



Rodeo!



by J. P. Adams

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT



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Introduction


 Imagine traveling back through time to the glory days of the cowboys. It's easier than you think—just spend a day at a rodeo.


At a rodeo, men and women demonstrate the skills and daring of the cowhands of the old West. You can see how cowboys used to work when the western frontier was being settled more than a century ago.



 Cowboys and their horses worked as a team to rope cattle.




 Timing is important when wrestling steers.


 Today, rodeos are held all over the country. They are very popular in the western United States and Canada. They are usually held outdoors in large arenas.

Male and female cowboys compete in various events. They ride bucking broncos. They grab steers by their horns and wrestle them to the ground. On horseback, riders catch calves. They use a long rope called a *lariat*.

These rodeo contests come right out of a chapter of American history.

A Cowboy's Work

 From the 1860s through the 1890s, cowboys played a key role in the American West. Raising cattle was a booming business. Cattle ranchers **prospered**. The ranchers needed cowboys to take care of their herds.

 The cattle roamed freely on the **sprawling** open range. Cowboys on horseback looked after them. Cowboys also branded the cattle. They used a hot iron to make a mark on each animal's hide. Each rancher had a different mark. Branding helped ranchers identify their cattle.



 Ranchers used different marks to keep track of their herds.



The cowtown of Abilene, Kansas, marked the end of the Chisholm Trail. Many cowboys herded cattle along this trail.

Taking the cattle to market was another important part of cowboys' jobs. They drove the herds of cattle across the open range to cowtowns. Cowtowns were places where ranchers sold their cattle. Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Abilene, Kansas, were two 19th-century cowtowns.

Cattle drives were often very long. Cowhands drove the cattle for hundreds of miles. They worked hard not to lose any animals during those long drives. This was difficult because herds could be very large. One herd could have as many as 2,500 head of cattle!

🔊 The Roots of Rodeo


🔊 How did the rodeo begin? Rodeos started in cowtowns. Cowtowns were lively places. When a big cattle drive ended, many cowboys stayed for a while in the cowtowns.

🔊 After a successful cattle drive, cowboys often wanted to celebrate. They had friendly contests with each other. In these contests, each cowboy tried to prove that he was the bravest and best at his job. Cowboys bragged about their skills. They dared each other to perform dangerous tricks on horseback. These entertaining contests were the very first rodeos.




🔊 Cowboys showed off their skills in friendly contests.

The First Rodeos

 Historians are not sure exactly when the first official rodeo was held. As early as 1872, a rodeo was held in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In 1882, another rodeo competition occurred in Winfield, Kansas.

The events in these early rodeos were mostly on horseback. In one event, cowboys on horseback had to separate a single calf from a herd of cattle. They were judged on their speed and skill. In other rodeo events, cowhands showed off their roping skills.

 These early rodeos quickly became popular with the public. People flocked to see cowboys' feats of courage and ability. Some of the best rodeo riders became famous. They were considered stars of the "Wild West."



Early Rodeo Stars



Annie Oakley was born in Ohio in 1860. Oakley was not a cowboy. But she did perform at many rodeos. Oakley did trick shooting. She could shoot a playing card from 90 feet away.



Jackson Sundown belonged to the Nez Perce Indian tribe. He was a fearless cowboy and an exceptional horseman. In 1916, he made history. That year, he **dominated** the competition at the World Rodeo Championships. He became the 1916 World Champion Bronc Rider.






Bill Pickett was a famous early rodeo star. Born around 1870, Pickett was African American and Native American. He is credited with inventing the rodeo event of steer wrestling. A steer is a young male cow raised for beef. In this event, a cowboy on horseback rides up next to a galloping steer. Then he leaps onto the steer's back, grabs its horns, and wrestles it to the ground. Steer wrestling is also known as "bull-dogging."




Bill Pickett is credited with inventing the rodeo event of steer wrestling.

The End of an Era

 By the early 1900s, the era of the cowboys on the open range was in **decline**. There were several reasons why.

One reason was the invention of barbed wire. Barbed wire is wire that has been twisted to hold sharp metal points. Ranchers put up fences made of barbed wire. These new fences prevented cattle from roaming. This meant that cowboys were no longer needed to follow the herds. The open range had been fenced in.

 Railroads were another reason for the decline of the cowboys. The railroad made transportation easy. Cattle were loaded onto trains and taken to market. Cowboys were no longer needed to drive cattle.

The glory days of the cowboys were ending. But the rodeo would live on.



Major rodeos attract hundreds of thousands of fans.

Rodeo Today

Today, rodeo is a sport. In fact, rodeo is the official state sport of both Texas and Wyoming. Rodeo has many fans. Every year, millions of people attend rodeos or watch rodeo events on television.

In the past, cowboys competed in rodeos for fun. Today, many rodeo cowboys are professionals. A successful rodeo cowboy can earn a lot of money.

Some Rodeo Events

Today's rodeos have many different events. Two of the biggest are bronc riding and bull riding.

Riding a bucking bronco is a popular event. In the old days, cowhands sometimes rode wild horses. These horses tried to throw the rider off. Today, rodeos still use broncos that jump, kick, and buck. The cowboys try to hang on. The cowboy who hangs on longest is the winner.

What Does It Mean?

The word *bronco*, or *bronc*, comes from Spanish. It means “rough, coarse, or wild.”

This cowboy tries to hang on to a bucking bronco.



🔊 Bull riding is also a difficult event. It was introduced by Mexican vaqueros. These bulls truly are wild animals. These bulls can weigh over 1,000 pounds!

🔊 Conclusion

🔊 Today, rodeos take place all over the country. But rodeo is also **acknowledged** to be more than a sport. It is a part of American history. Its roots go all the way back to the days of cowboys and cattle drives. So, if you have ever wondered what it was like to be a cowhand in the days of the Wild West, go to a rodeo and find out!



🔊 Bull riding

Responding



TARGET SKILL Text and Graphic Features

What does the image on page 7 help you to understand? Copy and complete the chart shown below. Then add one other text or graphic feature and the information it gives.

Text or Graphic	Location and Purpose
picture of cowboys roping cattle	page 7; shows what cowboys did at an early rodeo
?	?



Write About It

Text to Self Look back at the photographs of rodeo events. Would you be interested in trying one of those events? Why? Write a paragraph to tell what you think.



TARGET VOCABULARY

acknowledged

acquainted

decline

dominated

extending

flourished

hostile

prospered

residents

sprawling



TARGET SKILL **Text and Graphic Features**

Examine how the arrangements of text and visuals makes ideas clearer.



TARGET STRATEGY **Summarize** Briefly tell the

important parts of the text in your own words.



GENRE Informational Text gives facts and examples about a topic.

Level: R

DRA: 40

Genre:

Informational Text

Strategy:

Summarize

Skill:

Text and Graphic Features

Word Count: 939

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