

What's Your Brand?

Objective

Students will learn about the history and purpose of branding cattle.

Background

The early Egyptians were branding their livestock with simple patterns as early as 2000 BC. The Spanish conqueror Hernando Cortez brought the practice of branding horses and cattle to North America in the 16th Century.

The American custom of branding cattle came from Mexico. Mexican caballero (cowboys) would mark the large herds with the owner's coat of arms. Today there are hundreds of thousands of cattle brands registered throughout the United States. Animals can be branded with chemicals, paint, by tattooing or even by tagging or notching.

Ranchers in the American West branded their cattle to keep cattle rustlers from stealing them. If the cattle were stolen, the brand would prove who the real owner was. Since there were no fences on the American Plains in those days, branding was also a good way for ranchers to know their own cattle from those of other ranchers.

In Texas there was at least one rancher who didn't like to brand his cattle. His name was Sam Maverick. Many of his cattle were stolen or wandered away. Since they had no brands, no one knew who owned them. That was how unbranded cattle came to be known as "mavericks."

Ranchers today still brand their cattle to protect them from rustlers and to help identify them in case they get outside the fence or mingle with another herd.

A rancher must register his or her brand in the state where he or she first started using it. A brand is considered property and can be inherited or passed down in a family.

A ranch can have more than one brand, but they must all be registered. The location of the brand on the animal's body will be the same for every animal that belongs to that ranch. It may be on the animal's hindquarters, shoulder or side. The brand never disappears and can even be seen in the hide after the animal is butchered. A registered livestock brand that is easy to read is a cow's only "return address." Registered Oklahoma brands are recorded by the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, an organization made up of Oklahomans involved with beef production, marketing and distribution.

Branding irons are formed from steel and placed on long handles. The branding iron is heated until it turns an ash color. Then it is pressed into the hide of the calf long enough to burn through the hair and the outer layer of skin. Some modern branding irons are electric, with plastic grip handles.

Horses can be branded on the cheek, shoulder or rump, but branding is not as common in the horse industry as it is in the cattle industry. Branding "irons" for sheep are carved from wood or molded from metal and dipped in paint, so the wool and hide will not be ruined. As soon as the wool is sheared, the sheep must be branded again.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

GRADE 2

English Language Arts—
1.R.1,2,3,4; 3.R.5,7;
4.R.1,3,5; 2.F.1; 1.W.1,2;
2.W.1; 3.W.3

Visual Art—3.2

GRADE 3

English Language Arts—
1.R.1,2,3,4; 3.R.7; 4.R.1,3,5;
2.F.1; 1.W.1,2; 2.W.1; 3.W.3

Math—N.3.3

Visual Art—3.2

GRADE 4

English Language Arts—
1.R.1,2,3,4; 3.R.7; 4.R.1,3,5;
2.F.1; 1.W.1,2; 2.W.1; 3.W.3

Math—N.2.8

Visual Art—3.2

Materials

fuzzy sticks (pipe cleaners)

tempera paint

24-inch muslin squares

Vocabulary

brand—a mark indicating identity or ownership, burned, tattooed or painted on an animal's coat or hide

caballero—a Spanish gentleman skilled in riding and managing horses, precursors of American cowboys

livestock—domestic animals, such as cattle or horses, raised for home use or for profit, especially on a farm

maverick—an unbranded or orphaned range cow or colt, traditionally considered the property of the first person who brands it; a horse or steer that has escaped from the herd

Cattle Herding

1. Provide each student with three white balloons. These represent each student's "cattle herd."
2. Students will blow up the balloons. Balloons that pop will be considered a loss to the cattleman.
3. Students will use markers to draw their "brands" on their "cattle" (balloons).
4. When all the cattle are branded, they must be "trucked" to the range. Students will decide how many cattle will fit comfortably in each truck (large plastic garbage bags). Then students must figure out how many "trucks" they will need to transport all the cattle. Explain that overcrowding will cause distress and the possible death of an animal. Too few animals could allow too much movement, which could result in an animal slipping and hurting itself.
5. After all the cattle are turned out on the "range" (playground, cafeteria, gym, etc.) and allowed to graze for awhile (Move the balloons around to mix them up, similar to what they would do on an open range.) the ranchers must gather their cattle. The first cattleman to successfully gather all his/her cattle wins. Remember that a popped balloon at any time is a death loss to the rancher.

In Oklahoma, the beef business is big, with 60,000 producers and 5 million cattle. Oklahoma beef sales come to about \$3.2 billion a year. Oklahoma ranks fifth in the nation in the production of cattle and calves.

English Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
2. Hand out student worksheets.
 - Students will complete student worksheets, either individually or in small groups. Answers are below.
3. Students will design their own brands, using the information on the student worksheet. Students will write essays explaining the meaning of their brands.

Visual Art

1. Provide pipe cleaners, tempera paint and 24-inch muslin squares.
 - Students will shape pipe cleaners to form the brands they have designed.
 - Students will dip their brand designs in tempera paint and practice on paper before printing their brands on the muslin to make western handkerchiefs.

Math

1. Students will determine how many of her 50 cattle a rancher may turn out in a particular pasture if pasture conditions will only support $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, or $\frac{1}{8}$ of the total number of cattle.

Extra Reading

Murdoch, David Hamilton, *Cowboy*, Eyewitness Books, DK Children, 2000.

Patrick, Jean LS, and Alvis Upitis, *Cows, Cats and Kids: A Veterinarian's Family at Work*, Boyd's Mills, 2003.

Peterson, Cris, *Amazing Grazing*, Boyd Mills, 2002.

