

# Cowboy Jargon Word Search

Find the words in bold

N S T R U L U E C P W J L B U  
X S Q R M G S S J G D G J T Y  
F H P H R O U H Q L H Q X H M  
V A B U O V S R P U D J C K G  
D O B M Y A H E N D U P Q S I  
S T A M L D A K Y L P F I A R  
U V M M L S D N N E S Y J E U  
G B B R I G N I V C C C H Z D  
O N O U F G H S G H U P N C S  
J I O Q W E O A U U D Z H F F  
G K Z D F K J D N C D O H O R  
V Q L V V N X O R K L N G G I  
U R E T T U B S A X E T L C C  
H G T V B K K I N R F R H H Z  
S L H M Y S T H G I T R I A J

**Amigo** – Friend

**Bamboozle** – to confuse

**Hanker** – to want something

**Filly** – young horse

**Chuck** – food

**John** – male mule

**Mosey** – to leave

**Skunk Eggs** – onions



**Soda Sinker** – biscuit

**Grub** – food

**Texas Butter** – gravy

**Upscuddle** – argument

**Vamoose** – get going

**Airtights** – canned food

**Giddy Up** – get your horse moving



# Cowboy Life

## What was the life of a cowhand like?

- The real life of cowhands was very different from the pictures presented in later books and movies.
- Cowhands became important during the cattle drives that began in the late 1860s. Though the number of cowhands began to decline with the end of the open range in the 1890s, there are still cowhands today.
- Cowboy life was usually dull and always hard. Cowhands usually worked alone, all day, outdoors, and in all weather. They spent most of their time herding cattle. They ate the same few foods every day and often had no shelter at night.
- The death rate for cowhands was very high, primarily because of cattle stampedes, accidents, and dangerous weather. Most left for other jobs after only a few years.
- Despite the risks involved, wages were very low. Most cowhands made less than the average factory worker.

## Who became cowhands?

- Probably about one third of the cowhands were Mexican Americans and African Americans.
- The original cowhands were Mexican American and American Indian *vaqueros* from Texas. *Vaqueros* invented most of the clothing, equipment, and practices that cowhands adopted in all areas of the American West. Practices such as the roundup and the branding of cattle began in the brush country of Texas and northern Mexico. High saddles helped cowhands stay on their horses while using lariats to rope wild cows. Wide-brimmed hats, bandannas, and leather leggings called chaps protected *vaqueros* and cowhands from severe weather and thorny plants.
- Ranchers needed experienced workers and most were willing to hire freed Texas slaves to herd their cattle. Though few of them were allowed to lead the trail drives, perhaps as many as one quarter of all cowhands were African Americans.
- Poor Civil War veterans moving west also found opportunities in the cattle trade. Most cowhands were young men, who were more willing than older men to work for the low pay.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

Directions: Mark T for a true statement or F for a false one. If a statement is false, make it true by correcting the underlined word or phrase on the lines that follow.

1. Partly due to the great risks involved, cowhands usually kept their jobs for life.  
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2. One big disadvantage of being a cowhand was a high death rate.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Cowhands were usually wealthy young men trying to learn all about the ranching business.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Fewer cowhands were needed after the end of the open range in the 1890s.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Men of several races became cowhands.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. *Vaqueros* developed most of the clothing and equipment used by cowhands.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Ranchers were too prejudiced to hire African Americans as cowhands.  
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8. Many poor Civil War veterans moving west became cowhands.  
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