

BOOK 17

Tommy the Cowboy



Tommy Tales

Guide for Teachers and Parents

Book 17: Tommy the Cowboy

This is the seventeenth in the *Ewe Books* series of illustrated books, available on the **Learning Page** Web site for downloading and printing free of charge. A new book in this series will be published regularly.

These books are written to a second- or third-grade reading level, but children in pre-kindergarten through first grade will also love having the stories read to them.

Introduction

If possible, make enough copies of the book for each member of the class or group. See pages 2 and 3 of the Teaching Guide for Book 1, *The School Lunch Room*, for directions on how to make the book. If you download and copy the pages in advance, students can assemble the pages and tape or staple them together. Before starting the reading, have students color the covers of the books in any way they choose. While coloring, initiate a discussion on what the title could mean and what the next adventure might be.

Before starting to read *Tommy the Cowboy*, share with the class that this book is another in a series and that this story is part of a much longer one.

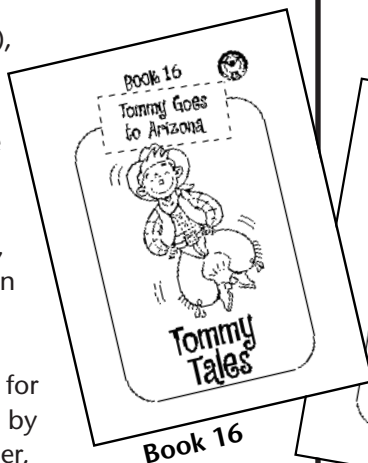
Planning with Ewe Books

As you begin your planning for the year, you can depend on the **Learning Page** and this delightful serial story to add variety and fun to your reading routines. A new book added regularly, and all accompanying teachers' materials and **Fun**

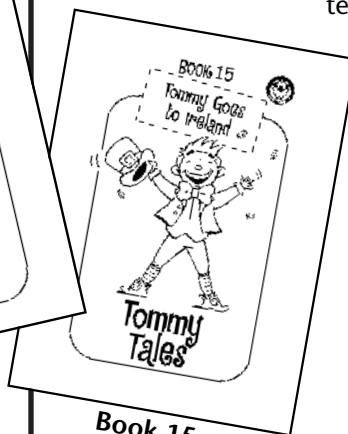
Sheets, supplement your other classroom activities and curricula.

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

In the last *Tommy Tales* adventure (the first part of this two-part story), RK-5 transported Tommy and his friends to the territory of Arizona in 1891. He sent them back in time so that they could experience real cowboy times. While Tommy was looking for firewood for a campfire, he met Red Deer, a Native American boy whom he befriended with the help of RK-5's translation skills. Red Deer joined Tommy and his friends for a lovely picnic that was interrupted by something that sounded like thunder, but it wasn't thunder at all . . .



Book 16



Book 15

Preparing for Reading

In the last **Tommy Tales** story—the first part of this two-part adventure—Tommy and his friends went to Arizona. **Tommy the Cowboy** is the second part of this adventure. Ask students to share any speculations they might have about this new story based on their knowledge of how the last story ended. Ask them whether they have any speculations about what Tommy and Red Deer heard that sounded like thunder.

Reading Guide

You may structure the reading time for this story in many ways. Here are just two ideas:

1. You can read it aloud, all the way through, with the entire class on the rug during your regular story time. Then, review the story spread by spread and begin implementing the various objectives and **Fun Sheets**.
2. After reading aloud the first two pages, you can begin questioning for comprehension and work on some of the **Fun Sheets** and activities cited in this section. Proceed to the second two pages, and so on.

Opening Lesson

Introduce the book by showing the cover and saying the title clearly: **Tommy the Cowboy**. You can also write it on the board. Read the first two pages of the story.

Ask students what they can predict about the story from what you have read on these first two pages. Write their ideas on the board.

Fear

Red Deer heard a noise and became afraid. That is because people, like other animals, have instinctive reactions to scary noises, sights, smells, and feelings. This is part of our fight-or-flight instinct. Our brains have something called the limbic system or “crocodile brain.” It is the most primitive part of our brain, and it is very important. What if you felt no sense of fear? As nice as that may sound, our fears help us to know when we need to flee from danger. The problem with the limbic system is that while it helps us in survival situations, it also interferes with rational thought. Fear can interfere with thinking things through, planning, and making good decisions.

2

Tommy and his friends were having a picnic. They were in Arizona. RK-5 had taken them back in time to 1891.

Red Deer, a Native American boy, had made friends with them.

They were just finishing eating when they heard a noise like thunder. Red Deer jumped up and told Tommy to follow him. They scrambled down the rocky hill. At the bottom of the hill, two horses were tied to a tree.



In the case of fear instincts, your brain receives information, like a suspicious sound, and sends an impulse to your crocodile brain. Your crocodile brain reacts with either fight, in which case you might confront whatever is frightening you, or flight, where your impulse is to flee the source of danger.

Extension Ask students whether they can think of a time when the fear instinct helped them avoid danger. Encourage students to pay attention to fear. If they feel fear when they see a person, they should trust it. They might know something instinctively before knowing why. People are saved by their fears every day. Students might feel a little silly when running away from a person or situation that creates discomfort, but they need to be able to do this. You can create role-play situations in class to help students practice walking (or running) away from someone creepy, or even screaming, “Help!” when necessary. Children raised to be very compliant might need extra help with this.

Red Deer jumped on one of the horses.
 He told Tommy to get on the other horse.
 Bongo jumped on behind Tommy.
 The horses galloped off. Tommy asked
 RK-5 what was happening.



Horses

Horses are an essential domesticated animal for many cultures around the world. Evidence of domesticated horses dates back to 5,000 years ago in Eurasia. Fossil records indicate that those horses were smaller, but so were the people riding the horses. Since those first fossil records, horses have become an integral part of many cultures.

