

# Hit the Trail

**Skills:** Social Studies, Language Arts, Information Literacy, Instructional Technology

**Objective:** The student will draw three cattle trails that passed through Indian Territory, using a written description of the trails.

## Background

The great cattle drives began in 1866, following the Civil War. Herds of longhorn cattle were driven north from Texas and Mexico to Nebraska, Kansas, the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana. There the stock could be fattened on open range. The cattle were then driven to railroad towns in Kansas and shipped east to St. Louis, Chicago or Cincinnati. In some cases, cattlemen rented or leased the right-of-way across Indian land or ranches to safeguard their herds. Some Indians allowed passage; others did not.

Between 25 and 30 thousand cowboys took part in the cattle drives. Many really were just boys. Few were grown men. Usually the oldest people on any drive were the trail boss and the cook, whose average ages were 30. The cowboys worked an exhausting schedule—eighteen hours in the saddle, sleeping on the ground, with nothing more than a bed roll for comfort. They endured snake bites, wild river crossings, driving hail storms and deadly stampedes. Many young men were drawn to this lifestyle because they yearned for excitement and wanted to prove to their families that they could make it on their own. For many, working a trail drive brought in more money than they had ever seen in their lives—an average \$30 a month.

The Shawnee Trail, also known to early settlers and merchants as the “Texas Road,” was the first cattle trail in Oklahoma. The trail entered Oklahoma just south of the present-day city of Durant and meandered north, past Muskogee and Fort Gibson, to the Kansas border. The East Shawnee Trail had fine grass and an abundant supply of water, but it was expensive, because the Chickasaw and Choctaw governments charged for its use. As the railroads progressed westward, a western branch of the Shawnee Trail was developed. This route connected the main trail with Wichita, Kansas, after departing the Texas Road at the Boggy Depot stage station.

The most famous trail during this period was the Chisholm Trail. Named for the Cherokee Indian trader Jesse Chisholm, the trail entered Oklahoma from Texas at the Red River Station and proceeded almost due north to Kansas. Most cattlemen preferred the Chisholm Trail or the Great Western Trail because these trails were the shortest. However, the Great Western, or Dodge City Trail was dangerous because of hostile Indians.

The range cattle industry lasted only a short period of time—about 23

P.A.S.S.

GRADE 2

**Reading—7.1bc**

GRADE 3

**Reading—6.1ab**

GRADE 4

**Reading—1.4b; 3.1b;  
5.1a,2cd**

**Writing—2.4d,6**

**Oral Language—1.1,2,3;  
2.1; 3.3**

**Social Studies—4.1; 5.2**

**Information Literacy—**

**1.4; 4.1**

**Instructional**

**Technology—3.2; 4.1**

## Materials

colored map pencils

Oklahoma road maps

## Ag in Your Community

Invite a cattle broker, rancher or modern day cowboy to speak to the class. Ask the speaker to discuss his or her daily routine and compare it to the practices of yesteryear. Have students brainstorm questions to ask before the speaker arrives.

years. Settlers began to put up barbed wire fences around their farms, making the movement of cattle difficult, and railroads in Oklahoma provided a safer and less expensive method of moving cattle. By 1889, there was little unfenced range left. Only scattered evidence remains today of these great trails.

## Language Arts

1. Ask students what comes to mind when you say the terms “wild west” and “cattle drive.” List all reasonable responses on the chalkboard.
2. Read and discuss background material.
3. Hand out Student Worksheet B.
  - Read the directions with your class.
  - Have students complete the record books.
  - Ask for volunteers to read aloud from the created trail records.
4. Divide students into groups, and assign each a historical trail to research (Trail of Tears, Pony Express, Overland Mail, Santa Fe, Mormon, Oregon, etc.), using a variety of resources.
  - Have the groups share the information they have gathered through maps and multimedia class presentations.
  - Have groups recreate the period dress of the people who followed the trails they have researched.
  - Have groups write short scripts and role-play events that may have taken place on the trail they have researched.
5. Read some poetry created by cowboy poets like Baxter Black, Waddie Mitchell and Oklahoma’s own Fred “Sky” Schivers. Make a list of terms used in the cowboy poetry that are not familiar to students. Assign different students to find the meanings of the terms and share them with the class.
6. Follow the instructions on the reading pages that follow to play “The Real Reader.”

