

Branding

Lesson Plan for 3rd -12th Grades - Social Science, History, and Visual Arts

OBJECTIVES

The student will evaluate the importance of branding as a tool used by the cattle industry. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of brands and branding by illustrating brands of their own creation. Older students will register their brands in the Classroom County Court.

TEKS Requirements: History 4.4, Social Studies 4.23



OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Branding is an example of a technique that has been used for centuries, 4000-year-old Egyptian tomb paintings depict the first scenes of roundups and cattle branding. Spaniards brought the first cattle and horses to the New World, as well as introducing the practice of branding. Most of the Spanish brands were elaborate with many curls. Each time a new son was born, the Spanish rancher would add a new design to the original brand. These intricate were hard for the Texas ranchers to understand. “They often referred to them as “quien sabe” – who knows? Since they couldn’t be read”. (The New Handbook of Texas).



BUILDING BACKGROUND

- Write, draw or show logos/brands.
- McDonald's, Superman, Batman, Texas Tech (Choose example depending on age group)
- Ask students to identify each logo.
- Discuss: Why do organizations use easily identifiable logos? What comes to your mind when you see these logos?

VERIFICATION AND INTRODUCTION

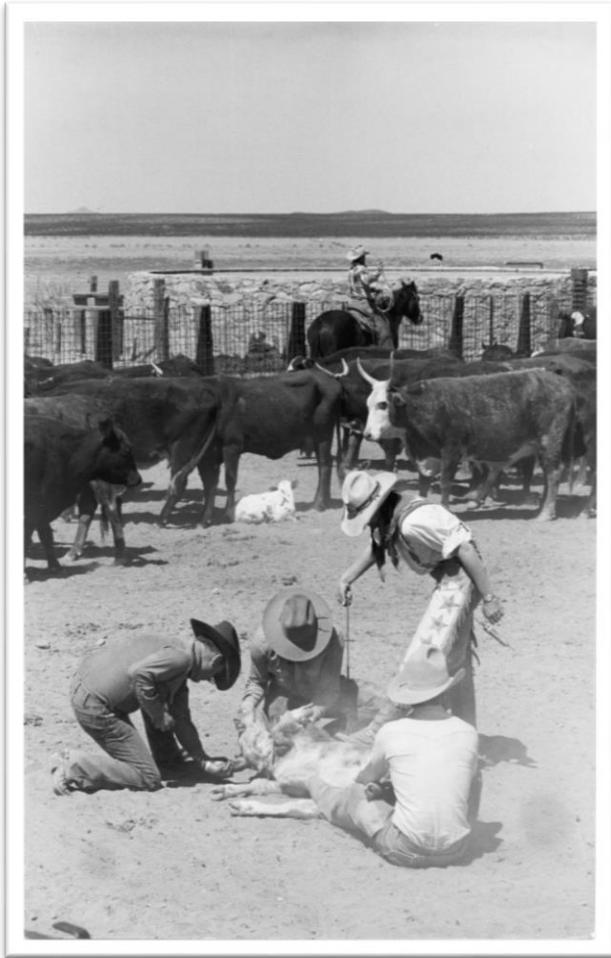
Discuss: In the same way logos identify organizations, brands identify ranches

* Using the examples on the “Branding 101” sheet shows students brands and compares them to modern-day logos. For example, when we see the checkmark on athletic shoes, we know that it's Nike's athletic shoe brand. Younger students use superheroes as an example (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Black Panther, etc.)

In the days before barbed wire fences, cattle roamed freely on the open range. It was often hard to determine whose cattle belonged to whom. So, ranchers would gather up all the new calves in the spring and brand them with the ranch's official marking. A ranch's brand is the most official mark that usually stays with the ranch from generation to generation. Brands must be registered with the county to ensure that more than one ranch doesn't have the same brand.

CALLIN' THE BRAND

When it's branding season, the cowboys gather all the calves and put them in a holding pen or corral. Then they rope them one at a time to give them their shots and brand them. A branding iron is heated in the fire and the mark is seared (burned) onto the calf's shoulder or hip. Although it is not a pleasant experience for a calf at that time, the brand heals and the cattle are fine.



Once the brand is applied, it does not wash off or rub off. It stays with the animal forever. Additionally, some ranchers choose to mark their cattle by placing a tag in their ear, similar to wearing an earring. Whatever the method, branding is a useful tool for the rancher that is still a part of their work each year. (*Burning the Brand*. The National Ranching Heritage Center)

Why do ranchers still brand? The modern rancher puts his cattle in a truck to take them to market instead of taking them on a long cattle drive. Is it more or less important for a cow or horse to be branded today? If a cow or any other ranch property is taken from its owner, brands help identify who they belong to and it helps law enforcement agents to return stolen cattle.

Why do we brand?

- Identification
- Ownership

BRANDING METHODS USED TODAY:

- Freeze Brands
- Hot brands
- Earmarking or Tagging
- Tattoos

1. Freeze Brands

- A freeze brand consists of a super-cold or chilled branding iron.
- They are applied to the hide of the animal, where the pigment-producing cells are destroyed or altered.
- When the hair grows back, it is white.



