

# Bill Pickett, Bulldoggin' Cowboy

## Objective

The student will be introduced to Bill Pickett, An Oklahoma rodeo personality, who pioneered the rodeo act of bulldogging. Students will read an informational text and then answer questions to show their comprehension of the material. Students will determine the meaning of new vocabulary words. Students will use a dictionary to look up the meaning of new words. Students will design their own postage stamp.

## Procedures

1. Ask students “What is a bulldogger?” Students will make guesses and talk about what they already know.
2. Introduce vocabulary words from the Reading Page, and discuss possible meanings. Use this seven-step process to help students begin to learn some of the words.
  - Students will touch the word on the page.
  - Students will say the word with you.
  - Students will repeat the word.
  - Provide a simple definition of the word.
  - Students will put the definition in their own words.
  - Ask students a question about the word.
  - Students will talk to a partner about the word.
3. Hand out copies of the Connect/Correct/Collect chart.
  - Students will predict the answers to the questions and write them in the “Connect” column.
  - Hand out copies of the Reading Page for students to read independently or as a class.
  - As students read, they will write the correct answers in the “Correction” column. In addition, students will add any other interesting information in the “Collect” column.
  - Students will read the information on the Reading Page independently or as a class.
4. Students will use the information from their charts to fill out index cards/ sticky notes to make a card pyramid, with the main idea at the top, details in the middle and supporting details at the bottom. (See Answer Page at the end of this lesson for more instructions.)
  - Students will number the cards, starting with the main idea and ending with supporting details.
  - Students will gather up their cards, keeping them in numerical order.
  - Students will take 2-3 minutes only to move around the room, find a partner, and use their cards to tell their partner about Bill Pickett.
  - Students will use the information from the card sort activity to write a summary of the Bill Pickett reading.

## Oklahoma Academic Standards

### GRADE 3

Speaking and Listening:  
R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Fluency: 1.  
Reading and Writing Process:  
R.1,3. Critical Reading and  
Writing: R.7; W.2. Vocabulary:  
R.1,3,5. Research: R.1,2,3,4;  
W.1,2,3  
Oklahoma History—6,10  
Visual Art History and  
Culture: 1,5. Expression: 2.  
Appreciation: 4

## Vocabulary

**bulldogging**—method used to get cattle to lie down by grabbing the horns and twisting the head until the animal falls to the ground.

**cattle branding**—a mark indicating identity or ownership, burned, tattooed or painted on an animal's coat or hide

**commemorate**—to honor the memory of someone or something

**consciousness**—the state or condition of being aware of one's own existence, sensations and thoughts and of one's environment.

**dazzling**—something that inspires admiration or wonder

**descendant**—a person born into a particular family

**enthusiast**—a person who is intensely involved with a particular subject.

**gelding**—a castrated male horse

**history**—events from the past that are remembered by large numbers of people

**horse breaking**—to tame a horse or train it to obey

**lariat**—a long rope with a running noose (hondo) used for catching livestock

**mannerism**—a special way of doing something.

**originator**—The person who brought something into being

**rodeo**—a competition in which cowboys display skills such as riding broncos or lassoing.

5. Students will use online search engines to find the names of the other famous cowboys included in the US Postal Service “Legends of the West” series.
  - Students will write short research papers about one or more of the other famous cowboys and describe what achievements made them famous.
6. Students will design stamps that reflect their own personal interests.
  - Students will take care to make their stamps as accurate as possible so as to avoid mistakes like the one the US Postal Service made when designing the Bill Pickett stamp.
  - Discuss the importance of research and accuracy in the development of a series of stamps.

# Bill Pickett, Bulldoggin' Cowboy

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Bill Pickett, Oklahoma cowboy, made history two times—once in his lifetime and once in ours. Pickett was the originator of a dazzling rodeo act called “bulldogging.” In his time, he was known as “the best bulldogger in the world.”

A descendant of South Carolina slaves, Bill was born and raised in central Texas. He was one of 13 children born to a family with a long history of cowboys' ways. In movies and TV shows about the old West, cowboys are usually white. In real life, nearly one out of seven cowboys was an African American freed from slavery by the Civil War.

Bill didn't go to school past the fifth grade. That was not unusual for a black child growing up in Texas in the early 1900s. Many children were not allowed in the schools because of their skin color. Instead, Bill concentrated on learning all he could about horses and ranch life. He would stand for hours studying the mannerisms of the cowboys as they swung their lariats to break horses and throw cattle down on the ground for branding.