Native Americans have historically held horses in high regard. They depended on horses for hunting, war, communication, and the transportation of trade goods. Horses were considered a sign of wealth and power, but they were also honored members of the tribe. Special horses were given special markings and headdresses, and stories of heroic horses were told at gatherings, just as stories of heroic warriors were told.

The Chinese and Mongols were also highly dependent upon horses. The Han army of China conquered a great deal of land due to the use of horses in warfare. They had the advantage over enemies because of the increased power, speed, and strength that a horse added. The saved time, food, and energy that horses gave traveling armies was also significant. Until one hundred years ago, advanced armies had a cavalry, a unit of horsemen who rode with the army. Today, tanks, planes, ships, and advanced weaponry have spared horses from military service.

Horses are still used in many ways in daily life. In large cities, horses can be found transporting traffic officers. Horses are also still used for farm labor, and their manure is used as fertilizer.

Horses today are often seen pulling carriages on city streets, but this is not the best way to employ a horse. Horses that live and work on concrete or any kind of pavement can develop hoof problems. Horses' feet are designed to impact soft earth. The lack of "give" in paved surfaces can wear on a horse's hooves and joints until an animal becomes lame.



Did You Know?

In Africa and Egypt, camels are used in many of the same ways that horses were and are used in other civilizations. Camels are used instead of horses because they are able to go without water for several days at a time. In the deserts of Africa and the Middle East, camels are crucial to transportation and require only a fraction of an expedition's precious water. For nomadic tribes of the region, camels are more precious than gold.

How do camels do it? They do not, as many people believe, store water in their humps. They store fat, which helps them to conserve energy for times when they will need it. Camels absorb water slowly into their systems, and their systems use all of the water they consume. Along with a slow absorption rate, camels are able to concentrate their waste using minimal amounts of water. Camel urine is about the consistency of syrup.

Horses

Horses are beautiful and powerful animals. In the wild, horses run free in herds, living on natural vegetation. Horses spend a great deal of time running to get to food and water sources, to escape predators, and to exercise their energetic bodies. People domesticated the horse for transportation 3,000 years ago. Since then, people have benefited from horses in ways that we can barely imagine. Horses gave people transportation, strength for farming endeavors, and companionship.

Horses, which are fully independent in the wild, require many hours of labor every day in captivity. They must be kept clean, exercised, fed, kept safe from predators and people, and given medical attention when necessary. Students who would like to own a horse someday need to learn how to take proper care of your horse. Here are two Web sites that provide information on caring for a horse:

http://members.tripod.com/~White_Arabian/care.html

<http://www.thehorse.com/>

Labor Pains

Horses are born after a gestation period of eleven months. Humans take only nine months to develop before birth. The average weight of a newborn foal is one hundred pounds. Humans usually weigh between six and nine pounds. Mares must be very strong to give birth to such large creatures!

Horse Terminology

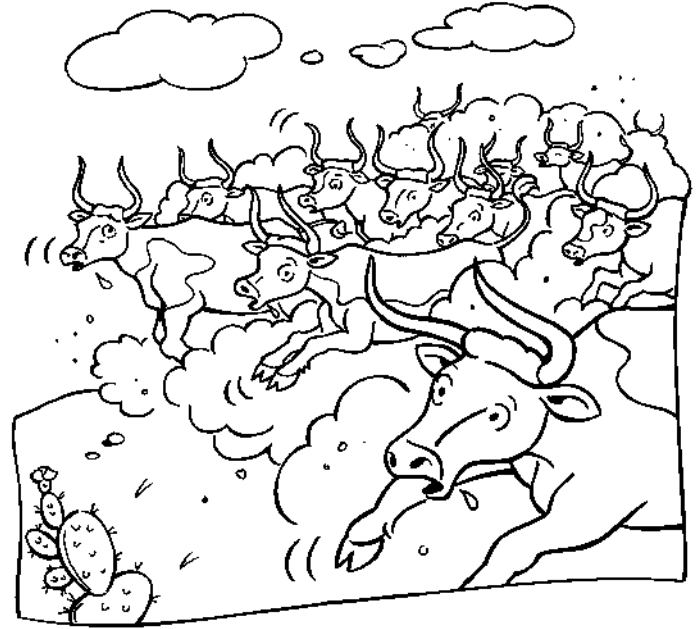
What is the difference between a mare and a horse? In most jobs, specialized words help people to quickly communicate special information. This is called jargon. Jargon is the word for a set of words used by people who know a lot about a particular subject. On a farm, there is jargon to describe animals. Now that students know a little about horses and cattle, you can share with them some terms used to describe these animals:

Horse terms:

horse—generic term for all horses
foal—generic term for baby horses
filly—a young female horse (under the age of five)
colt—a young male horse (under the age of three)
mare—a female horse over the age of five
stallion—an adult male horse, often used for breeding
gelding—a male horse that has been castrated to calm its temperament for domestic work
equine—relating to horses

Cattle terms:

cow—generic term for all cattle
calf—generic term for baby cattle
cow—an adult female cow
heifer—a female cow that has not yet given birth and does not produce milk
bull—a male cow, often used for breeding
steer—a male cow that has been castrated to calm its temperament for domestic work
bovine—relating to cattle

