



## **Ride 'Em Cowboy**

(Buffalo Bill Cody and the Wild West Show)

**Shelly Turk**

Grade Level: 7-8

Time Allotment: Two 45 minute class periods

Overview: Buffalo Bill Cody lived a life that inspired the world's view of the American West and the cowboy. Using Internet and video, students will learn about Cody's life, the Wild West Show, and Cody's impact on western culture. Finally, students will create posters advertising the Wild West Show.

Subject Matter: Social Studies

### Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Summarize Cody's life and work.
- Describe the Wild West Show
- Explain how Cody impacted the world's view of the American West and the cowboy.
- Create posters advertising the Wild West Show.

### Standards:

From the Montana State Standards for Social Studies:

(Available on-line at [www.opi.state.mt.us](http://www.opi.state.mt.us))

Standard 1: Students access, synthesize and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

Standard 4: Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

Standard 6: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

### Media Components:

#### VIDEO

*Buffalo Bill: Showman of the West.* A&E Biography. A&E Television Networks. New York, 1996.

## WEB SITES

*William F. Cody. New Perspectives on the West.* PBS.

[http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a\\_c/buffalobill.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/buffalobill.htm)

This site gives a brief, concise biography of William F. Cody.

*Buffalo Bill Cody. America's Story.* America's Library.

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/cody>.

This interactive site gives a biography of Cody, some colorful pictures of Cody and posters from the Wild West Show, and black and white video clips of the acts in the Wild West Show, including an Indian ghost dance, a cowboy riding a bronco, and “Little Sure Shot” Annie Oakley shooting at a target.

### Materials:

*For each student:*

One “The Life & Times of William F. Cody” worksheet.

One standard-sized sheet of white poster board.

*For the class:*

A variety of art materials, including colored pencils, crayons, paint and paintbrushes, western magazines and/or clip art and graphics, scissors, glue.

### Prep for Teachers:

Prior to teaching this lesson, bookmark the sites used in the lesson on each computer in your classroom.

Prep the video so that it is at the desired location for the video portion of the lesson.

Prepare the hands-on elements of the lesson by gathering the art materials listed above.

When using media, provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites, or other multimedia elements.

### Introductory Activity:

Step 1. Ask your students if they remember who their heroes or idols were when they were small children. Invite them to share with the class. (*Answers will vary.*) At this point, you may wish to share with your class who your childhood hero was.

Step 2. Ask your students what characteristics a hero has. (*Answers will vary but may include strong, good, larger-than-life, etc.*)

Step 3. Now ask your students if they can think of any Hollywood or comic book Western heroes that seemed to fit some of the characteristics they listed in Step 2.

*(Answers will vary but may include John Wayne, Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger, Clint Eastwood, Wyatt Earp, Zorro, etc.)*

Step 4. Tell your students that there was a real man that inspired the world to romanticize the American West and the heroic cowboy figure. This man was a hero to many children in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Insert the video *Buffalo Bill: Showman of the West* into the VCR. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to determine who this hero was and what Winston Roche, the speaker, liked about this man and the Wild West Show when he was a little boy. START the video right after it shows an historian talking and he says, "...but at being a showman, he was the very best of all." STOP the video when the tape shows a sepia shot of riders in the Wild West Show and the narrator says, "...and his romanticized vision of the frontier became the world's." Check for comprehension by asking the students who Winston Roche's hero was. *(Answer: Buffalo Bill Cody.)* Ask the class what Roche enjoyed about the Wild West Show. *(Answer: Seeing the cowboys and Indians, whooping and hollering, and being part of the action.)* Tell the students that in this lesson they are going to learn about Buffalo Bill, the Wild West Show, and how this man created the American cowboy hero.

Learning Activity:

Step 1. Give each student a "The Life & Times of William F. Cody" worksheet. Tell your students to log on to *William F. Cody* at [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a\\_c/buffalobill.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/buffalobill.htm). Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to use the information on this site to complete their worksheets. When the worksheets are completed, the students should hand them in to you.