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

Savage, Candace, *Born to Be a Cowgirl: A Spirited Ride Through the Old West*, Tricycle, 2004.

Wolfman, Judy, and David Lorenz Winston, *Life on a Cattle Farm*, Lerner, 2002.

Extra Reading

Answers for student worksheet B are as follows: 1. number, letters, and /or pictures; 2. Diamond B Ranch, D Bar T Ranch, Pm Ranch; 3. (See designs on student worksheet A); 4. The student may list any state in the central or western part of the United States; 5. yes; 6. no; 7. two, four.

What's Your Brand?

A

Herdsmen have been branding their own cattle, sheep and horses for thousands of years. Branding is the best way anyone has found to show who owns what animals. Many times the brand will tell you something about the animal's owner or the ranch to which it belongs. A brand with two Rs might be the initials of the owner or it might be the initials of two different people who are partners on the ranch. A line drawing showing two people shaking hands might tell you friendship is important to the owner.

If you think branding hurts the animal you are probably right, but it may not hurt as much as you imagine. Animal hide is thicker and tougher than your skin. Sometimes the brand will singe and burn the long hair on an animal, and that will cause some pain as well. The mark that is left is similar to a scar. It cannot be removed.

Sheep are branded with paint or ink which comes off when the wool is sheared from the sheep.

When an owner gets ready to design a brand, he or she must be careful not to use one that is already registered. A book showing all the registered brands in the state can give the rancher ideas, but he or she cannot copy any registered brand for his or her own use. In Oklahoma, it is legal for one person to buy a brand from another person.

Designs may be letters, numbers, pictures or a combination of all these things. The design must be simple enough to shape with metal or carve into wood, and it must be easy to read. Brands are usually two or more inches tall and four or more inches long.

Designs can be:

open— 

closed— 

lazy— 

Designs are read from:

outside to inside— 

Diamond B Ranch

top to bottom— 

BC Ranch

left to right 

S Bar Ranch

A design can have a simple picture, an arrow, a star or a house.

 stand for Tumbling L Ranch.

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Name _____

What's Your Brand?

B

Read the information on student worksheet A, then answer the following questions.

1. Brand designs may be made from _____ , _____
and _____.

2. Write out the ranch names expressed in the following brands.

 _____ Ranch

DT _____ Ranch

P
M _____ Ranch

3. Draw a brand that is:

Lazy

Open

Closed

Letters

Numbers

4. Branding first became popular among ranchers in the Plains and Western states of the United States. Name two states that are located in the Plains or Western states.

_____ and _____

5. Can an Oklahoma brand be sold? Yes or no?

6. Are all brands permanent? Yes or no?

7. A brand is _____ or more inches tall and _____ or more inches long.

Design your own brand. Remember to make it simple. Follow the design rules. Don't forget your brand should mean something.

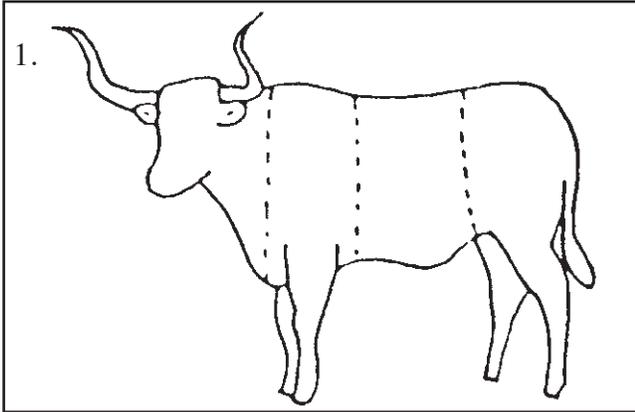
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Name _____

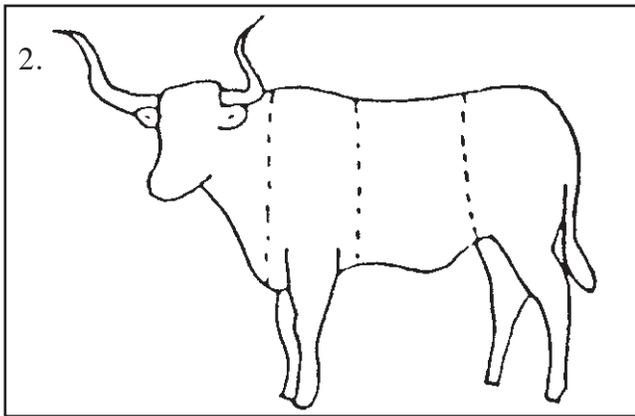
What's Your Brand

C

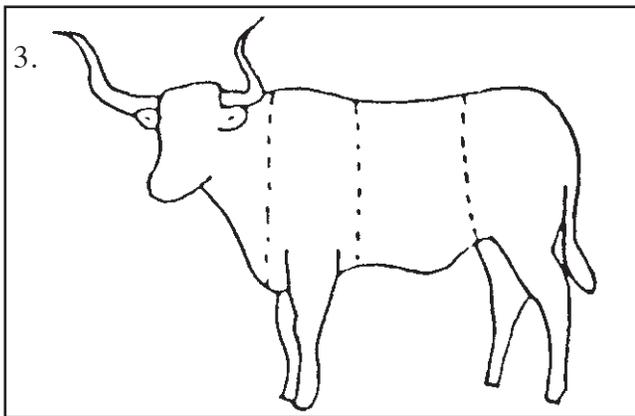
Place the brand you designed on the hip, shoulder and side of the steer pictured below. Write the name of the body part on the line next to each steer. Color the steers.



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____