

Name _____

The Wild West

From the mid 1800s to the early 1900s, the land west of the Mississippi River became known as the American Wild West. Much about the Wild West has been romanticized over the years by authors and the entertainment industry. Real life in the West was often very different than these glamorous portrayals. Some well-known figures definitely evolved from this time in America's history. People such as lawmen Wild Bill Hickok and Wyatt Earp or outlaws such as Jesse and Frank James are often written about in American history books. The exploits—some real and some fictitious—of these men and others like them have helped the term "Wild West" to live on.

Another important part of the West was the cowboys and cattle drives. The completion of the railroads helped turn cattle drives into a profitable venture for those living west of the Mississippi. Cattle could be driven to cattle towns located at railroad depots and then shipped by train in stock cars where they could be

sold for larger sums of money in urban areas. This profitable business lead to the establishment of railroad towns such as Dodge City and Abilene. Many of the people arriving in these towns spent their money gambling and at local saloons, making the towns unsavory and unsafe for those who lived there; however, the money from the cattle drives was a double-edged sword because the money kept the economy of these towns booming.

One famous cowboy of the Wild West was Nat Love. Love was a former slave from Tennessee. He became a star in the rodeo and was well-known even in his lifetime.

Many former slaves moved away from the South and to the West hoping to find a better way of life. Regardless of anyone's reasons for moving to the West, this unique time in America's history is filled with stories that are worth remembering.

Text Questions

1. What does the word *romanticized* mean as it is used in the first paragraph?
a. glamorized
b. belittled
c. loved
d. minimized
2. Which paragraph explains how the completion of the railroads helped the growth of the West?
a. first paragraph
b. second paragraph
c. third paragraph
d. none of the paragraphs
3. Which statement in the fourth paragraph best explains why former slaves might have moved to the West?

4. The second paragraph states that money from the cattle drives was often a "double-edged sword." What does this expression mean?
a. Spending the money caused people extreme pain.
b. Spending the money led to both good and bad results.
c. The money was only spent on buying weapons.
d. Cowboys stopped using guns and spent money only on swords.
5. What type of figurative language is the phrase "a double-edged sword"?
a. metaphor
b. alliteration
c. personification
d. idiom