Trails to Trains

Trace cattle routes and the rail connections that expanded the beef trade

OKH.C.3.2.B "Trace the routes of cattle trails across Indian Territory and describe the growth of the cattle industry, including the associated role of railroad transportation to meet the needs of an expanding economy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the places cattle passed on each trail from Texas through Indian Territory to Kansas. Circle the places where cattle could switch from a trail to a train.

The Long Route to Market

1. After the Civil War, Texas ranchers had large herds but limited nearby markets. Cowboys drove cattle north to railheads, places where animals could be loaded onto trains. The Chisholm Trail crossed the Red River from Texas into central Indian Territory, passed near present-day Duncan and Kingfisher, and continued to Abilene, Kansas. From there, railroad cars carried cattle east to growing cities. A drive took weeks and required river crossings, grass, and water. Because rail lines initially stopped outside much of Indian Territory, a trail was the connection between a Texas pasture and a distant buyer.

2. As demand for beef rose in the 1870s, ranchers used more than one northbound route. The Western Trail entered western Indian Territory after crossing the Red River at Doan's Crossing, then led toward Dodge City, Kansas, another rail shipping center. Compared with the Chisholm Trail, it kept herds farther west. Ranchers chose routes based on access to grass, water, and rail service. These drives crossed Native nations' lands, and grazing herds could damage crops or compete for grass. Some tribal governments charged fees for passage, so cattle traffic brought both revenue and conflict to communities along the way.

3. Railroads changed where the long drive ended. The Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway crossed Indian Territory in the early 1870s, and additional rail lines later opened shipping points within the territory. When a depot was closer to Texas, a rancher could drive cattle fewer miles before putting them on a train. Rail transport moved many animals to meatpacking centers faster than a cattle drive could. Beef sales encouraged larger herds, more cattle buying, and related work at loading pens and along the rail lines. Yet shorter drives did not erase disputes over land use: new tracks and cattle shipments also affected Native nations.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace a herd's route from Texas to eastern buyers using the Chisholm Trail. Where did it travel through Indian Territory, and where did it board a train?

2. How did the Western Trail's route through Indian Territory differ from the Chisholm Trail's route, and which Kansas rail center did it reach?

3. How did shipping points inside Indian Territory change the distance cattle had to travel on foot before reaching buyers?

4. How did rising demand for beef expand cattle activity, and what was one effect of that activity on Native nations' lands?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new cattle-shipping depot opens in central Indian Territory in the 1880s. In five sentences, advise a Texas rancher how this might change the herd's route and train shipment, and explain one possible effect on Native communities.

ANSWER KEY

Trails to Trains

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.3.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the places cattle passed on each trail from Texas through Indian Territory to Kansas. Circle the places where cattle could switch from a trail to a train. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace a herd's route from Texas to eastern buyers using the Chisholm Trail. Where did it travel through Indian Territory, and where did it board a train?	**The herd crossed the Red River into central Indian Territory, passed near present-day Duncan and Kingfisher, and reached Abilene, Kansas. It boarded a train at Abilene for the trip east.**
2	How did the Western Trail's route through Indian Territory differ from the Chisholm Trail's route, and which Kansas rail center did it reach?	**The Western Trail passed through western rather than central Indian Territory and led toward Dodge City, Kansas.**
3	How did shipping points inside Indian Territory change the distance cattle had to travel on foot before reaching buyers?	**A closer depot shortened the cattle drive. Trains then carried the animals the remaining distance to buyers.**
4	How did rising demand for beef expand cattle activity, and what was one effect of that activity on Native nations' lands?	**Demand encouraged more routes, larger herds, and more cattle buying. Herds crossing Native nations' lands could damage crops, compete for grass, or bring passage fees.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would guide the herd toward the Chisholm Trail through central Indian Territory instead of taking the Western Trail farther west. The cattle could reach the new depot before traveling all the way to Abilene. A train could then carry them to buyers in eastern cities. The shorter drive would reduce the distance the herd traveled on foot. More cattle near the depot could bring passage fees to Native communities, but grazing herds might also compete for grass.

Accept route descriptions that correctly distinguish central and western Indian Territory and connect cattle drives to rail shipment. For the open task, accept other plausible route choices if the student explains how the new depot affects the drive and identifies a supported effect on Native communities.