Unit 3/Week 4

Title: *The Real Story of a Cowboy’s Life*

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.7.1, RI.7.2, RI.7.3, RI.7.4; W.7.2, W.7.4, W.7.9; SL.7.1; L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.4

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings A cowboy’s life on a cattle drive was a difficult experience, full of conflict and danger requiring special skills. While it could be rewarding, it was rarely glamorous.

Synopsis “The Real Story of a Cowboy’s Life” describes a cattle drive from the perspective of real cowboys who rode on one.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently; give them a guide or something to look for: difficult vocabulary, identifying images, or sensory detail, etc.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| According to the author, on what did a cattle drive’s success depend? | The author states that “a drive’s success depended on discipline and planning.” This was because there were so many cows on each drive. In fact, although most herds had about 2,000 cows, many were as large as 15,000, which meant they were hard to handle. |
| What does the author mean by saying the cowboys at the end of the line of cattle were “eating dust?” | This metaphor means that the long lines of cows walking would churn up a lot of dust. The cowboys at the end of the line would have this dust blowing into their faces the whole day. |
| According to the author, what did the cowboys need to learn to be successful? | According to the author, the cowboys had learn to work as a team so they could keep the herd moving during the day and resting at night. |
| What did the author mean by “gauge the temperament of his cattle?” Why was this important? | With these words, the author means that the cowboys had to figure out what personalities the cattle had. This was important so the cowboys would know the best way to handle each herd. |
| What does the author say about why the saddle was so important to the cowboy? | The author describes the many uses the cowboys made of the saddles: the saddle horns were used to tie ropes; they were used as chairs, workbenches and as pillows at night. |
| According to the author, what was the most common cause of death on the trail? Why was the nighttime stampede so feared? | The author points out that being dragged to death was the most common cause of cowboys’ deaths. Because of this, the cowboys feared stampedes at night. If this happened, the cowboys had to ride around in the dark, not knowing if their horses would step in a hole that would throw the cowboys off and drag them as the horses ran. |
| The author mentions that cowboys rarely used their guns on the trail. What does this detail tell you about the cowboys’ lives? | This detail lets the reader know that having guns could be dangerous. Since the cowboys were together so much, they could get into arguments. If they had guns, they might shoot each other in anger. |
| When the author describes the homesteaders, what does he mean when he uses the words “pouring onto the Plains?” | The author used the word “pouring” to try to express how many people were coming at one time. Pouring makes the reader think of a big rush of people coming like water pouring. |
| How does the author describe the relationships between the cowboys and the settlers or homesteaders? | The author states, “there was no love lost between settlers and cowboys on the trail.” This was caused by the differences in their lifestyles and needs. The cowboys needed the trail to be wide open so they could drive the cattle freely. On the other hand, the settlers wanted the land to be fenced so they could keep their livestock safe from the cattle drives. |
| The author writes that there was very little entertainment for the cowboys on the trail. What effect did this have on the cowboys? | According to the text, “there were few diversions on the trail.” This meant that the cowboys had very little opportunity for fun, making their difficult jobs even more stressful. Even the songs they sang were not really for entertainment but to calm the cattle. |
| The author states, “the numbers of cattle…was sometimes staggering…” What does he want to convey by using these words? | By using the word “staggering” the author is trying to get the reader to understand just how big the cattle drives were. When something is staggering, it is surprising and difficult to comprehend. The author goes on to describe what a real cowboy had seen on one of his drives: seven herds behind him, eight more ahead and even thirteen more herds moving parallel to him. Along with the word staggering, these numbers help the reader visualize just what that experience was like. |
| The author details some of the other discomforts cowboys endured on the trail. What were these discomforts and why were they important? | The author mentions that the cowboys had to wear the same clothes every day, had a very limited diet of biscuits and beef stew and had no companions except the other cowboys and the animals. These details provide further evidence that the cowboy’s life was more difficult than others might think. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | discipline  escorts  gauge  head  temperament  prized  stampede  outfits  longhorn  jay-hawkers  furrow  monkeyed | homesteaders  claim |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | drive  emphatic  stipulate  ultimate  nettlesome  devastated  domestic  diversions | hostility  prohibit |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt
  + *In the essay, “The Real Story of a Cowboy’s Life,” Geoffrey C. Ward describes the challenges confronted by cowboys on a cattle drive. How did these dangers and conflicts affect the cowboys’ lives? What characteristics helped cowboys cope during their time on the trail? Write two paragraphs using evidence from the text to support your answer.*
* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students will complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially if this process is new.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “They had to learn to work as a team…” | Because of the dangers of trying to keep a large herd of cattle from stampeding, the cowboys had to work together. |
| “A cowboy had to know how to gauge the temperament of his cattle, how to chase down a stray without alarming the rest of the herd, how to lasso a steer…” | This shows the many skills a cowboy had to use. |
| Being dragged to death was the most common death and most feared | Because they were working with so many large animals, their lives could be in danger if they made a mistake. |
| “There was no love lost between settlers and cowboys on the trail.” | The conflict with settlers is another issue the cowboys had to deal with while on the trail. |
| “There were few diversions on the trail.” | Another problem for the cowboys was the boredom they experienced. |
| “Even the songs for which the cowboys became famous grew directly out of doing the job.” | While on the trail, the cowboys were completely focused on their jobs. Even the songs, which might be considered entertainment, were used to keep the cows calm at night. |
| They spent months in the saddle wearing the same clothes every day, eating nothing but biscuits and beef stew. | This quote demonstrates how the cowboys must have felt relieved after spending day after day on the trail. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade/reading level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

In the essay, “The Real Story of a Cowboy’s Life,” the author introduces the reader to the challenges that cowboys endured during their time on a cattle drive. The biggest danger cowboys faced was the possibility of being thrown from their horses and dragged behind. In fact, this was the most common cause of death on the trail. Another serious danger was the conflict between homesteaders and the cowboys. Moving their cattle through land that was being farmed meant angering settlers who didn’t want the cattle to cross their land. Cowboys also had to deal with the discomforts of living for months on the trail. They didn’t have many opportunities for entertainment. “Even the songs for which the cowboys became famous grew directly out of doing the job.” They had to wear the same clothes and eat the same food day in and day out.

Because of its hardships, cowboys had to learn to cope with their difficult lifestyle. For one thing it was extremely important that they learned to work as a team to control the cattle, learning to “gauge the temperament of his cattle, how to chase down a stray without alarming the rest of the herd, how to lasso a steer…” so they could keep themselves and the cattle from danger. Due to the threat of getting hurt or even dying, cowboys had to become a team, working together to control the herd. Having to endure boredom, monotonous food and being dirty forced cowboys to find ways to get through these difficulties. Even though they sang to the cattle to calm them, those songs could also calm and entertain the cowboys themselves. These details provide evidence that the cowboy’s life was more difficult than others might think. As a result, cowboys had to gain special skills to help them survive the long months on cattle drives.

Additional Tasks

* Conduct research using the following articles and videos about the history of cowboys and cattle drives. Discover the origins of the cowboy and the unique place the cowboy legends have in American culture.
* <http://www.americancowboy.com/home>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowboy>
* <http://www.history.com/topics/cowboys>
* <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/lastcowboy/cowboys.html>
* <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/cowboyculture.htm>
* <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/we-americancowboy.html>
* <https://sites.google.com/a/wcsga.net/turn-of-the-century-wild-wild-west/cattle-trails>

Sample response: The tradition of cattle drives began in the area that is now Texas. At that time, this region was part of Mexico, and it was on the Mexican haciendas, or cattle ranches, that the cowboy culture was born.