## Social Studies

1. Hand out Student Worksheet A.
  - Review the directions with students, and study the map carefully so that students understand all the information presented.
  - Explain to students that the maps only show the parts of the cattle trails passing through Oklahoma. Explain that most of the trails started in Texas and ended in cattle market towns in Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.
  - Have students label the cattle trails, based on the information provided.
  - Caution students to follow the instructions carefully and not be tempted to simply connect the towns.
2. Lead a discussion in which you ask students the following questions:
  - How many of the towns on the map are located on rivers?
  - Which towns were stage coach stations (Enid Stage Stand, Dover

Stage Stand)

—Divide students into groups of four or five, and provide each group with an Oklahoma road map.

—Have students compare the cattle trail maps with current road maps by answering the following questions:

Which of the towns on the cattle trail map are towns or cities today?

What, if any, major highways follow the old trails?

3. Have students research the impact of the changes in transportation on the development and growth of towns in Oklahoma.

—Which Oklahoma towns were formed because they were located on rivers? Along the cattle trails? Near railway stations? Interstate highways?

—Have students research to find out why some of the towns survived while others did not?

### Extra Reading

Granfield, Linda, *Cowboys*, Ticknor and Fields, 1994.

Johnson, Neil, *Jack Creek Cowboy*, Dial, 1993.

Miller, Robert, *Cowboys*, Silver Burdett, 1991.

### Vocabulary

**cattle drive**—Moving cattle on foot from one place to another.

**cattle trail**—One of several routes on which cattle were driven for long distances in the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**longhorn cattle**—The descendants of cattle with long curving horns which the Spanish explorer Coronado originally brought to the North American continent.

**open range**—Extensive range area which has not been fenced into pastures.

**right-of-way**—Privilege to travel across a given piece of land which may be purchased or granted by a landowner.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Hit the Trail

Most of the great cattle trails went through Indian Territory on their way from Texas to open range in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas. From there they were driven to railroad towns in Kansas where they were shipped back East. On the map below, use different colored pencils to draw the routes following by these cattle trails as they passed through what is now Oklahoma.