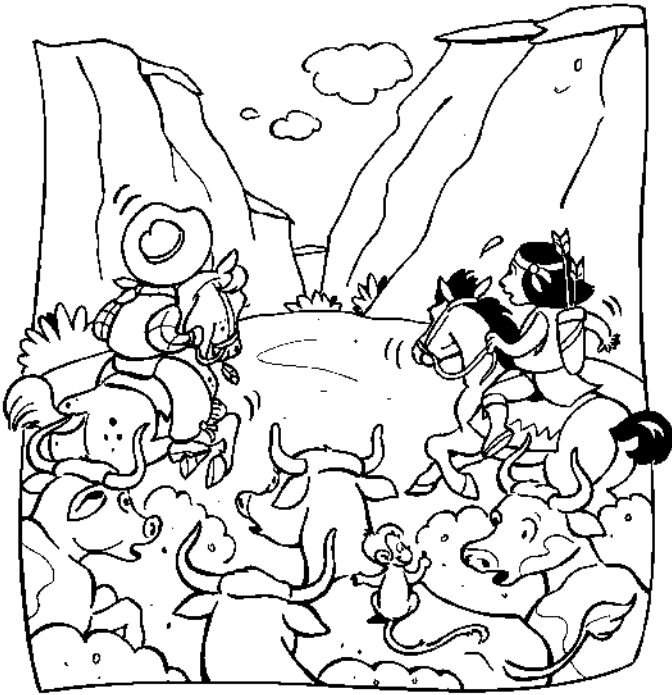


“Red Deer says ‘Many cows are running.’ That means there’s a stampede,” said RK-5.

Tommy soon saw the stampeding cattle. The cows were running very fast. There was dust everywhere.

Tommy and Red Deer reached the leading cows. Red Deer showed Tommy where to ride.

Taffy ran alongside the cows. He helped Tommy control the cows in the front. Bongo jumped off the horse onto the back of a big, brown cow. Red Deer then skillfully guided the cows into a narrow canyon. The rest of the herd followed. The cows had to slow down because the canyon was so narrow.



Stampedes

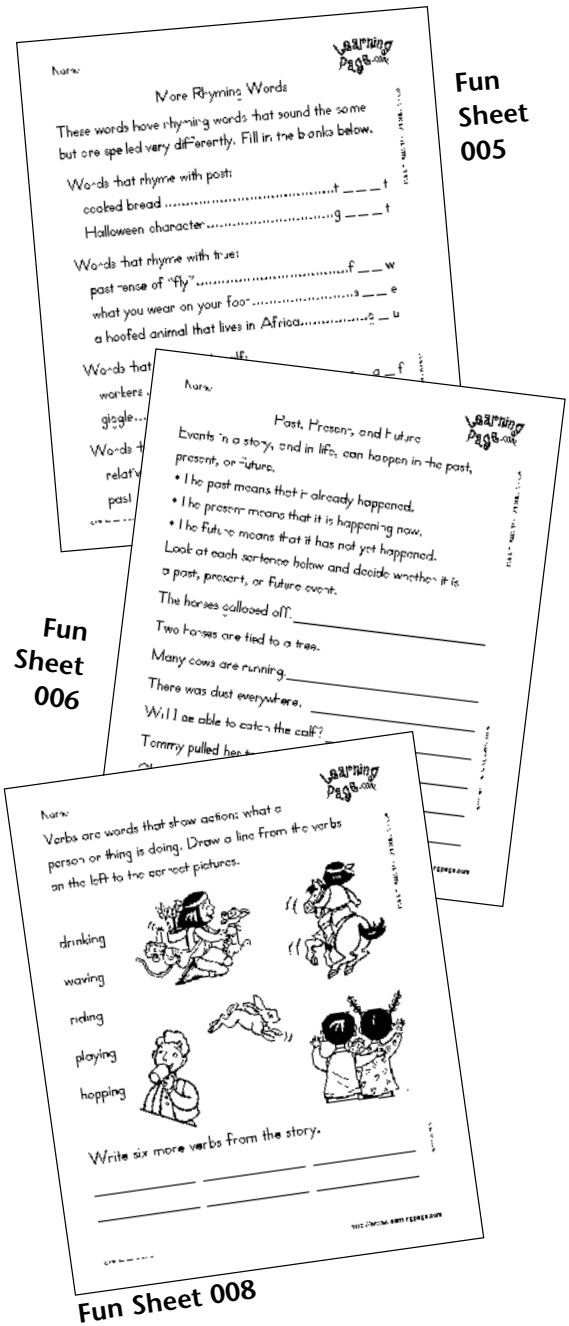
Cattle, oxen, buffalo, horses, caribou, zebras, and other herd animals periodically run together full force in one direction. This is generally in response to a predator or another source of danger. This happens quickly and effectively, and the entire herd moves fairly far, fairly fast. If the animals stood around grazing, they might be picked off one by one. By running together, fewer animals are likely to be killed. Another benefit of a stampede is that hundreds of large, running beasts can confuse and frighten predators.

Why would a rancher not want his herd of cattle to stampede? They are avoiding danger, right? Wrong. Many cattle are lost along the way when a herd stampedes, causing a loss of cattle for the rancher. In addition, there is often property damage, as well as danger to people, animals, and plants in the area. To prevent stampeding, cattle are fenced in. But as long as there are herd animals, there will be stampedes.

Language Skills

The teaching materials that accompany every **Tommy Tales** story provide a wealth of opportunities to practice language skills. Some of the **Fun Sheets** associated with *Tommy the Cowboy* that are designed to strengthen students' language skills include:

- **Fun Sheets 004 and 005** for practice with rhyming
- **Fun Sheet 006** for practice with verb tenses
- **Fun Sheet 008** for practice with verbs



Cattle and Cattle Ranching

Cattle ranching began 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, before recorded history. People lived as hunters and gatherers until the domestication of plants and animals. Cows were among the first animals that were domesticated, being an ideal choice because of their strength, large size, meat, milk, and easy temperament. Early cattle were not as docile as they are today, but they were never particularly ferocious. People easily gathered them together and developed techniques to use them as beasts of burden.

Cattle were powerful enough to pull equipment to till the earth for planting crops. Cattle ranchers used their herds for many tasks that people could not have done otherwise. Oxen and cattle were good for pulling carts and large loads. However, bulls were not very good at domestic work. While they are much more aggressive than cows, they are also more powerful. In order to avail themselves of the strength of bulls, ranchers began to castrate them before maturity. (Castrated bulls are called steers.) This enabled ranchers to use steers for hard labor without having to deal with the aggression of a mature male. A few bulls in each breed were not castrated and were kept for breeding purposes.

