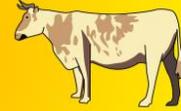




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Discover how some of Florida's industries were impacted by the natural resources of our state!



## **Ranchers, Rustlers, and the Law:**

### **A Lesson on Cattle Branding**

#### **Skills:**

- This lesson engages students to think creatively and solve visual puzzles.

#### **Method:**

- Students will be taking on the roles of a rancher, a cattle rustler, and a lawman/lawwoman as they design an individual brand, alter a classmate's brand, and then, as a full class, try to match the altered brands to the original brands.

#### **Materials:**

- Cattle Brand Example Sheet
- Cattle Brand Worksheet
- A whiteboard or other clearly visible display space



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## Background:

- What is a brand?

*Famous modern brand logos are a good way to help students understand this concept: the Nike “swoosh,” the McDonalds double arch M, the Apple logo, whatever icons students are familiar with. Students might be wearing visible brands.*

- What is a cattle brand?

**A cattle brand is a mark used to identify cows. Every cow belonging to the same person, the same family, or the same company, has the same mark or “brand” on them.** Cattle branding has been around for thousands of years, and it has been a part of Florida’s cattle industry for almost 500 years. Today many ranchers use other ways to mark their cows, but brands are still common.

The brand is put onto the cow using a branding iron, which is a very hot piece of metal made in the shape of the brand. The branding iron is pushed onto the side of the cow, and the mark it leaves will stay there for the rest of the cow’s life. If the person placing the brand is good at their job, it doesn’t hurt the cow for very long.

*Pierced ears are a useful comparison to help students to understand this concept if any students have them.*

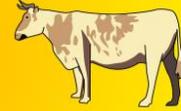
- Why do you think people brand cows? What might happen to a cow without a brand?

Sometimes different ranchers’ cows get mixed together, and people need to be able to tell whose cows are whose. However, this isn’t the only reason for cattle brands. Cows are valuable, and sometimes people try to steal them and sell them, pretending those cows belong to them. These people are called “cattle rustlers.” A cattle brand shows who owns the cows, and this protects the cows.



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## Let's Be Ranchers!

- How does a cattle rancher create their brand?

The best brands are simple and distinctive. They don't match any other brand, but they also don't have too many numbers, letters, or symbols on them. A brand should be easy to quickly read and understand, even when it is on the side of a moving animal. The brand should be big and clearly written, without too many lines that are too close together. Lines like these can smudge together over time, or might hurt the cows too much.

*Hand out or begin displaying the Cattle Brand Example Sheet. Walk students through the examples.*

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all of the options and want to include as many interesting elements as you can, but remember:

- **The best brands are simple, distinctive, and easy to read.**
- **Try not to use more than two or three letters or numbers.**
- **Some designs might not have any letters or numbers at all!**

*Have students use scrap paper or the back of the Cattle Brand Worksheet to come up with their cattle brand, and then draw their brand large, clear, and identical in both of the provided spaces on the Cattle Brand Worksheet, the "Cattle Ranchers" section AND the "Cattle Rustlers" section. They should now have the exact same brand drawn on the paper twice.*

- What is your brand?

There are a few different ways to read the name of a brand:

Left to right:                   —BQ is read as Bar B Q

Top to Bottom:                 ROAD is read as Rail Road

Outside to inside             ER is read as Box ER

*Have students write down the name of their brand using these methods.*



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## Let's Be Rustlers!

- If a cattle rustler found cows that were already branded, what would they do?

Often, cattle rustlers tried to slightly change the existing brands on cows in order to make them look like a different brand.

A brand on a cow cannot be erased or moved, so any changes to the brand have to use all of the parts of the existing brand. For example, a cattle rustler might change a — S (“bar S”) brand to a 4 8 brand by adding lines that turn the bar into a four and the S into an 8.

Let's see if the students are as good at being cattle rustlers as they are at being ranchers!

*Redistribute Cattle Brand Worksheets, making sure that no student ends up with their own brand. Encourage students to use scrap paper while figuring out how to change the brand, just like they did designing their own brand. Students should NOT draw over both brands while creating an altered brand, just over the brand in the section labelled “Cattle Rustlers,” leaving the “Cattle Ranchers” brand alone so that the original brand design can still be viewed.*



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## Let's Be Lawmen and Lawwomen!

*Select several sheets that work well as examples and write all of the brands, both altered and unaltered somewhere easily viewable by students. The more pairs of brands you use, the more challenging this will be. This part works similarly to a matching game, so try not to place the altered brands too close to the originals.*

Changing a brand is hard, and even the cattle rustlers who thought they were pretty good at it were usually caught by the lawmen and lawwomen who knew how to spot an altered brand.

Now that everyone has tried being a rancher protecting their cows with a brand, and tried being a cattle rustler stealing cows by changing brands, it is time to try being a lawman (or lawwoman) trying to catch cattle rustlers. See if you can match the changed brands to the originals! Look out for:

- **Brands with more lines in them than the other brands**
- **Brands with similar shapes to each other**

*If students struggle with this, you can provide them with a "list of registered brands," (all of the original brands the class designed).*