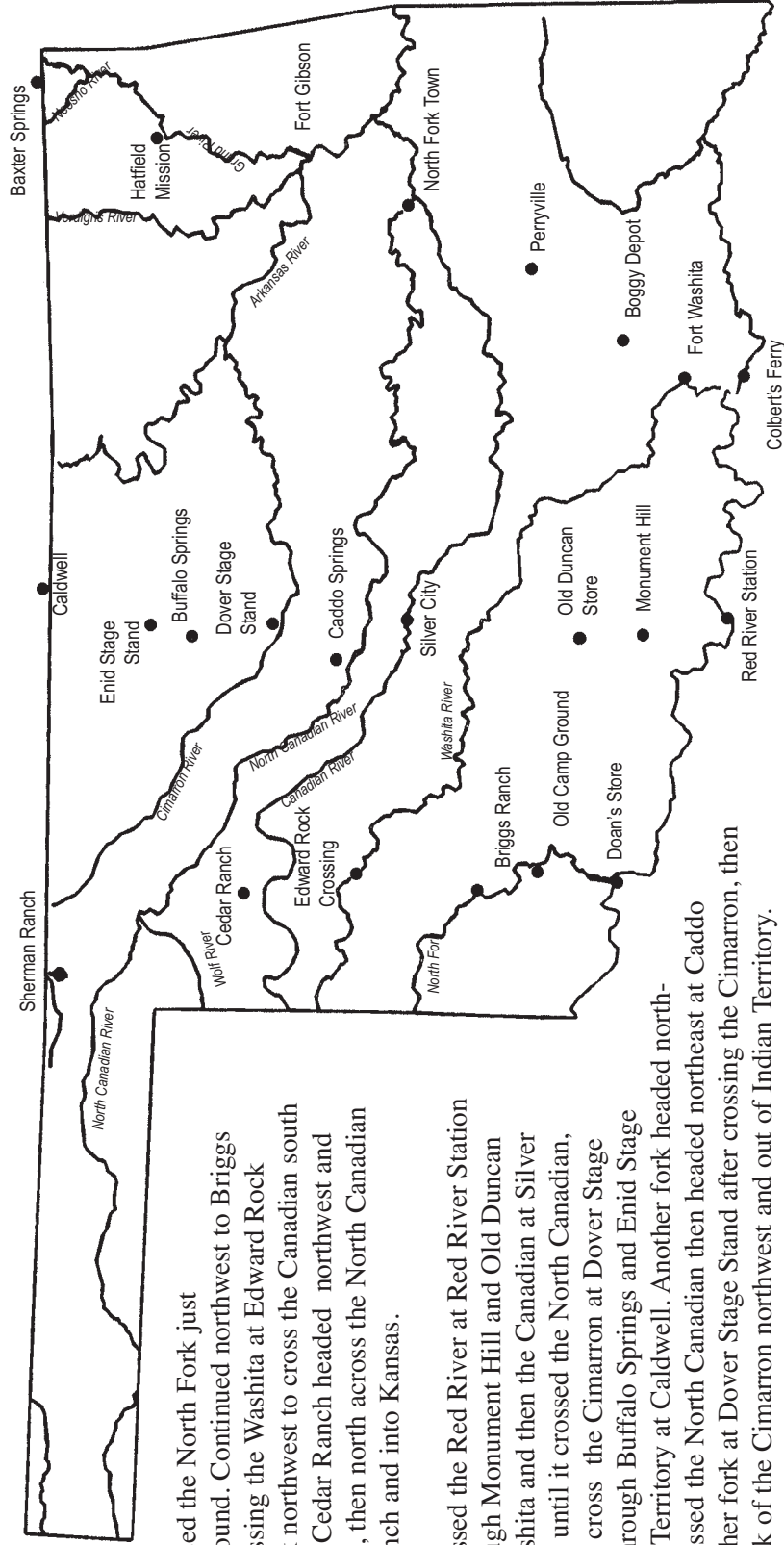
## Great Western

**Trail**—Crossed the Red River on the west side of the North Fork at

Doan's Store and crossed the North Fork just north of Old Camp Ground. Continued northwest to Briggs Ranch, then north, crossing the Washita at Edward Rock Crossing. Headed back northwest to cross the Canadian south of Cedar Ranch. From Cedar Ranch headed northwest and crossed the Wolf River, then north across the North Canadian and on to Sherman Ranch and into Kansas.