Cows are especially profitable to ranchers because they give milk. Milk provides protein and calcium that people benefit greatly from, especially in the early days of domestication when food was often scarce. The meat that cattle provided was also very important. Long ago, meat had to be hunted, but with the domestication of animals, meat became much more readily available. Once people no longer had to spend all their time hunting, time was available for other activities, including cultural development and technological improvement. Health and mortality rates improved at an incredible rate with the domestication of cattle.

Some people argue that there are too many cattle ranches today. Rainforests are being cut down, depleting our planet's natural resources, to make room for more cattle to graze. Many argue that with all of today's alternative food products, such as soy and natural foods, there is no need to breed so many cattle. People likely have too much beef in their diets in many countries. Some people make the decision to eat no meat. Others argue that meat is an essential part of the human diet.

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The herd reached the far end of the canyon. They were walking, not running.

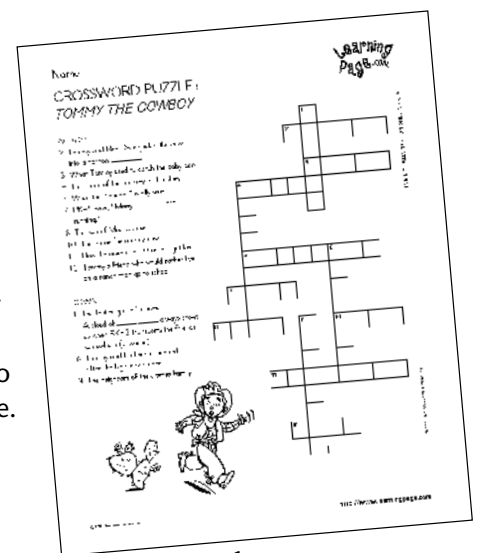
At the other side of the canyon was a ranch. The two boys guided the cows into pens near the ranch house. The cows had calmed down quite a bit.

The door of the ranch house opened. The rancher's wife ran out of the house to thank them.



Crossword Puzzle

The crossword puzzle for *Tommy the Cowboy* (Fun Sheet 016) includes many details from this *Tommy Tales* story. Reading the puzzle clues gives students the opportunity to think verbally as well as visually, which helps to reinforce their knowledge.



Fun Sheet 016

<http://www.learningpage.com>

Just then, Tommy noticed a little calf had wandered off. It was in danger of falling off a steep cliff. Tommy quickly grabbed a lasso that was hanging on a post. He rode toward the calf as fast as he could.



The Lasso

The lasso has a rich history. Originally, it was used by cowboys strictly for roping purposes. Just as Tommy used a lasso to rope a calf that was in grave danger, cowboys roped wayward cows, horses, pigs, and other domesticated animals. Later, the lasso became a way for cowboys to show off. Rope tricks were first done as a diversion for bored cowboys, who would jump over lassos, rope various objects, and have an overall good time showing off their prowess with a rope.

One of the most famous lasso artists was Will Rogers. He was born in the Cherokee nation in Oklahoma in 1879. Will Rogers learned to lasso as part of his work as a ranch hand. Soon, he was on the road to stardom. He won national acclaim as the star of over 70 movies during the 1920s and 1930s. Will Rogers was also known for his sense of humor and wit, as well as for being genuinely kind. Will Rogers was known for the famous quote, "I never met a man I didn't like," and it would seem that he didn't. Will Rogers loved life, his work, and the people around him. He had written six books and 4,000 syndicated news articles, and had traveled the world three times at the time of his death in 1935 in a plane crash.

Other ropers can be found practicing their art in rodeos around the world. Many places have clubs that teach roping. Interested students can go online to a search engine and type in "roping club." Many children learn the art of roping at an early age in families and clubs that focus on rodeo arts. It is a fun

hobby that can be learned by almost anyone.

Animals

Two Fun Sheets that accompany this Tommy Tales story help students to learn and remember facts about animals. Use **Fun Sheet 013** to teach students compare-and-contrast skills with horses and cattle. Use **Fun Sheet 018** to help students learn about wild versus domesticated animals.

Compare and Contrast

Tommy the Cowboy has lots of cattle (cows and bulls) and horses. In the chart below, list some things that are the same about these animals (comparisons) and some things that are different (contrasts).

| | cattle | horses |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| same | | |
| different | | |

Fun Sheet 013

Some animals are wild. Others are domesticated, which means that they have been kept by humans for a very long time and have become more tame. They have also been bred for human use.

Do some research on domesticated animals in a library or online. Then fill in the information below.

Name nine animals that have been domesticated.

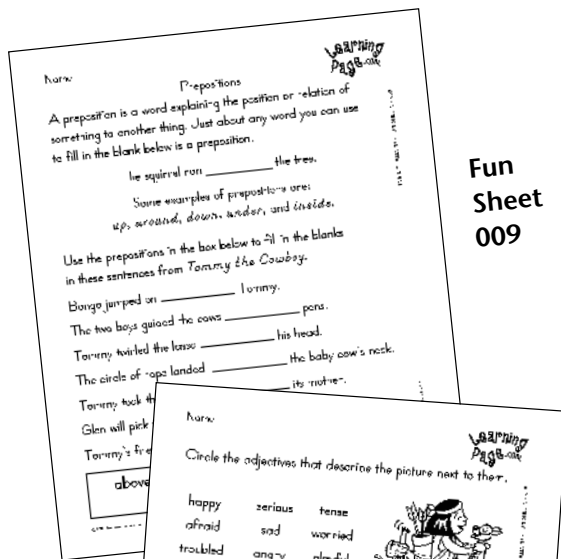
Name nine animals that have never been domesticated.

