

# Unit 10: Cotton, Cattle, & Railroads

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan: What's the story?

(90 - 120 minutes)

<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>In this two-day lesson, students will examine six readings presenting significant events that took place during Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads and identify their significance to United States and Texas history.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>We will</u></b> examine six primary topics and themes in Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads to identify the major events that shaped the era in the United States and Texas.</li> <li>2. <b><u>I will</u></b> read six short passages about key events to determine the primary details and significance of key events that occurred during Cotton, Cattle, and Roads.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Key Concepts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The population of Texas dramatically increased during the era, with some beginning to move into larger cities, and many migrating west to the frontier.</li> <li>• The increase of Anglo settlers, professional bison hunters, and the U.S. Army resulted in conflicts with Plains Indians which ultimately resulted in the forced removal of Plains tribes.</li> <li>• Northern demand for beef led to the rise in cattle drives to Northern states, while population increases in the eastern part of the state and “Texas fever” caused more trails to be opened farther west.</li> <li>• The success of the cattle industry gave rise to the establishment of large ranches in the Plains. Ranchers used barbed wire to close off large areas of the Plains, which decreased cattle drives.</li> <li>• The majority of Texans were cotton farmers, and falling cotton prices caused a lot of financial hardship for farmers. Farmers organized groups to advocate for political reform and economic relief.</li> <li>• Southern states passed Jim Crow laws, which restricted the rights of Black Southerners.</li> <li>• Black Southerners played a meaningful role in the era as cowboys, ranch hands, and cavalry soldiers known as “buffalo soldiers.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading for context and significance information.</li> <li>• Identifying and paraphrasing or summarizing main ideas and supporting evidence.</li> <li>• Identifying and explaining the significance of historical events.</li> <li>• Explaining cause-and-effect relationships between significant historical events</li> </ul>
<p><b>Essential Question</b></p>	<p>What were the most significant events of Cotton, Cattle, &amp; Railroads? What were the details, causes, and effects of each event?</p>
<p><b>Assignment</b></p>	<p><b>Warm-up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read three (fictional) newspaper headlines related to the era and write at least one piece of information they would expect to read in each article.</li> <li>• Headlines include, “Prices of Cotton Fall Again!”, “Northern States Want TX Cattle!”, “Millions of Bison Killed!”</li> </ul> <p><b>Lesson</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read 6 short passages that present the most significant events of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads in chronological order including an overview of the era’s major changes, the end of Comanche dominance of the Plains, cowboys and cattle drives, the rise of mega ranches, farmers and laborers organize, and the rise of Jim Crow in the South.</li> <li>• Students use the readings to complete a note-taking timeline of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads on their worksheet, including the name of each event, its date or timeframe, key information related to the event, and the significance of the event.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exit Ticket</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose ONE event from the era from a list of options and write at least one cause and one effect of their chosen event.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Materials</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Slideshow (<i>Suggested use: present on the overhead; Upload to an educational platform like google classroom; print extra copies for note-taking assistance</i>)</li> <li>2. Warm-up / Exit Ticket (<i>Suggested printing: 1 per student. Assignment prints two copies per page.</i>)</li> <li>3. Readings (<i>Suggested printing 1 per student or partner group</i>)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Advanced Readings</li> <li>b. Grade Level Readings</li> <li>c. Foundations Readings</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Assignment (<i>Suggested printing 1 per student</i>)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Advanced Level work</li> <li>b. Grade Level work</li> <li>c. Foundations Level work</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Differentiation</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scaffolding including classwork and readings at three different levels of academic ability</li> <li>2. Visual representations of directions</li> <li>3. Chunking text information</li> <li>4. Key information presented in bold lettering in the readings</li> <li>5. Note-taking assistance including response options for dates, key details, and significance of each event.</li> </ol>
<p><b>TEKS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>7.01(A)</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>7.06(A)</b> Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the factors leading to the expansion of the Texas frontier, the effects of westward expansion on American Indians, the buffalo soldiers, and Quanah Parker.</li> <li>• <b>7.06(B)</b> Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the development of the cattle industry from its Spanish beginnings and the cowboy way of life.</li> <li>• <b>7.06(C)</b> Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the effects of the growth of railroads and the contributions of James Hogg.</li> <li>• <b>7.06(D)</b> Explain the political, economic, and social impact of the agricultural industry and the development of West Texas resulting from the close of the frontier.</li> <li>• <b>7.07(B)</b> Define and trace the impact of “boom-and-bust” cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries such as farming, cotton, and ranching.</li> </ul>

- **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.
- **7.09(C)** Explain the ways in which geographic factors such as limited water resources have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas.
- **7.19(C)** Analyze the effects of various scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the development of Texas such as advancements in the agricultural industries.
- **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: What's the story?

