

Vocabulary in Context

Read the following passage, in which some of the words you have studied in this unit appear in **boldface** type. Then complete each statement given below the passage by circling the letter of the item that is **the same** or **almost the same** in meaning as the highlighted word.

Life on the Range

Although cowboys have been portrayed as romantic figures in American folklore and film, in reality their life on the trail was anything but romantic. From about 1865 to 1890, cowboys drove approximately 10 million head of cattle from ranches in southern Texas to faraway northern locations. Where the herds went changed during the period. At first, the drives supplied cattle to forts, mining towns, and reservations. Later, with the coming of the railroad, the destinations were railroad towns in Kansas or Nebraska, where the cattle were sold for beef to Eastern buyers. Regardless of the destination, the trip was dangerous and exhausting. In addition to stampedes, cowboys encountered many other **hazards** on the drive.



Herd of longhorn cattle on the move

Along with dangers, almost anything could **retard** the long journey. If the raging rivers they had to cross didn't slow the cowboys down, then the weather would. Cowboys were routinely **pelted** by hail and **plagued** by dust storms. They were also often sickened by the food that was **available** to them.

The majority of the cowboys who drove cattle were Texans. Some were ex-Confederate soldiers. Others were former slaves. Most were young. All were small. Their size made it easier for the horses to carry them over long distances. Cowboys also had something else in common. All worked long hours for very low pay, for up to four months at a time before resting or returning home. Only teamwork got them through the ordeal. Cowboys soon learned that cattle could be managed most effectively in herds of about 2,500 head, with eight to twelve cowboys for each herd. Cattle drivers worked together to herd, round up, watch, and brand the cattle. This teamwork was **indispensable** to the success of any cattle drive.