Fun Sheet 018

More Language Skills

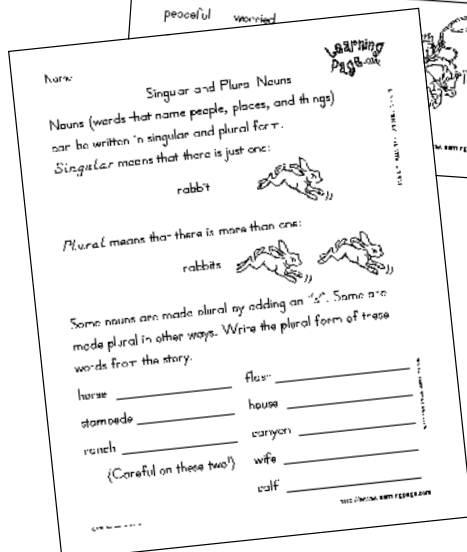
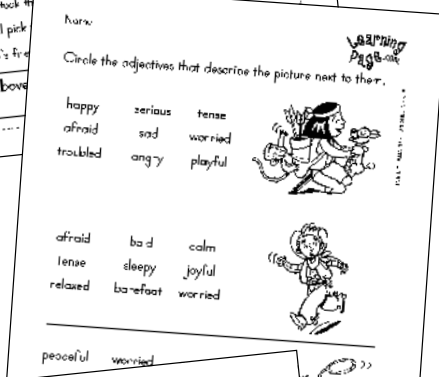
Here are more **Fun Sheets** for *Tommy the Cowboy* to strengthen students' language skills.

- **Fun Sheet 009** for practice with prepositions
- **Fun Sheet 010** for practice with adjectives
- **Fun Sheet 011** for practice with singular and plural
- **Fun Sheet 012** for practice with alphabetical order



Fun Sheet 009

Fun Sheet 010



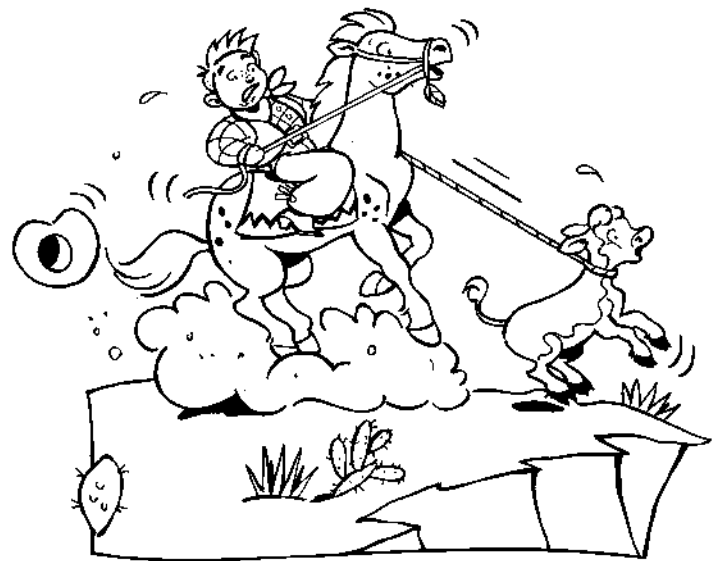
Fun Sheet 011

8

When he was near enough, Tommy twirled the lasso above his head. Then he threw the rope at the calf. He caught it on the first try. The circle of rope landed around the baby cow's neck. Tommy was able to pull it to safety.

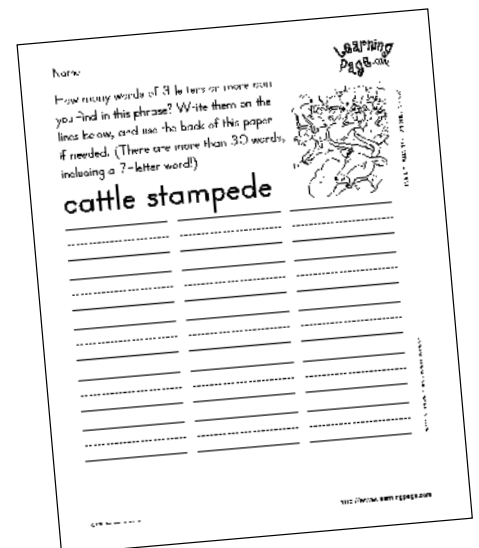
Tommy took the calf back to its mother.

"Thank you, thank you," said Mrs. James, the rancher's wife. "You are a true cowboy."



Word Find

Use **Fun Sheet 007** to give students practice with the skill of recombining letters to form new words. This task helps to strengthen spelling skills as well as encouraging an imaginative approach to problem solving.



Fun Sheet 007



Tommy told Mrs. James that his friends were in the hills on the other side of the canyon.

Mrs. James said, "My son, Glen, will pick them up in the wagon. When they get here, we'll all have a delicious steak dinner."

Midway Comprehension Check

Pages 8–9

- How did Tommy and his friends end up in Arizona?
- What was the noise that sounded like thunder?
- How did Tommy know what "Many cows are running" mean?
- What caused the cows to slow down?
- How did Tommy rescue the little calf?
- How did Tommy's friends get to the ranch house?

Canyons

Tommy found a calf in danger of falling into a canyon. While it is not an easy time in the story, Tommy's view might be incredible. This is an opportunity to teach students about the many interesting rock formations in the western United States (see also **Fun Sheet 019**). In the desert of Arizona, few trees and little vegetation exists to block the view of the magnificent land features. What are these land features, and how do they form?

The most famous Western formation is certainly the Grand Canyon. The oldest part of the Grand Canyon dates back 1.7 million years, and it is still being formed. At first, the Grand Canyon was a river, flowing over the ground on its way to the sea. All streams and rivers do this, but over time, the river begins to cut into the rock, and the sediment is carried away in the stream's flow. The stream that formed the Grand Canyon is now called the Colorado River.

