

One Cool-Looking COWHAND

by Carol Dombleski

Set Your Purpose

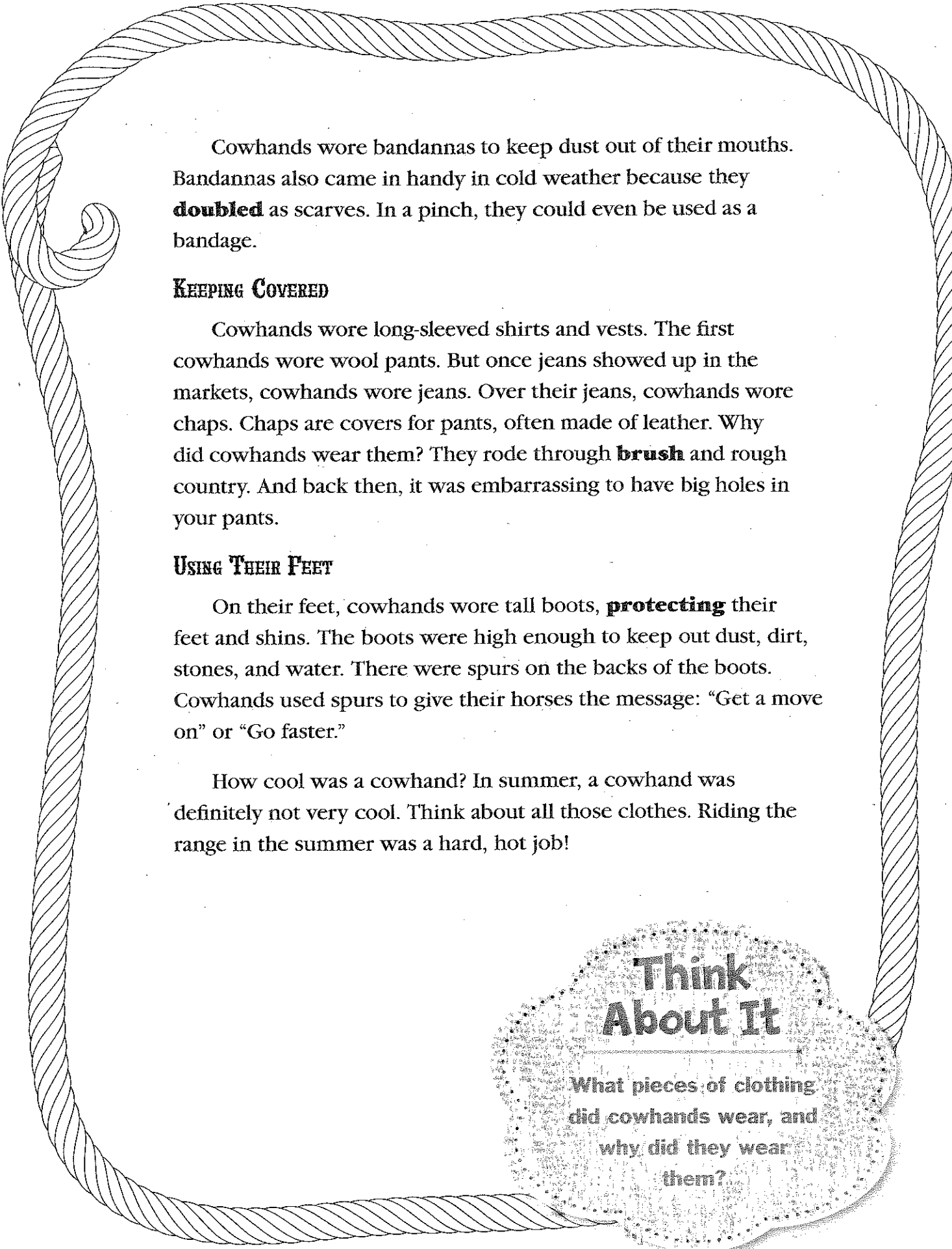
The cowhands of the Old West were pretty cool characters. Read this article to find out what a cowhand wore.

Picture a cowhand riding the **range**. The sky stretches for miles above the open plains. The horse breaks into a gallop, and the herd of cows picks up its pace.

Cowhands, another name for cowboys and cowgirls, were important workers in the Old West. They drove **herds** of cattle across the plains to railroad stations. At the railroad station, the cattle were loaded onto trains and taken to market. Cowhands spent many long weeks riding the range. But do you know what they wore and why?

