.2; 3.1b,2d; 5.1

**Visual Literacy**—3

**Visual Arts**—3.2

**PE**—1.1

### GRADE 5

**Reading**—2.2; 3.1b; 5.1

**Visual Literacy**—3

**Visual Arts**—3.1

**PE**—1.1,2

## Materials

- large brown paper bags (2 per student)
- tape, stapler, hole punch, markers, tissue paper, string
- cardboard wrapping paper tubes (1 per student)
- 3 large coffee cans (Barrel Racing)
- 1 rubber glove, serving spoon (Wild Cow Milking)
- pink balloons (1 per student), 4-5 fly swatters (Pig Herding)
- 4 bales of straw, flag, saddle, hula hoop, bucket (Flag Relay, Calf Roping)
- 3-4 pairs man-size boots

## Vocabulary

**cattle**—bovine animals (as cows, bulls, or steers) kept on a farm or ranch

**cowboy**—one who tends cattle or horses; especially : a mounted cattle-ranch worker

**herd**—a number of animals of one kind kept or living together

**open range**—open land over which livestock may roam and feed

**ranch**—a place for the raising of livestock (as cattle, horses, or sheep) on range

**rodeo**—an exhibition featuring cowboy skills (as riding and roping)

**roundup**—the gathering together of animals (as cows) on the range by riding around them and driving them in

**slaughterhouse**—an establishment where animals are butchered

**stockyard**—a yard in which livestock are kept temporarily for slaughter, market, or shipping

## Physical Education

1. Set a date for the rodeo, and invite parents and other students to come and dress western.
  - Begin the rodeo with a grand entry. Have students ride in on their stick horses, dressed in the vests they have made.
  - Enlist the help of parents and older students to conduct some or all of the games and activities included at the end of the lesson.

## Extra Reading

Brett, Jan, *Armadillo Rodeo*, Putnam, 1995

Ketteman, Helen and James Warhola, *Bubba the Cowboy Prince: A Fractured Texas Tale*, Scholastic, 1997.

Lester, Julius Lester, and Jerry Pinkney, *Black Cowboy, Wild Horses: A True Story*, Dial, 1998.

Medearis, Angela, Shelf, and Maria Cristina Brusca, *The Zebra-Riding Cowboy: A Folk Song from the Old West*, Owllet, 1997.

Pinkney, Andrea D., and Brian Pinkney, *Bill Pickett, Rodeo-Ridin' Cowboy*, Voyager, 1999.

Sauer, Tammy, and Mike Reed, *Cowboy Camp*, Sterling, 2005

## Calf Roping

This event came from everyday chores on ranches. When a calf was sick a cowboy roped it so he could give it medicine. In the rodeo event the calf gets a head start. The horse and rider go after it. The rider ropes the calf, gets off the horse and runs to the calf. After catching the calf and flopping it down on its side, the cowboy ties three of the calf's legs together. During this time the horse must lean back to keep the rope tight so the calf won't wiggle free. Once the rider has completed his tie, he throws his hands in the air, gets back on the horse, and lets the rope go slack. If the calf kicks free within six seconds the run doesn't count.

## Steer Wrestling

This is the event, also called "bulldogging," which was invented by Oklahoma's own Bill Pickett. Pickett would leap from his horse onto the horns of a running steer and stop it in its tracks. Then he would bite the lip of the animal to distract it and twist it to the ground.

The bulldogger begins his chase from behind a barrier. The steer gets a head start. Another cowboy on horseback keeps the steer running in a straight line. The bulldogger pulls even with the steer, eases down the right side of the horse and grasps the steer's horns. Then he digs his heels into the dirt.

As the steer slows down, the cowboy turns the animal and lifts up on the right horn while pushing down with his left hand on the left horn. He must either bring the steer to a complete stop or change the direction of the animal's body before throwing it on its side, with all four legs pointing in the same direction.

## Bull Riding

This event is always the last and most eagerly anticipated. It is similar to the bareback event, except that the bull is bigger and wilder than a horse. As in all riding events, half the score is determined by the animal. In the eight seconds before the buzzer, the rider's free hand cannot touch himself, the equipment, or the animal.



## Rodeo Clown

The earliest records of rodeo clowning date back to 1889. When promoters started charging admission to the rodeo, they decided they needed something extra to keep the crowds entertained. The first clowns were cowboys chosen at random to amuse crowds between events. Some were funny. Some were not.

