

# “BLACK COWBOYS: AN AMERICAN STORY”



## BLACK COWBOYS AN AMERICAN STORY

### PRIMARY THEMES

- Black cowboys were integral to the Texas and American economy.
- Black cowboys—enslaved and free—used their skills to become Black ranchers and shaped legacies of Black ranching families.
- Black cowboys turned their ranch skills into popular performances in rodeos, music and film

### TARGET AUDIENCE

The exhibition has broad appeal for general audiences. A key Witte demographic is school children in the 4th and 7th grades, and has created educational materials particularly for these groups

“Black Cowboys: An American Story,” from the Witte Museum, explores the lives and work of the numerous Black men, women and children- enslaved and free- who labored on the ranches of Texas and participated on cattle drives before the Civil War through the turn of the twentieth century.

These cowboys tended livestock, cooked, repaired equipment, performed tonsorial arts, and tamed and trained the horses. An estimated one-quarter of the cowboys that went up the trails were Black, but their stories too often remain neglected and untold.

Black cowboys would later ride in rodeos, become singers, perform in movies, serve as officers of the law, and own their own ranches.

Featuring artifacts, photographs and documents depicting the work and skills of Black cowboys the exhibition offers insight into the legendary cowboy, a clearer picture of the Black West, and a more diverse portrait of the American West.

### LEARNING GOALS

- *Cognitive:* Visitors will understand the significant roles that Black Americans played in the history of the American West. After leaving the exhibition, visitors will remember the three main themes.
- *Affective:* Visitors will feel a connection to the personal stories of Black cowboys, leading to an increased awareness of the many untold contributions of Black Americans.
- *Physical:* Visitors will interact with the props and hands-on experiences.



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## NATIONAL RELEVANCE

Themes of the exhibition have national significance and relevance beyond the borders of Texas. The scope of the exhibition includes stories from the south and southwest, travel up the cattle trails to the midwest markets, and across the Atlantic to origins in Africa and Spain. Host venues have access to the Witte's award-winning educational programs as well as expert speakers and other outreach opportunities.

## DESIGN INSPIRATION

The colors, typography and materials in this exhibition are inspired by the wide open spaces of Texas, historical photos of trail drives and ranches, and contemporaneous print materials such as newspapers and movie posters.

***"When I was a young kid my mother... made me stay home and she taught me how to cook and season. Down the line, all that came in handy. While the rest was cowboyin', I was cookin' and doin' road and fence work.***

***-Nat "Fog" Nixon, Camp Cook***



## HECTOR BAZY

In 1910, Hector Bazy published a memoir, detailing his daily life cattle herding and cooking on the prairies of Texas. Bazy was born in 1851 on a plantation in Grimes County, Texas; he and his parents were enslaved there. His 30-page manuscript describes his early years and family, his journey as a freed man at age 14 to become a cowboy, and his adventures there after on the trails.

His detailed account paints a vivid picture of everyday life as a cowboy, but also inherently reveals his experiences of being enslaved from birth and then a Black cowboy among many white men. For these reasons, Hector Bazy is featured centrally in the exhibition. His story welcomes visitors to the experience and invites them to explore the lives of many others, about many much less is known.

***Hector Bazy Manuscript, Anacostia Community Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution***





## EMBRACING AND EXPANDING LEGACY

The lives and legacies of Black cowboys have inspired new generations to explore the past through music, film, fashion and design. Black Cowboys: An American Story concludes with a multimedia look at the latest pop culture moments that have been influenced by the stories of Black cowboys.



Stetson cowboy hat, late 1800s (Witte)



Texas saddle, made in late 19th century (From the Collection of the Black Cowboy Museum)



Drop front "white woolies" (Witte)

## TEKS:

**K:** 10A, 13A,B, 14A,C,D

**1ST:** 6A,B 7A,B, 9A,B, 16A,B, 17A,C,D

**2ND:** 5A, 15A, 10A, 16A,B,C,D

**3RD:** 5A, 6A, 10A, 11D, 12A,B, 15A,B, 16A,B,C

**4TH:** 4A,B,C,D, 7A,B, 8A,B,C, 10C, 11A,B,C,D, 14D, 18B, 19A,C,D

**5TH:** 4D,E, 5A,C, 7A, 8A,B, 11B, 12A,B,C, 20B, 21A,B, 23B, 25B,C

**6TH:** 1A,B, 3B, 8A, 13A, 15B, 16A,C, 17A, 19A,C,D

**7TH:** 1A, 5A,B,C, 6D, 8A,B,C, 9A, 10A,B, 11A, 12A, 16A, 18B,C, 20B,E, 21A,B

**8TH:** 1A,B,C, 7B,D, 8A, 10B,C, 11A, 12B, 20A, 23A, 24B,C, 29B,C,D,E,F,G

### SPARK CURIOSITY!

Encouraging children to use **"I Notice, I Wonder, I Imagine"** questions during a field trip can help them engage actively with the exhibits, stimulate their curiosity, and foster their creativity and critical thinking skills. It also provides an opportunity for meaningful discussions and reflections on their experiences.