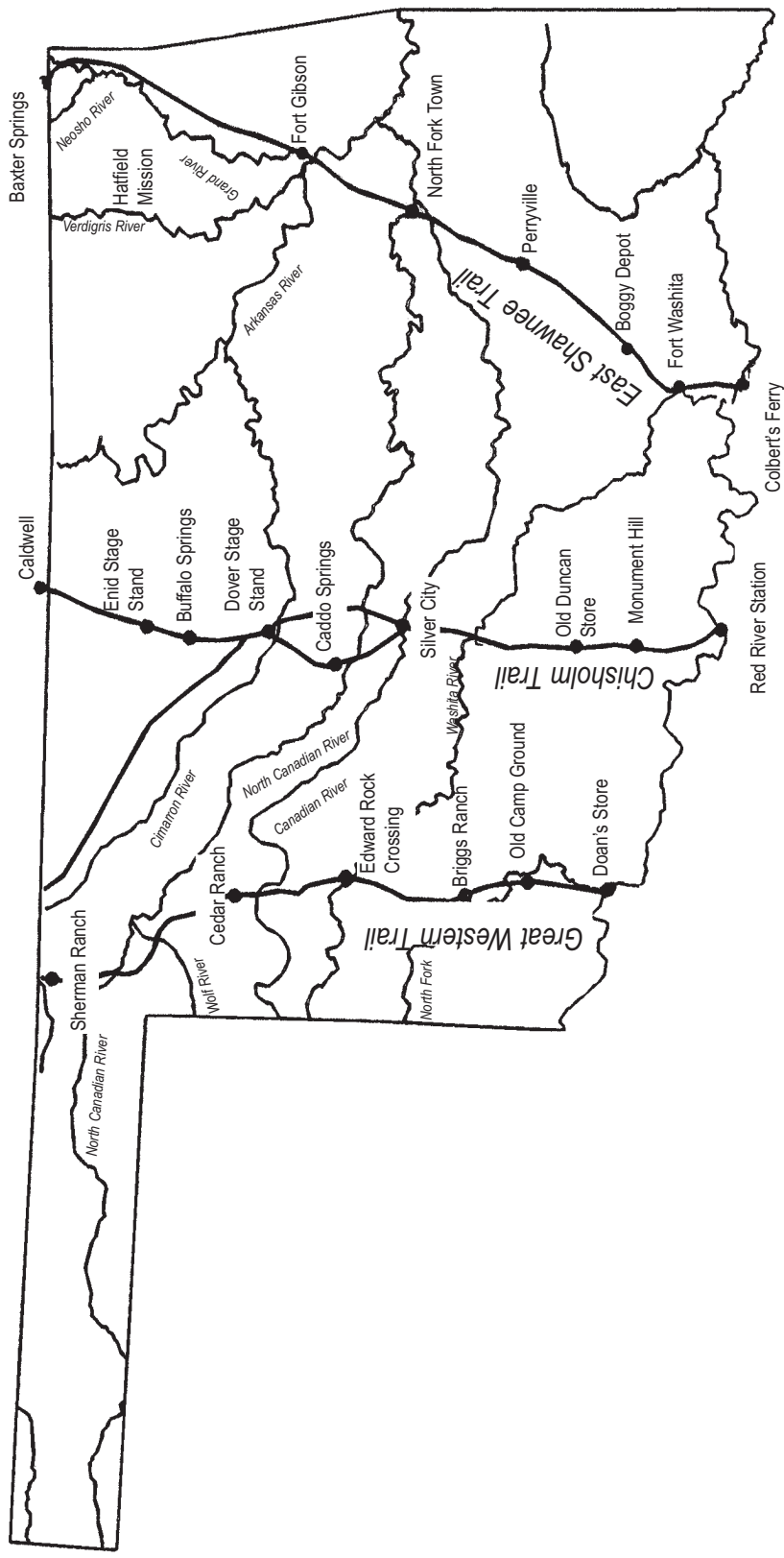
**Chisholm Trail**—Crossed the Red River at Red River Station and headed north through Monument Hill and Old Duncan Store, crossing the Washita and then the Canadian at Silver City. Headed northeast until it crossed the North Canadian, then back northwest to cross the Cimarron at Dover Stage Stand. Headed north through Buffalo Springs and Enid Stage Stand, then left Indian Territory at Caldwell. Another fork headed northwest at Silver City, crossed the North Canadian then headed northeast at Caddo Springs and met the other fork at Dover Stage Stand after crossing the Cimarron, then followed the north bank of the Cimarron northwest and out of Indian Territory.

**East Shawnee Trail**—Crossed the Red River at Colbert's Ferry, turning northeast at Fort Washita through Boggy Depot and Perryville. Crossed the Canadian and then the North Canadian at North Fork Town and continued northeast. Crossed the Arkansas at Fort Gibson and followed the east bank of the Grand River before crossing the river at the northeast corner of Indian Territory and heading northwest to Baxter Springs.



# Hit the Trail (answers)

Most of the great cattle trails went through Indian Territory on their way from Texas to open range in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas. From there they were driven to railroad towns in Kansas where they were shipped back East. On the map below, use different colored pencils to draw the routes following by these cattle trails as they passed through what is now Oklahoma.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Real Reader

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1. Choose three students to serve as “Real Readers” of the following stories. All three stories are the same, but subtle changes have been made in specific facts in the two marked “not real.”
2. Hand out copies of the “real” story to the class, and instruct students to read it.
3. Have the assigned “Real Readers” come in one at a time and say, “I am the Real Reader.”
4. Divide the class into groups of two or three students, and have each group ask the three “Real Readers” questions to determine which one has the correct story.

## THE COWBOY'S LIFE (REAL)

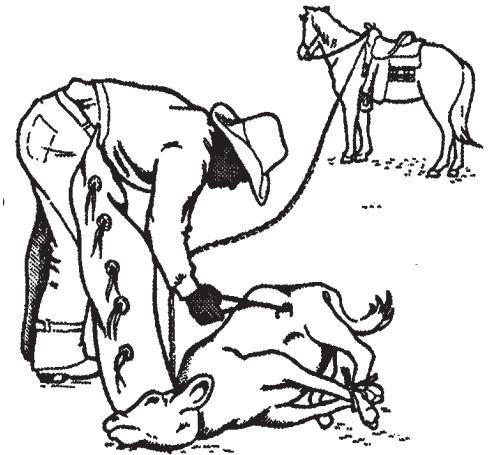
Between 1865 and 1887, millions of longhorn cattle walked from Texas, through Oklahoma, to Kansas and Missouri. They were led by 25-30 thousand cowboys.

