

Unit 10: Cotton, Cattle, & Railroads

7th Grade Lesson Plan: The Big Picture

(45 – 60 minutes)

Objective	<p>In this one-day lesson, students will examine the main events and defining characteristics of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>We will</u> examine the major events and defining characteristics of the era of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads. 2. <u>I will</u> analyze a primary source image, read a passage presenting the main ideas of the unit, and explain the causes and effects of four key events that occurred during this era.
Key Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas underwent significant changes due to a rapid increase in population, aided by the expansion of railroads due to industrialization. • Texans moving to the western frontier and professional bison hunters overhunting the buffalo caused conflict with Plains tribes that led to their forced removal from the region. • The open Plains allowed more Anglo settlement and industry, including increased cattle drives and the establishment of large ranches. • Innovations like the windmill and barbed wire helped the establishment of large ranches, which ultimately closed the Plains to cattle drives. • The majority of Texans worked as cotton farmers at the time, and falling cotton prices caused financial hardship for cotton farmers in Texas who formed groups like the Grange and the Farmer's Alliance to support struggling farmers. • The Populist Party was formed by farmers and workers to support labor in the U.S. and had a significant effect on politics. • Southern state governments established Jim Crow laws to restrict the rights and freedoms of Black Southerners.
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for key information, context, main ideas, and supporting evidence. • Summarizing and paraphrasing key ideas in a text. • Making observations, inferences, and predictions about a primary source image.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the main idea and supporting evidence from a primary source text. Identifying and explaining the cause-and-effect relationship between significant events of the era.
Essential Question	What were the major events and defining characteristics of the Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads era of Texas history?
Assignment	<p>Warm-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students use an answer bank of nine response options to identify up to six statements that they believe are true about Texas and the United States during the Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads era. Students use prior knowledge from the previous unit to accomplish this task. <p>Lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part I: Analyze an image – Students view an image titled “The Texas Cattle Trade” from an 1874 issue of Harper’s Weekly. The image is an illustration of cattlemen working to move cattle onto railroad cars. Students will use the image to make observations, inferences, and predictions about the unit. Part II: Essential Ideas Reading Passage – Students read a passage introducing key themes, events, and topics from the unit. Part III: Students complete a “cause-and-effect” activity identifying the causes and/or effects of four key events of the era based on information provided in the reading. <p>Exit Ticket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students identify three statements that best summarize defining characteristics of the era by answering a multi-select question.
Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slideshow (<i>Suggested use: present on the overhead; Upload to an educational platform like google classroom; print extra copies for note-taking assistance</i>) Warm-up / Exit Ticket (<i>Suggested printing: 1 per student. Assignment prints two copies per page.</i>) Assignment (<i>Suggested printing 1 per student</i>) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Level work Grade Level work

	c. Foundations Level work
Differentiation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scaffolding including classwork at three different levels of academic ability 2. Visual representations of directions 3. Key information presented in bold lettering 4. Response options provided for short, constructed response questions. 5. Reduction in writing.
TEKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.01(A) Identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads. • 7.06(A) Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the factors leading to the expansion of the Texas frontier, the effects of westward expansion on the American Indians, the buffalo soldiers, and Quanah Parker. • 7.06(B) Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the development of the cattle industry from its Spanish beginnings and the cowboy way of life. • 7.06(C) Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the effects of the growth of railroads and the contributions of James Hogg. • 7.06(D) Explain the political, economic, and social impact of the agricultural industry, and the development of West Texas resulting from the close of the frontier. • 7.08(C) Analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas. • 7.09(A) Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications. • 7.20(A) Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas. • 7.20(B): Analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and conclusions.

Teacher Guide: The Big Picture

Warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read nine statements in a graphic organizer to identify up to six statements that are likely to be true for Texas and the U.S. in the Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads era. Slides 2 and 3 restate the directions and provide sentence stems to guide student responses when sharing with the class. Slides 4 and 5 provide the essential question and the “We will / I will” statements for the lesson.
Lesson	<p><u>Part I: Analyze an Image</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students view an illustration titled “The Texas Cattle Trade” taken from an 1874 issue of Harper’s Weekly to make observations, inferences, and predictions about the unit. The image shows cowhands moving cattle onto trains using a series of low, wooden corridors to direct the cattle onto the cars. Slide 6 provides a larger view of the image from this portion of the work. <p><u>Part II: Essential Ideas Reading Passage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read the passage about the major themes, topics, and events of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads. Slides 8 – 12 provide images to accompany the reading. Each paragraph has one slide with an image that accompanies the primary theme or topic of that paragraph. The teacher can encourage students to try to determine the connection between each image and the paragraph it accompanies. <p><u>Part III: Cause and Effect</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students complete a chart demonstrating the cause and effect of four key events from the reading. <u>Advanced</u>: The Essential Ideas reading passage is written at an above-grade level Lexile level, and students identify and explain both the cause(s) and effect(s) of each of the 4 events in Part III of the assignment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grade Level</u>: The Essential Ideas reading passage is written at on-grade-level Lexile level, and students identify either the cause(s) or the effect(s) of each of four events from the reading. For each event, either the cause OR effect is provided for the students, and they identify and explain the missing information. • <u>Foundations</u>: The Essential Ideas reading passage is written at on-grade-level Lexile level with key information presented in bold lettering. Then, students identify the causes or effects of four events from the reading by choosing TWO out of three multiple choice options provided.
Exit Ticket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students answer a multiple-choice question to determine the best statement that most accurately explains the defining characteristics of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads.. • Slides 14 and 15 restate the directions and provide directions for sharing student answers with the class.

Primary Sources and Other Resources Used

- [Print from Harper's Weekly, May 2, 1874. "The Texas Cattle Trade"], artwork, May 2, 1874; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph7161/>: accessed November 4, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting George Ranch Historical Park.
- [Many wagons on a market day in Killeen], photograph, 1890~/1899~; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph12939/>: accessed November 5, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Killeen City Library System.
- Photograph 1892 of a pile of American bison skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer. 1892. Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. This is a **retouched picture**, which means that it has been digitally altered from its original version. Modifications: *restored*. The original can be viewed here: **Bison skull pile.jpg**. Modifications made by PawełMM. *This media file is in the public domain in the United States. This applies to U.S. works where the copyright has expired, often because its first publication occurred prior to January 1, 1930, and if not then due to lack of notice or renewal.*
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bison_skull_pile-restored.jpg
- [Cattle Drive On Ranch, 1918], photograph, 1918; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1125927/>: accessed November 4, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Hardin-Simmons University Library.
- [Men in a Cotton Field], postcard, April 1, 1907; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph784/>: accessed November 19, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Fort Bend Museum.
- Farmer's Alliance Banner. From Dunning (ed.), *Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest*. (Washington, DC: Alliance Publishing Co., 1891); pg. iv.; Digitally edited for Wikipedia by Tim Davenport ("Carrite"), no copyright claimed, file released to the public domain without restriction. Accessed on 11/18/25.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Farmers-Alliance-Banner.jpg&oldid=847710980>