For Example: "I notice an often overlooked perspective of the American West. I wonder what challenges these cowboys faced and how their experiences differed from those of their counterparts. I imagine the courage and resilience it took for Black cowboys to navigate a predominantly white frontier."

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES:

#### Introduction to Black Cowboys

Begin with a discussion on what students already know about cowboys and introduce the concept of black cowboys. Provide a few different photos of cowboy art and western posters. Share some basic historical information about their roles, contributions, and challenges in the American West.

#### Research Assignment

Have students research the history of black cowboys in the American West. Encourage them to explore the challenges, contributions, and stories of individual black cowboys.

#### Music Exploration

Introduce students to music associated with black cowboys and the American West. Play country music with historical significance and discuss the role of music in cowboy culture.

## POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

### Make your own cowboy hat!

What you'll need:

1. Paper plates
2. Decorating materials  
(colored pencils, markers,  
pom-poms, glue, etc.)
3. Scissors



Directions:

1. Cut along the interior circle of the paper plate. Make sure to only cut about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way.
2. Once cut, pull the circle forward and bend the bottom. Here you are creating the crown of the hat. Make sure to cut the top of the flap to make a crease. (see pictures)
3. After the hat is shaped, fold the crown back down and start decorating!
4. Once done, push the crown of the hat back up and wear your new hat!