Once a river begins to cut into the earth, it generally follows the same path, cutting more and more deeply until a small canyon is formed. Then other elements contribute to carving the canyon. Rain, other precipitation, and wind further erode the rock. But how do wind and water cut mile-deep holes in the earth? Think of yourself standing in the wind. You are hit with tiny pieces of dirt, plants, and other debris. Even though it does not hurt most of the time, cells are knocked from your body in tiny amounts. You are a person, so the cells grow back. But a rock is not so lucky. Much like an old, worn pair of pants, it will never grow back what it has lost. So, every time a piece of dust hits the rock, or the wind knocks loose some of the rock's matter, the rock loses part of itself forever. Add this up for 1.7 million years, and you have a large hole carved in the earth. Water speeds this process because it can carry more debris, and it can push on the rocks, causing them to slowly crumble away.

Why are there some higher parts of a canyon? Some types of rock wear away more easily than others. When a rock layer is particularly dense, it takes longer to erode. This causes different levels and layers to form in canyons. Canyons are a spectacular part of nature that have taken many years to form.

Ranch Life

Life on a ranch has never been easy, but life on a ranch in the 1800s was more difficult than life for most of us today. There was no electricity. There were no hospitals. There were few schools. A lot of hard labor was required just to survive each day. People worked all day, every day. Your students might be interested in these aspects of ranch life in the 1800s.

Food

The supermarket was not an option in the 1800s. To get food, people either grew it, raised animals, or provided a good or a service that they could trade for food. Hunger was always around the corner, especially in the winter when crops did not grow plentiful food for people and livestock. To survive the winter, food had to be preserved by pickling, canning, and drying. Refrigerators and freezers were not an option.

Cooking was nothing like it is today. People used raw ingredients. Microwave dinners did not exist. Wood- and coal-burning stoves had to be filled with fuel, lit, allowed to heat, watched, and cleaned. Breads and other recipe foods, which took hours to prepare, were the staples of most people's diets.

Water

Houses were built in areas where water existed. Natural springs, wells, and streams were needed to support life. If a well froze, people would have a difficult time living through the winter. Contaminated water was often a problem, and unclean water often led to severe illness. Brewing alcoholic beverages and drinking fresh milk both reduced the risk of water-borne illness.

Shelter

Homes were built by family, friends, and neighbors. Homes were built not for style, but for survival. There were few rooms and fewer comforts.

Life was often made more difficult because farms and ranches were not located close together. Community was very important to the people of the 1800s because they needed one another to build homes, trade goods, and provide a sense of belonging. Because homes were so spread out, neighbors might be as far as ten miles apart. There were no telephones,



At dinner, Tommy's friends heard all about his adventure as a real cowboy.

Mrs. James told them that her husband and the ranch hands were at the next ranch. They were helping their neighbors, the Johnsons, who were sick. The Johnsons were the nearest neighbors, but their ranch was a day's ride away.

computers, cars or bicycles to contact to the nearest neighbor quickly. When a doctor was ten miles away, and the only available transportation was a horse or one's feet, an emergency often became a catastrophe.

Although people were spread out, they often enjoyed a strong sense of community. Neighbors helped one another because it was likely that they would soon need help themselves. People gathered regularly at church to keep in touch with their community. They also stayed connected through celebrations, festivals, and gatherings.

Many of the things that we take for granted today were very difficult in the 1800s. But people were safer from crime, the air was fresher, and life was not as complicated. Ask your students whether they would prefer to live then or now.

"We could have lost our herd of cattle without the bravery of Tommy and Red Deer," said Mrs. James.

Everyone gave them a big cheer.

"Where does Glen go to school?" asked Sam.

"I don't go to school. There's no school around here for miles," said Glen. "Mom teaches me all I need to know."



Homeschooling

Mrs. James is homeschooling her son, Glen. In the past, particularly on farmland and ranches, there were no schools for children to attend. One-room schoolhouses existed in more populated areas, but children were chiefly homeschooled. Parents taught their children only the basics: reading, writing, and math. Many children were not even taught as much as that. Instead, they were taught to work on the farm alongside their parents. Life was very different for children of that time. They did not have many toys to play with. They had dolls, carved wooden toys, and imagination. Also, children did not have a lot of time because they had chores to perform from morning until night. In those days, chores were crucial to survival. Gathering firewood ensured warmth during cold nights, and tending a garden and caring for animals ensured regular meals. Children considered themselves lucky if they had the time to learn things other than daily survival tasks.

Today, many homeschooling families still exist. Many parents enjoy teaching their children. It can be very rewarding. The family can stay together all day, lessons can take as long or as short as an individual child needs, and there is a lot of room for adjustment that does not exist in public or private schooling. The down side to homeschooling is that children may suffer from not being with peers. Also, it is difficult for many parents to stay home and teach their children today. Plus, teachers are trained to teach students, whereas most parents are not.

Homeschooled children must learn the same curriculum that children in public and private school must learn. They are required to take special tests to measure their progress in every subject. This is because it is illegal in most countries to keep a child out of school.

The reason that education is so important today is that, unlike in the 1800s, there are not many jobs that do not require reading, writing, and math. People must work to earn a living and survive, and for this they need an education. The higher the educational level people achieve in today's society, the better their chances of knowing things that will help them to be valuable in a job. Children all deserve the opportunity to succeed in life, and a solid education is a key ingredient.

Homeschooling: What Do You Think?

Split your students into two groups, and ask them to debate the pros and cons of homeschooling. Many teaching opportunities exist as part of this exercise:

- Researching a topic—Students can do with Internet research as well as consulting a reference librarian at a local library.
- Presenting thoughts logically—You can allow each group to work independently, and then serve as a coach or consultant with each group to help the members prepare their presentation.
- Seeing both sides—You can end the debate with each group summing up their own main points and also the main points of the other side. Encourage them to see at least three good points that the other side made. Learning to put themselves in another's shoes is a useful skill that is best learned early in life. Whatever their situation, they can be grateful for the advantages they have in life.