Step 2. Ask your students what they thought it was like when Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show arrived in a town to perform. *(Answers will vary.)* Tell your students to log on to *Buffalo Bill Cody* at <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/cody>. Tell them to click on "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" at the bottom of the page, then "Next" for page 2 of this section. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to be ready to describe the parade they are about to view. Tell the students to click on "Real Video (streaming)" below the TV and watch the clip. When finished, ask your students to describe the parade. *(Answers should include lots of people, animals, big spectacle, etc.)* Ask the students what other kind of old-fashioned parade this clip was like. *(Answer should be circus parade.)*

Step 3. Tell the students to click on "Next", then "More Stories" at the same site they are currently at. Next, they should click on "Little Sure Shot and the Gang". Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to watch three clips, then explain why they think people found the show so thrilling that it even went to Europe where Queen Victoria saw it three times. Instruct the students to click on "Real Video (streaming)" under the TV picture of Little Sure Shot. When done, they should click on "Next", then "Real Video (streaming)" to see the Native American Ghost Dance. Lastly, they should click on "Next", then "Real Video (streaming)" to see Lee Martin ride

a bucking bronco. When finished with all three clips, ask your students what they thought the attraction was. (*Answers may include most people had never seen anything like it, lots of action and excitement, thrilling to see animals, cowboys, and Indians, the legends they knew about Cody, etc.*)

Step 4. Insert the video *Buffalo Bill: Showman of the West* into the VCR. Tell the students to take a good look at the posters on this clip, as well as listening for answers to the questions, as they will be making their own posters at the end of this lesson. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to find out how many members were in the Wild West cast and crew, how many horses and buffalo were in the show, how many U.S. cities it toured, how long the show stayed in Europe, and what the only European country the show did NOT go to was. START the video after a sepia picture of Annie Oakley with a rifle over her shoulder, and the narrator says, "...and of course, Little Sure Shot, Annie Oakley, who devotedly toured with Buffalo Bill for 17 years and never even asked for a contract." PAUSE the tape after the sepia picture of Buffalo Bill, and his voice says, "Goodbye and good luck, and be very happy. Brother Bill." Ask for the students' answers. (*Answers should be 640 member cast and crew, 400 horses, 20 buffalo, 1000 U.S. cities, 10 out of 30 years, and Scandinavia.*) If the students missed some answers, rewind the tape and play the segment again, using only audio, no picture.

Step 5. Ask the students why they think Native Americans, including Chief Sitting Bull, were willing to be in the show and work for Cody after he'd fought in the army against them and even scalped some. (*Answers will vary.*) Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to check their guesses against the information on the video. START the video right at the point you paused it in Step 4. STOP the video after the sepia picture of the two Native Americans and the voice says, "Long Hair had a strong heart. Black Elk, 1889." Ask the students why the Native Americans performed. (*Answers should include learning secrets of the white man to help their people, mutual respect between Indians and Cody, and Cody treated all of his employees with dignity and fairness.*)

Step 6. Tell your students that Cody has been credited with founding the West, creating the rodeo, and romanticizing the cowboy. Ask your students how they thought Cody did those things. (*Answers will vary.*) Rewind the video *Buffalo Bill: Showman of the West* back to the end of the first clip of Winston Roche. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to find out how Cody shaped the world's view of the West. START the tape right after a close-up on the elderly man, Winston Roche, and he says, "It was wonderful." STOP the tape when Cody rides across the screen and lifts his hat, and the narrator says, "That was hardly the case, but it seemed true to Buffalo Bill, and it seemed true to millions of people in America and around the world." Ask your students how Cody romanticized the cowboy and shaped the West. (*Answers should include the show had heroic scenarios of real life exploits, people had never seen such things, so accepted it for reality, Cody romanticized the West, including making cowboys, who were basically stockpersons who herded cows, into "Knights of the Plains."*)

### Culminating Activity:

Step 1. Tell your students that their final assignment for this lesson is to create their own Wild West Show advertising posters. Give each student one piece of poster board, and place the art supplies in an accessible area for all students. Tell the students they may draw and color their posters, and they may also incorporate graphics and magazine cutouts if they wish. Instruct them to turn their posters in to you when finished.