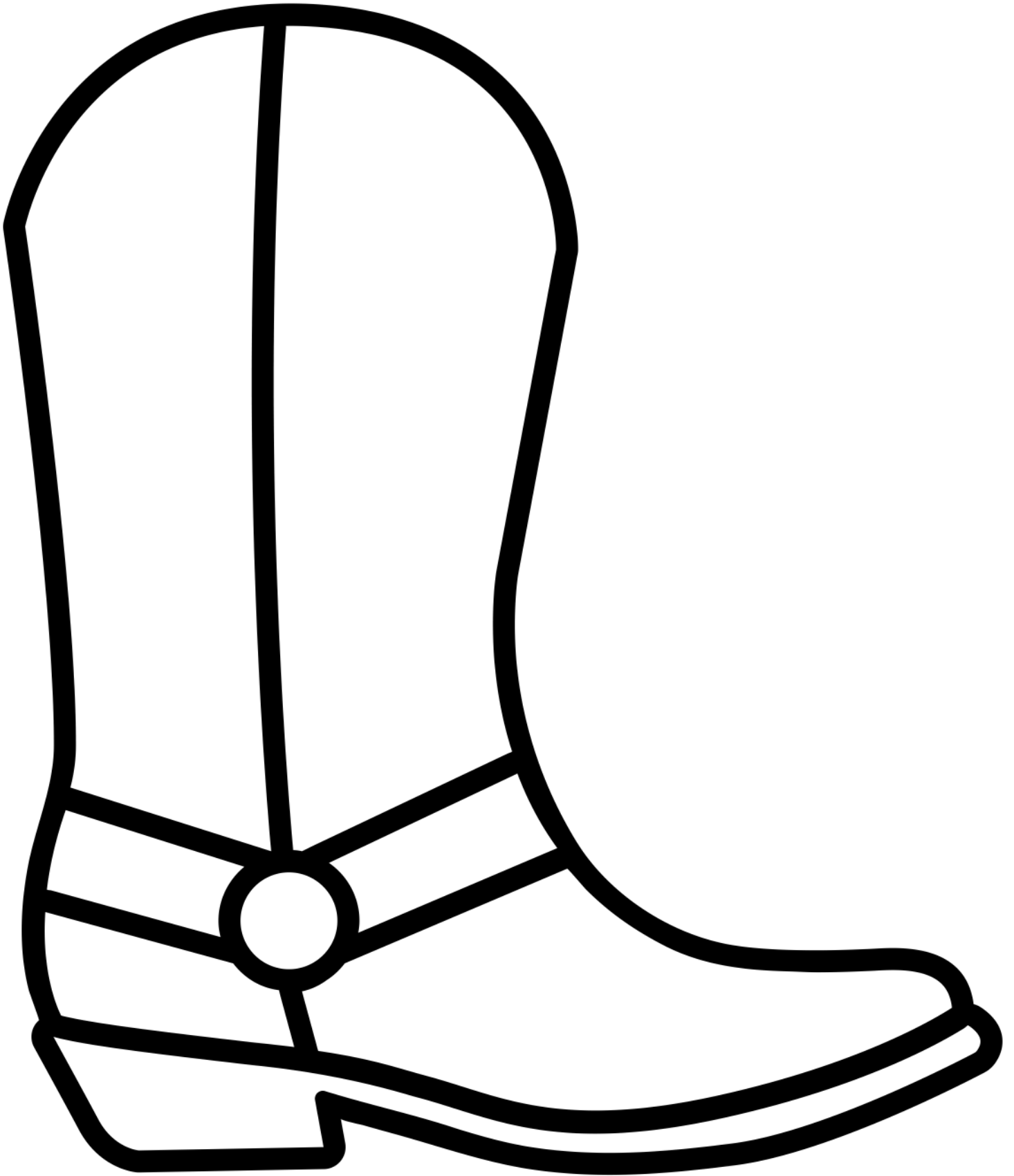
### Biographical Sketches

Assign or allow each student to select a prominent black cowboy from the lists and have them prepare a biographical sketch. Emphasize the individual's achievements, challenges, and impact on the community!

TRAIL DRIVE	RANCHING	PERFORMERS & RODEO
Jack "Maverick"	Steve West	"Tony" Lott
Hector Bazy	The Ashworth Family	Larry Callies
Nat Love	"80 John" Daniel	Tex Williams
Monroe Brackins	Webster Wallace	Myrtis Dightman
Jim Perry	Ann George Taylor	Bill Pickett
Bose Ikard	Daniel Alexander	Leon Coffee
Ben Kinchlow	The Wilcox Family	A.J. Walker
George Glenn	Sam Jones Washington	Fred Whitfield
Robert Lemmons	James Cape	Herb Jeffries
Al Jones	Johanna July	
"Aunt Rittie" Foster	Mack Williams	
Coaley Owens	George McJunkin	
Tom "Ball" Rodgers		

### Design a custom pair of boots

Print the following page and have your students design their own pair of custom cowboy boots!





## Chuck Wagon STEM Challenge: Design & Engineering for the Modern Frontier

### Description:

Have your students unleash their inner engineer and design a sturdy & functional chuck wagon that can stand the test of the modern frontier using the Engineering Design Process! This exciting challenge encourages students to apply their knowledge in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to design a chuck wagon that not only withstands the elements but also serves a specific purpose in transporting either a traveling rodeo performer, country musician, or cowboy cook.

### Objective:

Challenge students to design and build a chuck wagon capable of navigating the rugged terrains of the modern frontier while carrying essential supplies for your chosen character—be it a rodeo performer, country musician, or cowboy cook. The chuck wagon must exhibit structural integrity, stability, and creativity, as well as showcase innovative features that make it suitable for the unique needs of your chosen traveler. Students may also present their designs to the class and encourage them to include additional elements like a nickname for their rodeo performer, song lyrics from a musician, or a menu for their cowboy cook!



### Guidelines:

**Materials:** Utilize a selection of provided classroom materials, including popsicle sticks, cardboard, tape, toothpicks, string, pipe cleaners, bottlecaps, paper, and any additional materials provided by your teacher. Think creatively and strategically about how to maximize the use of these resources.

**Structural Integrity:** Design a chuck wagon that can withstand various challenges, including simulated weather conditions, bumpy terrains, and unexpected obstacles. Consider the weight distribution, balance, and overall stability of your creation.

**Purposeful Design:** Tailor your chuck wagon to the needs of your chosen traveler. If it's for a rodeo performer, think about secure storage for equipment; for a country musician, consider space for instruments; and for a cowboy cook, focus on compartments for cooking utensils and ingredients.

**Innovative Features:** Integrate at least one innovative feature into your chuck wagon design. This could be a retractable roof for weather protection, wheels that adapt to different terrains, or a modular storage system for versatility.

**Presentation:** Prepare a short verbal, written, or digital presentation to showcase your chuck wagon design to the class. Highlight the key features, design choices, and the reasoning behind your decisions. Be ready to discuss how your design meets the unique needs of your chosen traveler!

### Evaluation Criteria:

Projects may be evaluated based on creativity, structural integrity, functionality, and the ability to meet the specific needs of the chosen traveler. Extra points may be awarded for innovation and effective presentation skills during the showcase!

# BLACK COWBOYS

## AN AMERICAN STORY

ON VIEW

**January 20, 2024 - April 13, 2024**

"Black Cowboys: An American Story" is included in general admission or museum membership.

"Black Cowboys: An American Story" is organized by the Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas and generously supported by Bank of America, the Ed Rachal Foundation, John L. Santikos Charitable Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation and H-E-B.

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