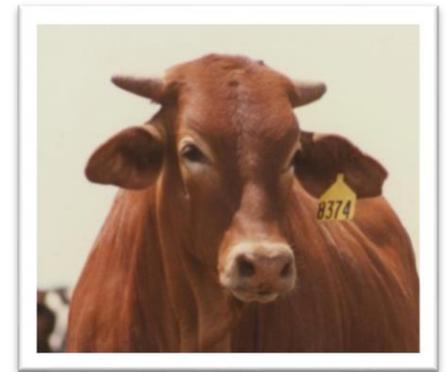
2. Hot Branding

- Burns the hide off the skin
- Can be electric
- Can be heated up by fire



3. Ear cutting or tagging

- Some ranchers will use ear tags (that look like earrings) with numbers. Some of these can have electronic chips that can track the location of the cattle. Other ranchers may make a cut on either the left or right ear to identify their cattle. Each cut is unique and can be placed in different locations. Also used to identify gender or the age of the cattle.



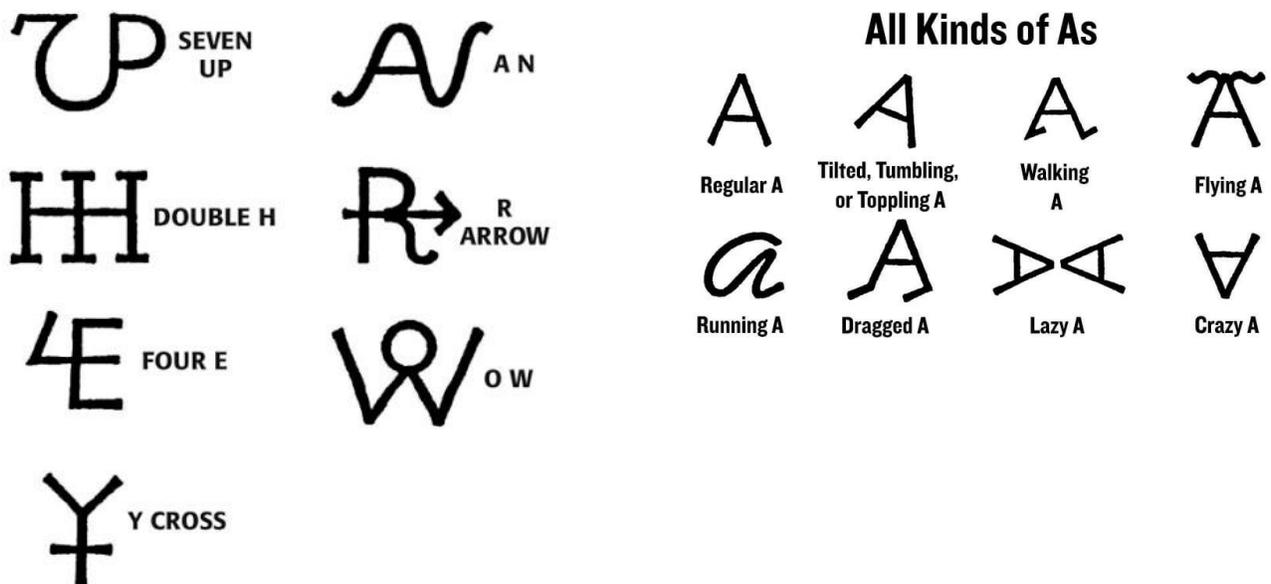
4. Tattoos

- Some ranchers may opt to tattoo their cattle (usually in the inner ear) to identify their cattle.

THREE RULES OF READING BRANDS

1. From left to right
2. From top to bottom
3. From the outside to the inside.

Brands can be as unique as the rancher's imagination. Most include either letters, numbers, figures or pictures. Show examples of walking, flying, running lazy, rocking, circle, bar, box, sunrise, and pitchforks brands.



Brands are designed so they are:

- Easy to read at a distance
- Difficult for rustlers to change

Two rules about brands are:

- They must be recorded at the County Clerk's office
- They cannot be duplicated within the county



Activity 1. Create your own brand here:

Activity 2. Talk about it! (3rd grade) Write about it! (4th grade and up):

If you owned a ranch anywhere in the world, where would it be? Why? Describe your ranch. What does it look like? How many cattle and horses would you own? Would you hire people to help you take care of the animals? What does your brand stand for? Why is it unique?

Examples:



Resources:

“Cowboy Hieroglyphics,” Clarence Stilwill, Hearland USA, July/Aug. 2001.

“Chipping Away at Horse Theft,” Leslie Groves, The Quarter Horse Racing Journal,” January 1994.

“Branding,” David Dary, The Handbook of Texas Online. Jul. 23, 2002.
The Portal to Texas History

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- * What other topics would you like us to explore?