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The cowboy: A legendary and real character of the wild west

The cowboy is both a myth and reality of American history, he embodies the qualities of the "good American citizen": he is white, strong, brave and kind at heart. The mythical cowboy wears a fancy embroidered shirt, black leather boots, a leather belt and jacket and a large hat to protect him from the sun and rain. In real life, the cowboy was often black, worked all day long looking after cattle and wore ordinary working clothes. His life was very hard: he was compelled to go on long journeys to drive cows across the Great Plains and ship them to eastern cities. For his solitary and dangerous work he received low pay and poor food.

One of these adventurers who became part of the American myth was Buffalo Bill, an almost legendary character. The real name of this American pioneer was William Frederick Cody (1846 – 1917). His nickname was due to his skill in killing buffalos. In fact he killed an enormous number of buffalos which roamed the plains, on his own. He fought in the Civil War and took part in the wars against the Sioux. This character inspired a vast amount of popular literature and a lot of western films.

Activities:

1. Read the passage about the cowboy then match the answers with the right questions below:

1. He is strong, brave and kind at heart.
2. He was a legendary American cowboy.
3. Yes it was. He was compelled to go on long journeys.
4. He received poor food and low pay.
5. Because he killed an enormous number of buffalos.
 - a) Why did Buffalo Bill become a legendary character?
 - b) What did a cowboy receive for his work?
 - c) What qualities does the American cowboy embody?
 - d) Who was Buffalo Bill?
 - e) Was a cowboy's life very hard?

2. Write a short account of a western film you have recently seen.

Include these points: title; main characters; story; if you liked it and why.