STARTING AT THE TOP

A cowhand always wore a big hat. Hats kept out the dirt and shaded the cowhand from the sun. A cowhand might also use a hat to carry water. Cowhands touched their hats to say hello, and they waved their hats to show they were happy.



Cowhands wore bandannas to keep dust out of their mouths. Bandannas also came in handy in cold weather because they **doubled** as scarves. In a pinch, they could even be used as a bandage.

KEEPING COVERED

Cowhands wore long-sleeved shirts and vests. The first cowhands wore wool pants. But once jeans showed up in the markets, cowhands wore jeans. Over their jeans, cowhands wore chaps. Chaps are covers for pants, often made of leather. Why did cowhands wear them? They rode through **brush** and rough country. And back then, it was embarrassing to have big holes in your pants.

USING THEIR FEET

On their feet, cowhands wore tall boots, **protecting** their feet and shins. The boots were high enough to keep out dust, dirt, stones, and water. There were spurs on the backs of the boots. Cowhands used spurs to give their horses the message: "Get a move on" or "Go faster."

How cool was a cowhand? In summer, a cowhand was definitely not very cool. Think about all those clothes. Riding the range in the summer was a hard, hot job!

Think About It

What pieces of clothing did cowhands wear, and why did they wear them?

Name _____

Date _____

Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- One reason why cowhands wore hats was to
 - keep dirt out of their hair.
 - be seen more easily.
 - make their horses go faster.
 - keep their heads from getting hurt.
- One reason why cowhands wore bandannas was to
 - keep something red on their bodies for cows to see.
 - protect the tops of their shirts.
 - keep dust out of their mouths.
 - keep their necks cool.
- One reason why cowhands wore high boots was to
 - cover up their short pants.
 - protect their chaps.
 - climb onto their horses more easily.
 - keep stones and dirt from their feet.
- The job of a cowhand was to
 - ride a horse.
 - take care of horses.
 - move cattle where they needed to go.
 - keep the West safe.
- Cowhands, like people today, sometimes used their hats to
 - show they were in danger.
 - shade their heads from the sun.
 - show they were fans of a certain person or team.
 - give them a certain fashion look.

Vocabulary

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- Picture a cowhand riding the range.
 - large grassy area of open land
 - top of an oven
 - stretch across a large area
 - western horses
- They drove herds of cattle across the plains to railroad stations.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> loud sounds large groups of animals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> truckloads train cars
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- Bandannas doubled as scarves.
 - served the same purpose
 - made to look alike
 - were not very good
 - were doubted
- They rode through brush and rough country.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> forests streams 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> dry bushes and weeds tool for smoothing hair
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- Cowhands wore boots, protecting their feet and shins.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> keeping warm hurting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> drawing attention to keeping safe
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Name _____

Date _____

Word Work

Some words have more than one meaning. You can often figure out the meaning of a word by looking at how the word is used in a sentence. For example, the word *range* has several different meanings.

1. **range** (*noun*)—group of mountains
2. **range** (*noun*)—open area over which animals roam and feed

Read each sentence. Decide if each underlined word has meaning A or B. Fill in the letter of the correct answer.

1. They drove the cattle north.
 - A rode in a car
 - B herded and moved animals
2. My dog pants after a long run.
 - A breathes quickly and heavily
 - B clothing worn over the lower body
3. Mei Ling shivered because the morning air was cool.
 - A in fashion
 - B not warm; chilly

An **idiom** is a group of words used in a way that has a special meaning. This meaning is different than the usual meanings of those words.

Write the letter of the definition that matches the idiom in dark type.

Idioms	Definitions
___ 4. looking cool	A. get going
___ 5. hold your horses	B. looking fashionable
___ 6. hold your tongue	C. fall asleep
___ 7. get a move on	D. keep quiet
___ 8. in a pinch	E. say no to
___ 9. nod out	F. if necessary
___ 10. turn down	G. calm down, be patient

Write Now

In "One Cool-Looking Cowhand," you read about what cowhands wore and why. Look at this chart to see some examples.

- Plan to write a paragraph telling what a certain group of people wear and why. Who, besides cowhands, needs to dress in a special way for work? Think of one group. Make a chart showing what they wear and why they wear it.
- Write your paragraph. Explain what each piece of clothing does. Use your chart to help you organize your thoughts.

Clothing Item	Why Cowhands Wore It
hat	to keep out the sun; to carry water
bandanna	to keep dust out; to use as a scarf in cold weather
chaps	to protect pants while riding through brush