Step 2. If the students wish to go back and look at posters, they can log back on to *Buffalo Bill Cody* at <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/cody> and click on “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show” and look at the posters on pages 1 and 3 of that section.

Step 3. Display your students’ work.

### Cross-Curricular Activities:

#### MEDIA

Create a video montage depicting the cowboy as the romantic figure of the West.

Study the use of the cowboy and/or the West in modern advertising.

#### ENGLISH

Read one of Ned Buntline’s or Cody’s dime novels, then write a short story about your own exploits in the same exaggerated style.

#### SCIENCE

Study the near extinction of the buffalo, and decide whether or not they are recovered sufficiently today. Explore the different ways bison are used in today’s society.

### Community Connections:

- Ask a rodeo cowboy to visit your class and discuss his/her training and sport.
- If you are close to Cody, WY, take a field trip to the Buffalo Bill Historical Museum and Irma Hotel.
- Ask a Native American person to visit your classroom to talk about his/her people’s views on the settling of the West.

## The Life & Times of William F. Cody

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Answer the following questions:

1. Where and when was Cody born?
2. List the many jobs Cody had during his lifetime:
  - 1857:
  - 1859:
  - 1860:
  - Civil War:
  - 1863:
  - 1867:
  - 1868:
  - 1872:
  - 1879:
  - 1876:
  - 1883:
  - 1890:
3. How old was Cody when he joined the Pony Express?
4. What was the name of the girl Cody married?
5. When Cody was a buffalo hunter, how many buffalo did he claim to kill in 17 months?
6. Tell about the contest in which Cody earned his nickname "Buffalo Bill":

7. What award did Cody earn for his service in the Calvary?
8. What writer's works caused Buffalo Bill to become known as a national folk hero?
9. What was the name of the first play Cody acted in?
10. How many seasons did Cody act on stage?
11. What books did Cody write?
12. Was Cody with Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn?
13. What happened in Cody's "duel" with Cheyenne Chief Yellow Hair?
  
14. Describe Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show which Cody organized in 1883.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Name 3 stars in Cody's Wild West Show.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. What type of performers did Cody add in his international show the "Congress of Rough Riders of the World"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. What was Cody's role in the army after the massacre at Wounded Knee?
18. How did Cody lose his success and the Wild West Show?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
19. When did Cody die?
20. Where is Cody buried?

## The Life & Times of William F. Cody Answer Sheet

1. *Scott County, Iowa, 1846*
2. *1857: Mounted messenger & wrangler*  
*1859: Prospector*  
*1860: Pony Express*  
*Civil War: Union scout*  
*1863: Seventh Kansas Cavalry*  
*1867: Hunting buffalo to feed construction crews*  
*1868: Chief of Scouts for Fifth Cavalry*  
*1872: Actor*  
*1879: Author*  
*1876: Army Scout*  
*1883: Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*  
*1890: Army*
3. *14*
4. *Louisa Fredrici*
5. *4,280 head*
6. *It was an 8 hour shooting match with a hunter named William Comstock, presumably to determine which of the two Buffalo Bills deserved the title.*
7. *Congressional Medal of Honor*
8. *Ned Buntline, pen name of E.Z.C. Judson*
9. *The Scouts of the Plains*
10. *11*
11. *His autobiography and some of his own Buffalo Bill dime novels.*
12. *No*
13. *Cody shot Yellow Hair, stabbed him in the heart, and scalped him.*
14. *An outdoor extravaganza that dramatized some of the most picturesque elements of frontier life: a buffalo hunt with real buffalos, an Indian attack on the Deadwood stage with real Indians, a Pony Express ride, and at the climax, a tableau presentation of Custer's Last Stand in which some Lakota who had actually fought in the battle played a part.*
15. *Annie Oakley, Buck Taylor ("King of the Cowboys"), and Chief Sitting Bull*
16. *Cossacks, lancers, Old World cavalrymen, vaqueros, cowboys, and Indians*
17. *Peacemaker—to restore order*



18. *Mismanagement and dubious investment schemes*
19. *Jan. 10, 1917*
20. *A tomb blasted from solid rock at the summit of Lookout Mountain near Denver,  
Colorado*