<p><b>Warm-up</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read three newspaper headlines and write at least one piece of information they would expect to find in each article based on its headline.</li> <li>• Headlines include, “Prices of Cotton Fall Again!”, “Northern States Want TX Cattle!”, “Millions of Bison Killed!”</li> <li>• This activity requires students to make inferences based on their prior knowledge of general topics in the unit.</li> <li>• Slides 2 and 3 restate the directions and provide sentence stems to guide student responses when sharing with the class.</li> <li>• Slides 4 and 5 provide the essential question and “We will / I will” statements for the lesson.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lesson</b></p>	<p><u>Reading Cards:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students read six short chronological passages for key events and information about the Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads era.</li> <li>• There are three levels of reading cards. The Foundations level provides a grade-level reading with key words and information presented in bold as reading supports. The grade level readings do not have the literacy cues for reading supports. The advanced readings are written at a higher Lexile level with more challenging terms and phrasing.</li> <li>• These readings can be printed as a set for each student, for groups, tables, or stations, or hung around the room as a gallery walk. They can also be uploaded to a Learning Management System like Google Classroom for digital work. They can be cut out (there are 2 short readings per page) or left as one full set.</li> <li>• Slides 6 – 11 provide images that accompany each reading passage.</li> </ul> <p><u>Student Worksheets:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will record the required information including the title of each event, the date/dates, key details from the event, and the significance of each event on their worksheets.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slides 6 - 11: Provide the title of each reading along with images that accompany and enhance the readings.</li> <li>• <u>Advanced</u>: Students create their own short, constructed responses to complete their timeline by recording the date/dates or timeframe, key details, and significance of the events described in each reading.</li> <li>• <u>Grade Level</u>: Students create their own short, constructed responses to record the date/dates or timeframe, and key information from the readings. They choose from two options provided for the most accurate description of the significance of each topic.</li> <li>• <u>Foundations</u>: Students complete their chronological timeline notes chart by choosing from multiple-choice response options for the date, key details, and significance of each event.</li> </ul> <p><u>Note</u>: This assignment can be carried out by dividing students into 6 groups and assigning each group one reading to read, record key information for, and present to the class for the class to take the key notes.</p> <p>It can also be carried out by going through all of the readings together (recommended for lower performing classes) or going through several readings together and then assigning the rest of the readings to the students to complete individually or in pairs. This lesson will take an average of two days to complete.</p> <p>This lesson is designed to take one or two days, depending on how the material is presented and the academic level of each class.</p>
<p><b>Exit Ticket</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose one event from the following list: The Red River War, Cattle Drives, Mega Ranches in the Plains, Farmer Organizations, and Jim Crow Laws.</li> <li>• Students write at least one cause and one effect for their chosen event.</li> <li>• Slides 12 and 13 restate the directions and provide students with sentence stems to guide their responses when sharing with the class.</li> </ul>

## Primary Sources and Other Resources Used

- [Two men herding cattle down a street], photograph, August 14, 1897; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph8867/>: accessed November 4, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting George Ranch Historical Park.
- Hine, Lewis Wickes, photographer. *Eddie Marek a six year old cotton picker who picks fifty pounds a day. His sister eighteen years old picks one hundred pounds. Father and mother and some negroes also pick. A frugal Bohemian family. Own the farm of two hundred acres near Houston. Location: Houston vicinity, Texas.* Texas Houston United States, 1913. October. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018677601/>
- Image Credit: Mugg, Kilo. [Cattle Grazing], photograph, Date Unknown; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph129765/>: accessed April 28, 2024), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Wolf Creek Heritage Museum.
- *The far west - shooting buffalo on the line of the Kansas-Pacific Railroad / Bghs.* Great Plains, 1871. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004669992/>
- Kiowa Ledger Drawings. Edward E. Ayer Digital Collection. Newberry Library. The Newberry makes its collections available for any lawful purpose, commercial or non-commercial, without licensing or permission fees to the library, subject to the following terms and conditions: <https://www.newberry.org/rights-and-reproductions> Accessed on 11/21/25 at [https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/nby\\_eayer/id/46856](https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/nby_eayer/id/46856)
- Smith, Erwin E. *[Cowhands guiding a herd of cattle]*. ca. 1910. Photograph. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1151055/>.
- [Cattle Branding at Five Wells], photograph, 1889; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1637090/>: accessed November 4, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Midland Historical Society.
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- 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>

- [Postcard of Farmers Union Warehouse], postcard, January 24, 1907; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph743134/>: accessed November 21, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Private Collection of T. B. Willis.
- The Galveston Daily News. (Galveston, Tex.), Vol. 47, No. 333, Ed. 1 Tuesday, March 26, 1889, newspaper, March 26, 1889; Galveston, Texas. (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph466971/>: accessed November 21, 2025), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.