One day in 1881, Bill watched in amazement as a bulldog bit a cow on its upper lip—and hung on! The cow stood perfectly still until the dog let go. A few days later, Bill decided he would use the dog's trick to wrestle a cow to the ground. He grabbed the cow's ears and bit down on her upper lip. With an easy flip, Bill threw the animal to the ground, all the time holding on with his teeth. The trick came to be known as “bulldogging” among the cowboys in the area, who used it as a way to get cattle to the ground for branding.

Bill began rodeo bulldogging after he got married, because he needed to earn extra money. His fame spread quickly, and on June 11, 1905, Bill went to work for the Miller Brothers 101 Wild West Show near Ponca City. The show's name came from the fact that it was located 101 miles from Tulsa, 101 miles from Oklahoma City and 101 miles from Wichita, Kansas. Pickett's bulldogging act was soon a featured attraction. Sometimes he did the act as many as three times a day. Pickett estimated that during his lifetime he bulldogged about 5,000 head of cattle.

One day in March, 1932, Bill and some other cowboys were gathering up some horses for a sale. A three-year-old unbroken gelding knocked Bill to the ground and kicked him in the head. He was rushed to a Ponca City hospital but never regained consciousness. On April 2, 1932, the man who invented bulldogging died. Bill Pickett is buried in the triangle pasture that once was part of the famous 101 Ranch.

When the US Postal Service decided to commission a series of stamps entitled “Legends of the West,” Bill Pickett was chosen, along with three other American cowboys, to be featured on the stamp.

The stamps were printed, sent out to post offices all over the country, and scheduled to go on sale in March, 1994. Days before the stamp was to go on sale, Bill Pickett's family discovered the picture used on Pickett's stamp was not of Bill but of his younger brother, Ben. An urgent memo went out to the nation's post offices. The stamp was not to be sold but returned to the main post office in Washington, DC.

In the state of Washington, between five and eight sheets were sold by mistake. Each sheet contained 20 stamps, with five stamps honoring each of the four famous cowboys on each one. That meant there were five Bill Pickett stamps on each sheet and between 25 and 40 Bill Pickett stamps somewhere in Washington state.

The US Postal Service offered a commemorative stamp mug to anyone returning the erroneous sheets. No one came forward to accept the offer. Rumors began to spread that an anonymous stamp collector would pay \$100,000 per sheet.

The US Postal Service was now stuck with 3 million incorrect stamps. The descendants of Bill Pickett began to worry that Bill would be remembered for the stamp rather than for his achievements as a rodeo star. Finally the postal service and the Pickett family came to an agreement. The postal service would release 150,000 sheets of the stamps for sale in October, 1994. That would decrease the value of the stamps that were sold by mistake, even though stamp collectors will always be interested in obtaining copies for their collections.

The remaining 2.5 million stamps are in a regional postal center in Kansas City, Missouri. They are not for sale.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Connect/Correct/Collect Chart

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Question	Connect	Correct	Collect
What was the last grade level Bill Pickett attended in school?			
What rodeo trick did Bill Pickett become famous for?			
How did Bill Pickett die?			
After Bill Pickett died, how did he become famous a second time?			

# Connect/Correct/Collect (answers)

QUESTIONS	CONNECT	CORRECT	COLLECT
What was the last grade level Bill Pickett attended in school?		Bill Pickett only attended school through the 5th grade because he was African American.	
What rodeo trick did Bill Pickett become famous for?		Bill Pickett became a famous “bulldogger” in the Miller Brothers 101 Wild West Show near Ponca City.	
How did Bill Pickett die?		Bill Pickett was kicked in the head by a horse and died shortly after.	
After Bill Pickett died, how did he become famous a second time?		Bill Pickett became famous a second time when a stamp was issued in his honor but had his brother’s picture on it. Over 3 million stamps had to be recalled.	

Extend: Use the information from the chart to fill out index cards to make a card pyramid. There will be at least nine cards, numbered as follows.

1. Main Idea: Bill Pickett was a famous rodeo cowboy.			
2. Detail: School	4. Detail: Rodeo Trick	6. Detail: Death	8. Detail: Also famous for
3. Supporting Detail: Only attended through 5th grade..	5. Supporting Detail: Famous for “bulldogging”	7. Supporting Detail: Kicked in head by a horse.	9. Supporting Detail: Stamp issued had wrong picture on it.

Additional cards may be inserted anywhere to add extra information. Just change the numbering.

Students will move around the room to a partner and give an oral summary of Bill Pickett. They may use their card pyramids as they talk.

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.