

How the West Was Made (Up)

a history video by Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin

Even as cowboys and cowgirls were living in the American West, some of them helped create a myth—a romantic idea called the Wild West. Sure, there were cowboys, army scouts, outlaws, and American Indians in the real West, but gunfights, holdups, and heroic rescues didn't happen every day. Life was hard and usually rather ordinary. Of course, that didn't keep exciting exaggerations out of newspaper stories, novels, wild west shows, and movies. Easterners couldn't get enough of those western stories, and western legends quickly became part of our culture.

Research suggestions:

Characters and topics featured in the video:

Wild Bill Hickok
Buffalo Bill Cody
Ned Buntline
Annie Oakley
Chief Sitting Bull
dime novels
Scouts of the Prairie
Scouts of the Plains
Buffalo Bill's Wild West

Related characters and topics to check out:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Texas Jack Omohundro | Pony Express |
| Calamity Jane | Army Scouts |
| Frank Butler | was between settlers and |
| William Frank "Doc" Carver | Native American Indians |
| Tom Mix | buffalo (bison) hunts, buffalo |
| Lillian Smith | hunters, tourists hunting |
| Mexican Joe | stagecoach travel, |
| Bill Pickett | stagecoach robberies |
| Pawnee Bill | other wild west shows |
| Chief Joseph | trick riding, roping, shooting |
| Geronimo | Penny Dreadfuls |
| Miller brothers, The 101 Ranch | Beadle's Dime Novels |
| Wild West Show | <i>Harper's New Monthly</i> |
| Custer's Last Stand | <i>Magazine</i> , Feb. 1867 |
| Grand Duke Alexis of Russia | interview by Colonel |
| Kit Carson (and dime novels) | George Ward Nichols |

Ideas to consider:

1. Why do you think 19th- and early 20th-century easterners and Europeans found western stories so fascinating?
2. Find examples of western stories in today's books, movies, and television shows. Explain their appeal. How are today's westerns similar to or different from the dime novels, stage shows, and wild west shows mentioned in the video?
3. Find examples of western-style adventures in different genres. (For example, science fiction, detective stories ...) What are some basic characteristics of all these stories?
4. Use Joseph Campbell's description of the hero and the "monomyth" to analyze the appeal of westerns. (See Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.)
5. How do western legends affect some people's behavior even today? (Think of people, places, and situations you know, those in stories, those in the news ...)



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NOTES

Make notes of important information in the video:

1. James Butler Hickok was known by the name _____.
2. Hickok became famous because of a story published in the year _____.
3. William F. Cody was known by the name _____
because _____.
4. Ned Buntline wrote books that were called _____.
5. Hickok played the part of _____ in one of Buntline's plays.
6. Hickok was killed in the year _____.
7. Cody's show called "Wild West" toured places such as _____
_____.
8. "Wild West" performer Annie Oakley was known as _____
because _____.
9. The Sioux chief _____ was also a member of Cody's "Wild West."
10. The invention of the _____ brought wild tales of
the American west to a large audience.

Other points: _____



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