Web Research

Several **Fun Sheets** that accompany this **Tommy Tales** story help students to develop proficiency in doing research on the World Wide Web.

Use **Fun Sheet 019** to have students research natural and cultural wonders of the American Southwest. Encourage them to share their findings in class.

Use **Fun Sheet 020** to learn when various modern conveniences were first invented. They will soon discover that most of the items listed had not yet been invented in 1891, when **Tommy the Cowboy** takes place. Students are then asked to imagine life without those modern-day conveniences. You might encourage them to each write a short essay on how they imagine life back then.

Name: _____

The American Southwest is a fascinating region of the world that contains many natural and cultural wonders. Pick one of the items listed below and do research either in a library or on the Web. Write two paragraphs about what you learned. If you have an opportunity, present your findings to your class. If possible, bring a library book with photographs.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| The Grand Canyon | Monument Valley |
| Canyon de Chelly | Mesa Verde |
| National Monument | Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument |
| Chaco Canyon | White Sands National Monument |
| Saguaro National Park | Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument |
| Mesa Verde National Park | Arches National Park |
| Unesco Canyon National Park | Carlsbad Caverns |
| Zion National Park | Katibeh Caverns State Park |
| Canyonlands National Park | Coastal Cave Mountain Park |

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Fun Sheet 019

Name: _____

Web Research

The year 1891 was a long time ago! Do you know what life was like back then? Using your favorite Web search engine, find out in what year each of the things below was invented. Then take a few minutes to imagine life without the things that hadn't yet been invented in 1891.

Television was invented in _____

Bicycles were invented in _____

Computers were invented in _____

Cars were invented in _____

Light bulbs were invented in _____

Hospitals were invented in _____

Fire hydrants were invented in _____

Soda pop was invented in _____

Bubble gum was invented in _____

Blue jeans were invented in _____

Washing machines were invented in _____

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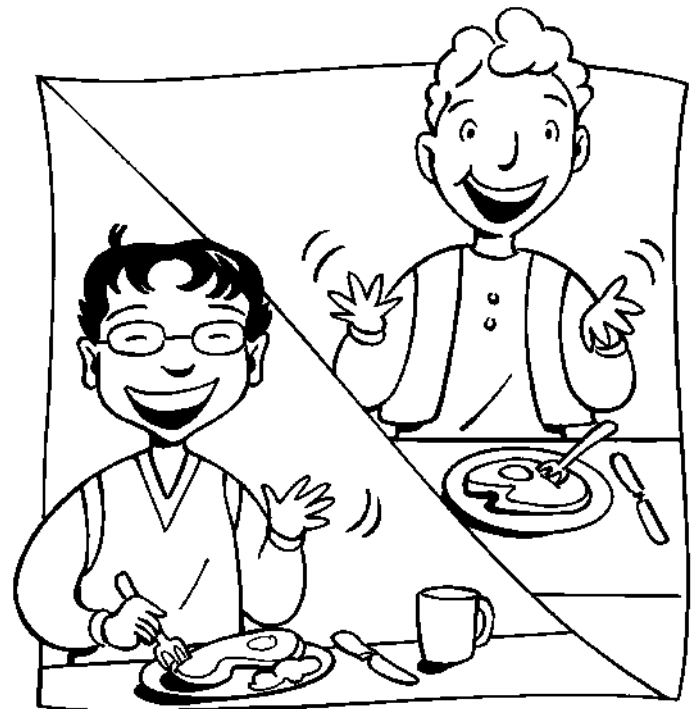
Fun Sheet 020

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"And Mr. James teaches him all about work on the ranch," added Mrs. James.

"I wish I could live on a ranch instead of going to school," said Andy.

"I wish I could go to school and meet other kids. It's hard work here on the ranch," said Glen.



Comprehension

Several **Fun Sheets** contain questioning strategies to aid students' understanding of **Tommy the Cowboy**.

Fun Sheets 001 and 002 test students' comprehension of the story. After assessing their answers, reread the story as needed to clarify anything that students don't understand.

Fun Sheet 003 asks students to use their imagination in answering questions related to the story.

Name: _____

True or False?

Decide whether the following statements are true or false, and then circle the correct answer.

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Sam helped Red Deer move the cows. | true false |
| 2. Tommy fell off his horse. | true false |
| 3. Bunga rode on the back of a cow. | true false |
| 4. Red Deer guided the cows across a huge river. | true false |
| 5. The news saw the ranch and started to stampede again. | true false |
| 6. Tommy used a lasso to rescue a calf that had wandered off. | true false |
| 7. Glen brought Tommy's friends back to the ranch in a wagon. | true false |
| 8. Glen was happy that he didn't go to school. | true false |
| 9. RK-5 transported Red Deer forward in time along with the other friends. | true false |

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Fun Sheet 002



After dinner, the children thanked Mrs. James and said it was time for them to leave. Mrs. James wanted to take them to the other side of the canyon in her wagon. Tommy told her that they preferred to walk.

"We need the exercise after such a big dinner," said Tommy.

Calories (continued)

Another reason people become overweight is that people often eat to try to feel better—that is, for emotional rather than physical reasons. There is a deep-seated reason for this that people have a hard time controlling. When we eat, our brains release endorphins. Endorphins are our brain's way of rewarding us for taking care of ourselves—they give us a happy feeling. People with eating disorders might eat to feel the endorphins, whereas another person might exercise, talk to a friend, work on a fun activity, or find another way to feel good. It is very hard to change this behavior. People who overeat should be treated with respect and understanding, and it is up to each person to decide whether he or she wants to make a change.

Calories

Tommy and his friends turned down Mrs. James's offer of a carriage ride because they needed some exercise after eating a big meal. This is a good opportunity to discuss exercise, calories, and diet with your class.

A calorie is a measure of the amount of energy in food. Eating food is a lot like piling wood on a fire. The more wood you pile on, the longer and hotter the fire burns. If the fire goes out early, burnable wood will remain in the fireplace. When you eat, you are fueling your body's energy. Without food, you have no way to create energy. The more food you eat, the more potential energy you have.