Most of the cowboys were teenagers. Usually the oldest people on any drive were the trail boss and the cook, and their average age was 30. The young cowboy worked an exhausting schedule. He spent about 18 hours in the saddle every day for 3-4 months at a time. At night he rolled out his bed roll and slept on the bare ground.

The cowboy had to stop stampedes of nervous cattle. He had to round up strays. He had to outwit cattle rustlers. He had to watch out for poisonous snakes. cross wild rivers and keep riding even in hail storms. Sometimes he went for two or three days without water.

The chuck wagon was the kitchen of the cattle drive. It was also the compass. Before going to sleep, the cook pointed the wagon's hitching pole toward the North Star. The next morning, it showed the cowhands the way to go.

Young men chose to be cowboys because they thought it would be exciting. They wanted to prove to their families they could make it on their own. For many, working a trail drive brought in more money than they had ever seen in their lives—an average \$30 a month.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Real Reader

## THE COWBOY'S LIFE (NOT REAL)

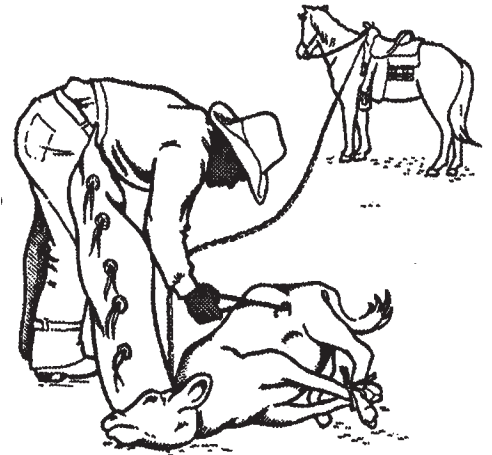
Between 1865 and 1887, millions of longhorn cattle walked from Texas, through Oklahoma, to Kansas and Missouri. Twenty-five to thirty thousand cowboys went on the trail drives.

Most of the cowboys were old men. Usually the youngest people on any drive were the trail boss and the cook, and their average age was 30. The cowboy worked an exhausting schedule. He spent about 18 hours in the saddle every day for 3-4 months at a time. At night he rolled out his bedroll and slept on the bare ground.

The cowboy had to stop stampedes of nervous cattle. He had to round up strays. He had to outwit cattle rustlers. He had to watch out for poisonous snakes, cross wild rivers and keep riding, even in hailstorms. Sometimes he went for 2-3 days without water.

The chuck wagon was the kitchen of the cattle drive. It was also the compass. Before going to sleep, the cook pointed the wagon's hitching pole toward the North Star. The next morning, it showed the cowhands which way was north.

Men chose to be cowboys because they thought it would be exciting. They wanted to prove to their families they could make a lot of money. For many, working a trail drive brought in more money than they had ever seen in their lives—an average \$30 a month.



## THE COWBOY'S LIFE (NOT REAL)

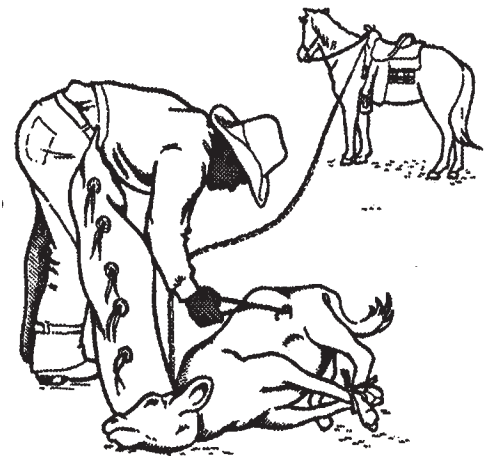
Between 1865 and 1887, millions of longhorn cattle walked from Texas, through Oklahoma, to Kansas and Missouri. Twenty-five to thirty thousand cowboys went on the trail drives.

