

Document B

Source: Chart compiled from various sources.

Cowboys by the Numbers

Estimated number of cowboys in early 1870s	40,000
Approximate US population in early 1870s	40,000,000
Number of cattle trailed north from Texas, 1867 to 1887	5,500,000
Average number of years a man worked as a cowboy	7
Fraction of cowboys who were Hispanic	1/9
Fraction of cowboys who were African American	2/9
Typical monthly pay for a Texas cowboy on a long drive	\$30
Typical monthly pay for a Texas teacher in 1870s	\$40 - \$50
Price of a new Stetson hat in Abilene, Kansas	\$10
Number of cattle on typical long drive out of Texas	2,000
Average number of cowboys per long drive	10
Hours of night watch per night on long drive	2
Number of gallons of water drunk per steer, per day	30
Pounds of a weight loss by one steer in hot night stampede	50
Price per steer for range cattle in south Texas in 1870s	\$8
Average market price per steer at Kansas railhead in 1870s	\$30
Average cost per steer to drive cattle north	\$2.50

EV

Document Analysis

1. Out of every 1,000 Americans in the early 1870s, how many were cowboys?
2. What evidence is there that about one-third of cowboys were non-white?
3. Use the average numbers above. Let's say that in 1879 an owner drove 1,000 head of cattle from south Texas to market in Dodge City but lost 100 cattle to stampedes, drowning, and disease. What was his profit or loss for the entire venture?
4. What numbers might encourage a Texas cowboy to re-up for another cattle drive? Explain.
5. What numbers might discourage re-upping? Explain.

Document C

Source: Baylis John Fletcher, *Up the Trail in '79*.

Note: Baylis Fletcher was born on July 4, 1859, and grew up in the ranch country around Lexington, Texas. He was 19 when he signed on to this cattle drive from the Corpus Christi area through Dodge City to Cheyenne, Wyoming. He recounted his experience in a trip narrative published after his death in 1912.

EV

We had collected about two thousand cattle and were ready to hit the trail. Before starting out on our long journey, however, we must road-brand our cattle. Our road brand was TL connected. To burn these letters on the sides of two thousand cattle, we must first drive them into the customary chute, or narrow lane, just wide enough for one cow to squeeze through and long enough to hold about twenty-five animals. After we had branded the imprisoned cattle by poking the red-hot branding iron through the fence of the chute, we cropped their tails as an additional mark ... that they were trail cattle....

The branding took two days of hard work.... Then ... we were ready to start north. ... On or about the first day of June [1879] we came in sight of the Red River Valley,

beyond which we could see the Indian Territory. The country ahead was then a wilderness, without a human habitation in view of the Chisholm Trail to the line of Kansas, nearly three hundred miles away by the meanderings of our route.

... We were not alone on the trail. The big drive northward was at its height, and that spring there were probably 500,000 cattle and horses moving up the ... trail from south Texas. Often [in northern Texas] we had been driven by angry men, with ferocious dogs, from tract to tract of grazing land, but ... the cattle got enough to live upon. The Indian Territory was the cow-puncher's paradise. Now we would have ... no more obstructing fences, but one grand expanse of free grass. It was a delightful situation to contemplate.

Document Analysis

1. Why were trail cattle branded?
2. Was Fletcher nervous about entering Indian Territory? What is your evidence?
3. What were the “angry men” in north Texas probably angry about?
4. What evidence in Fletcher’s account makes you more likely to re-up for another drive?
5. What evidence in this account makes you more likely not to re-up?