Early rodeo clowns used donkeys, mules and other animals, in their acts. Their antics ranged from falling off a bucking bronco to dropping skunks and other small animals out of their baggy pants.

Once Brahma bulls were introduced to bull riding, the clown's job became more serious. A decoy was needed to distract the bull while the rider dismounted safely. The job fell to the rodeo clown. This unique form of bullfighting required protecting the cowboy while staying away from the bull. If necessary, the clown would put his own life at risk to save the cowboy.

Today, there are three categories of rodeo clowning: the Barrelman, the Bullfighter and the Funnyman. The man job of the Barrelman is to distract the bull. The Bullfighter is mostly there to protect the cowboy, but he usually manages to entertain the crowd, too. The Funnyman entertains the audience by telling jokes and getting the audience involved while the bull is in the ring.

One of the earliest rodeo clowns was Red Sublett. He was a cowboy on the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma Territory before he became a clown. Sublett worked for rodeos and Wild West shows in Texas and Oklahoma. He would ride anything, including buffalo, zebras, mules and ostriches.

Sublett worked big-time shows in America and in Canada. He went to London, Paris, Mexico City, Brussels, Dublin, and to Hollywood and the movies.

Red had a trained mule named Sparkplug who was almost as famous as Red. The little mule was best known for imitating a trained horse act booked to work the same show. While the well-trained horse went through its act in front of the grandstand, little Sparkplug would be doing the same routine with a few extra moves thrown in for laughs.

# Stick Horse Rodeo

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## Stick Horse

Have students color and cut out the the horse head pattern included in this lesson, or have them draw a simple horse head on one side of a large brown paper bag, and cut through both sides. Students should decorate each side of the horse head with an eye, a nostril and a mouth. Have students cut an additional strip of the paper bag and fringe it to look like the horse's mane. Staple the two sides of the head together, with the mane, and stuff it with tissue. Tape the head on a cardboard wrapping paper tube. Punch a hole under the mouth to add a string for the reins so the student can hold on to the stick horse.

## Western Vest

Cut a large paper bag up the middle, and make arm holes so students can slip it on like a coat. Have students cut fringe on the bottom and decorate the vest.

## Barrel Racing

Set up three coffee cans in a triangle for each rider. Show students how to ride their horses around the cans in a cloverleaf pattern. The rider must ride around at least three cans without turning one over. Use a timer, and have someone record the times. The rider who finishes fastest wins.

## Wild Cow Milking Contest

Fill a rubber glove with water, and poke a small hole in one or two fingers. Have someone hold the rubber glove. Each participant will "milk the cow," filling the spoon with water. Once the spoon is full the participant will return the water to a cup at the starting line. Each member does this until all have participated. The group with the most "milk" wins.

## Team Pig Herding

Have each team member blow up a pink balloon and draw a face on it with a marker. Have team members place their pigs on the ground and herd them to the finish line with fly swatters. First team to get its herd to the finish line wins.

## Calf Roping

Set up two bales of hay, 3 feet apart. Place a saddle on the back bale and a bucket on one end of the front bale to simulate the calf's head. Allow one child to sit

in the saddle and try to throw a hula hoop over the calf's head. Each child gets three tries.

## Flag Relay

Divide children into two teams. Place two bales of hay with a flag stuck in each one, about 20 feet away. The first child on each team will ride down to the bale of hay, take the flag, return to his or her team and hand the flag to the next person in line, who will then carry the flag back and stick it into the bale of hay. Continue until all children take a turn. First team to finish wins.

## Relay Races

Have students race on their stick horses first galloping, then trotting, then running.

## Boot Relay

Have students put on man-sized boots, race to a certain spot with them on, race back and take them off for the next team member.

## Livestock Show

Have students bring stuffed animals from home for a livestock show. Every exhibitor gets a ribbon.

## Scatter Square Dancing

Divide students into pairs (Partners will change many times through the course of the activity), and walk them through the following calls:

*Right Arm Swing*—Lock right arms at elbow, and dance in a circle.

*Left Arm Swing*—Lock left arms at elbow, and dance in a circle.

*Do-Si-Do*—Cross arms in front, and dance around your partner.

*Right Hand Star*—High five right hands, and dance in a circle.

*Left Hand Star*—High five left hands, and dance in a circle.

*Honor Your Partner*—Curtsy or bow, and say a kind greeting.

*Hit the Trail*—Move about the dance area in time to the music.

Play any music with a quick, steady beat (country/western, pop or rock), and give calls as you wish. There is no correct order.

# Horse Head Pattern

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