Most of the cowboys were teenagers. Usually the youngest people on any drive were the trail boss and the cook, and their average age was 30. The young cowboy worked an exhausting schedule. He spent about 12 hours in the saddle every day for 5-6 months at a time. At night he rolled out his bedroll and slept on the bare ground.

The cowboy had to stop stampedes of nervous cattle. He had to round up strays. He had to outwit cattle rustlers. He had to watch out for poisonous snakes, cross wild rivers and keep riding, even in hailstorms. Sometimes he went for 2-3 days without food.

The chuck wagon was the kitchen of the cattle drive. It was also the compass. Before going to sleep, the cook pointed the wagon's hitching pole toward the Big Dipper. The next morning, it showed the cowhands which way to go.

Men chose to be cowboys because they thought it would be exciting. They wanted to prove to their families they could make it on their own. For many, working a trail drive brought in more money than they had ever seen in their lives—an average \$100 a month.



# Hit the Trail

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The great cattle drives began in 1866, following the Civil War. Herds of longhorn cattle were driven north from Texas and Mexico to Nebraska, Kansas, the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana. There the stock could be fattened on open range. The cattle were then driven to railroad towns in Kansas and shipped east to St. Louis, Chicago or Cincinnati. In some cases, cattlemen rented or leased the right-of-way across Indian land or ranches to safeguard their herds. Some Indians allowed passage; others did not.

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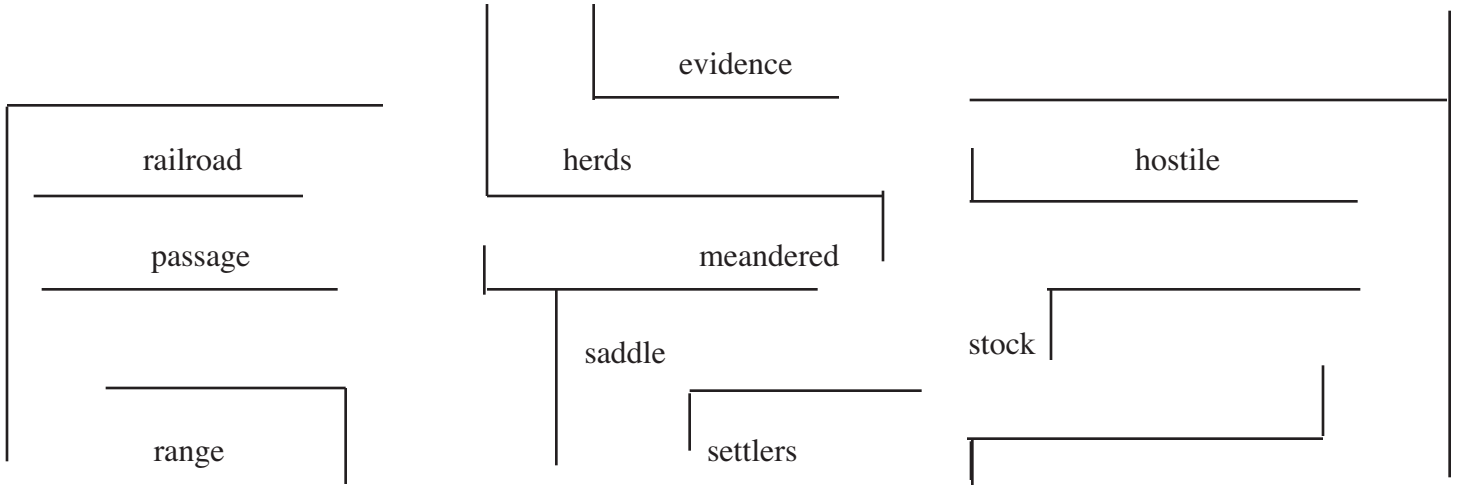
The range cattle industry lasted only a short period of time—about 23 years. Settlers began to put up barbed wire fences around their farms, making the movement of cattle difficult, and railroads in Oklahoma provided a safer and less expensive method of moving cattle. By 1889, there was little unfenced range left. Only scattered evidence remains today of these great trails.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Hit the Trail

Use your pencil to follow the trail by tracing the words below in alphabetical order. Write the words in alphabetical order in the spaces below and look them up in your dictionary. Write the dictionary page number and guide words from the top of that page for each word.



Word	Dictionary page number	Guide words from that page
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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