

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Wild West

In the 1800s, the West was unknown to many. It was seen as less civilized and more dangerous than the East. As a result, people often referred to it as the “Wild West.” There were stories about the West that were exaggerated. If something happened in the West, the story and the facts would often change each time the story was passed from person to person. In some cases, newspapers would sensationalize stories in order to make more people want to buy the paper. By the time a report reached the East coast, it could have had very little truth left in the story.

Some of the most fearsome outlaws were men who participated in the Civil War. Since these men learned to kill during war and steal what they needed to survive, many of them continued to kill and rob because they were desperate.

Jesse James was a notorious outlaw. He was one of the Confederate raiders during the Civil War. After the war, Jesse and his brother Frank formed a gang that robbed banks. They later began robbing trains and stories of their crimes spread. In 1882, Jesse was at his home in Missouri. Two of the members of his gang were with him. Their names were Charles and Robert Ford. When Jesse had his back turned, Robert Ford shot and killed him. Jesse’s brother Frank was later captured and put on trial for his crimes, but he was found not guilty.

Billy the Kid was another infamous outlaw. His real name was William Bonney. Before he was even eighteen, it is believed that Billy killed as many as twelve men. His gang stole cattle and killed anyone who tried to stop them. Billy the Kid and his gang seemed unstoppable for quite some time. Billy’s friend, Pat Garrett, eventually became sheriff. In 1880, Garrett trapped Billy’s gang. He forced Billy to surrender, but Billy escaped before he could be hanged for his crime of murder. Garrett tracked Billy down to his hideout and fired into Billy’s bedroom. Billy, who was only twenty-one at the time, was killed by the shots.

Because of the many stories about Billy the Kid, some people admired him because he was daring. Shortly after Billy’s death, the newspaper in his hometown wanted to make sure that people understood that Billy was not a hero and should not be admired. The paper printed an article that called Billy “a low-down, vulgar cut-throat, with probably not one redeeming quality.”

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## The Wild West (Cont'd)

While the Wild West was famous for its many colorful outlaws, some men became famous for enforcing the law. One such man was Wild Bill Hickok. Wild Bill Hickok was a marshal whose real name was James Butler Hickok. He was an excellent marksman. He was also a spy and a scout for the Union forces during the Civil War. After the war, he was asked to serve as a marshal in Kansas. Cowboys often gathered in Kansas at the end of their cattle drives.

Hickok was the marshal of Abilene, Kansas. He was known for wearing fancy clothes and expensive boots. He had ivory-handled pistols and killed several men. Some people even said that not all of his killing was necessary in order to uphold the law. He was known as one of the most fearless and dangerous men on the frontier.

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## The Wild West Questions

### Multiple Choice:

1. Jesse James was killed by:

- a. Billy the Kid
- b. His brother
- c. Charles Ford
- d. Robert Ford

2. This man was the marshal of Abilene, Kansas:

- a. Jesse James
- b. Billy the Kid
- c. Wild Bill Hickok
- d. William Bonney

3. This man and his gang were infamous for stealing cattle and killing anyone who got in their way:

- a. Wild Bill Hickok
- b. Jesse James
- c. Pat Garrett
- d. Billy the Kid

4. Jesse James' gang was known for:

- a. Stealing cattle
- b. Robbing banks and trains
- c. Slaughtering Indians
- d. None of the above

### True or False:

\_\_\_ 5. Some of the most fearsome outlaws were men who participated in the Civil War.

\_\_\_ 6. In the 1800s, the East was seen as less civilized and more dangerous than the West.

\_\_\_ 7. If something happened in the West, the story and the facts would often change each time the story was passed from person to person.

\_\_\_ 8. In 1880, Wild Bill Hickok trapped Billy's gang and forced Bill to surrender.

## The Wild West Answers

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