Many people do not use all of the energy that they eat. The extra energy is stored in our bodies as fat, much like wood lying in the fireplace. In more challenging times when survival was a greater concern, extra fat was a good thing. It allowed people to keep energy in reserve, and it helped people to survive when food was not readily available or during a long illness. But in today's fast-food society, excess fat is hazardous.

Foods high in protein and fiber and low in unnatural sugars are efficient fuel that the body burns evenly. Sugars and starches are good for people in small doses, but they are a much quicker burn, producing lots of fuel but little energy. Large quantities of fat and sugars are likely to be added to our fat reserves and not likely to make us feel well.

Food is a nurturing and necessary part of life. However, if a person becomes overweight (which occurs when calories are taken in and equal energy is not expended), his or her body has a more difficult time functioning. Blood vessels can become clogged, and the heart must pump harder to supply blood to the increased body mass. As activity becomes more difficult, losing weight can become increasingly challenging. But weight loss is not impossible. All one needs to do is consume fewer calories than one burns with activity and exercise. Why is it so hard for so many of us?

People become overweight for many reasons. One reason is that high-calorie foods are so readily available, and in our fast-paced society, reliance on fast foods has increased. Unfortunately, fast food does not by any means equate with nourishing food. The convenience factor wins out for most people.

More on Healthy Eating

One of the many reasons why people have become overweight, at least in the United States, is that the nutritional balance recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is not actually healthy or balanced! Called the "food pyramid," it recommends numbers of servings per day of various kinds of foods. According to this plan, the largest number of servings recommended should be bread, cereal, rice, and pasta.

A new, updated food pyramid was created in 2001 by Dr. Walter C. Willett and published in his book *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*. One of the important changes in the new version is the distinction Willett makes between simple and complex carbohydrates. The bread-cereal-rice-pasta group that was lumped together in the old food pyramid is now separated into two distinct groups:

- whole grain foods, which can be eaten at most meals
- white rice, white bread, potatoes, and pasta, which, along with sweets, should be eaten very sparingly

The main reason for the distinction between these two food groups is the different rate of conversion of each group into sugar in the bloodstream. This, in turn, is a key factor in insulin production and the degree to which a person is at risk for diabetes.

Many other important differences exist between the old and new food pyramids. For more information, check out these Web sites:

<http://nutrition.tufts.edu/publications/matters/2001-10-01.shtml>

<http://www.nal.usda.gov:8001/py/pmap.htm>

Do Kids Care?

Anyone who has spent time with children knows that few of them pay conscious attention to what is healthy and what isn't. They like Coke, pizza, and french fries, and telling them that a food is good for them is often the "kiss of death" as far as getting them to eat that food. At the same time, children learn food habits from their families and other people with whom they have regular contact.

The two largest factors in a child's eating habits are the availability of healthy versus unhealthy foods and their family's habits around food. Kids who have not already been

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The children waved to Mrs. James and Glen. Then they set off with Red Deer. Halfway to the canyon, Red Deer said goodbye. He took his horses and headed for home.



overly influenced by the bad habits of others know when they are hungry or full, and even know intuitively what nutrients they need. When they get low on protein, they crave protein-heavy foods. Over time, sugars and fatty foods override natural cravings as chemical cravings are created. The best course of action is to stock up on fruits, proteins, whole grains, and vegetables, and to allow children to choose from a healthy selection without micromanaging their diets. They will naturally eat what they need.

If each meal is dictated to children, their ability to make choices and to follow natural inclinations will be lost. On the other hand, if provided with healthy options, they will learn to fuel their bodies properly. Even if they have acquired unhealthy habits, some of these will fall away when they have healthier options available and when eating junk food no longer is presented as a recreational activity. Eating truly is a simple and natural thing. Just remember that doughnuts are not.

"Now that everyone has gone, you can take us back," Kim said to RK-5.

"And remember to take us back to 2002," added Lucy.

There was a flash of light and a cloud of blue smoke. When the smoke had cleared, they were back at the park and back in 2002.



Relationships

This story, like the other stories in the **Tommy Tales** series, continues to reveal to us aspects of the children's relationships with each other. Each adventure teaches the importance of friends and family, teamwork, and staying together on adventures. These stories also encourage readers to think about right and wrong and to make wise choices in their lives. As a way of wrapping up this story, ask students to share something they have learned from this **Tommy Tales** adventure that they can use in their everyday life.

Feedback

Remind students that this is the seventeenth book in the **Tommy Tales** series. Ask, "How do you like it so far?"

Ask students to write a critical book review of this story or of the series so far. Reviews can be in the form of a written essay, a poster, or a drawing. E-mail your reviews to editor1@learningpage.com for possible inclusion in future Teaching Guides.

More Feedback

Students who have followed the **Tommy Tales** stories may have ideas about adventures they would like Tommy and his friends to go on. Suggestions for future story adventures can be sent to editor1@learningpage.com along with book reviews. Imagine the excitement of a student whose idea is incorporated into a future story!

Conclusion

Ask students for their feelings and thoughts about this story. Students will naturally be curious and enthusiastic to see what happens in the next **Tommy Tales** adventure. As RK-5 continues to transport Tommy and his friends to new places, readers' knowledge and understanding of the world around them continues to grow.

Write a Letter to a Tommy Tales Character

After reading *Tommy the Cowboy*, have students write a letter to one of the characters in the story. Leave the content up to them. Be sure to have students follow a traditional letter-writing form, with the date, salutation line, closing, and a signature.

We want to hear from your students! Please e-mail the letters to editor1@learningpage.com.

Dear Glen,
Can I come live at your house? I will help you do your chores, and your mom can teach me all my school subjects. I would much rather live before the time of pollution and horror movies.
Your friend, Angela

