

# THE FENCE CUTTING WARS

**Grade Level Focus:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Topic:** Texas Rangers and the Fence Cutting Wars, 1883-1888

**Compelling Question:** What was the cause of the Fence Cutting Wars and how did the Texas Rangers end them?

**TEKS:** 4.3(D), 4.18(A), 4.18(B), 4.19(B)

**Materials:** handout with images, handout with questions, scissors, tape or glue

## Background Information:

When Texas was first settled, it was known for its wide-open spaces and roaming herds of cattle. However, with the invention of barbed wire by Joseph Glidden in 1874, ranchers and farmers began fencing in their private property. This made it difficult for cowboys to conduct major cattle drives (the process of moving a herd of cattle from one place to another). Finding the best water, trails, and grass was always challenging for cowboys but did not become a widespread problem until a drought in 1883. If cowboys couldn't find water and grass for their livestock, they would cut the barbed wire fence to get through. Fence cutting was soon made a felony offense for two reasons: some cowboys destroyed the land after using it, and barbed wire was new and expensive. Ira Aten was a Texas Ranger who worked undercover to put a stop to fence cutting. He suggested planting bombs along the fence lines. This tactic was never put into use, but word got around about the bombs, and the fence cutting stopped by 1888.

Engage	<p>What do you think caused the Fence Cutting wars? How do you think the Texas Rangers stopped fence cutting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students about their theories</li> </ul>
Explore	<p>Guess the Order of Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide students up into small groups. You can also do this activity together as a class or individually.</li> <li>• Pass out the handouts with the five images and have the students cut out the images.</li> <li>• Explain to students that each image is a clue representing something that occurred during the Fence Cutting Wars, from the cause leading up to the war to the end of it. Ask students to work as a group to guess which order would make sense and then create an explanation of what occurred.</li> <li>• *A quicker alternative to cutting out and reordering the images is to have students number the images on the paper.</li> </ul>
Explain	<p>Talk About the Fence Cutting Wars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the class an explanation for their pictures. Ask them to review the information and correct it if needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cattle Drive- Represents cattle drives of early Texas</li> <li>○ Barbed Wire- Barbed wire fences cut down on cattle drives and increased enforcement of private property</li> <li>○ No Water- Represents the drought in Texas during the 1880s</li> <li>○ Fence Cutters- Cowboys began cutting fences to use the land/water on the other side</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

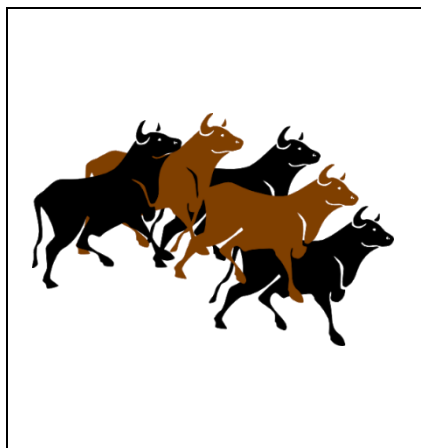
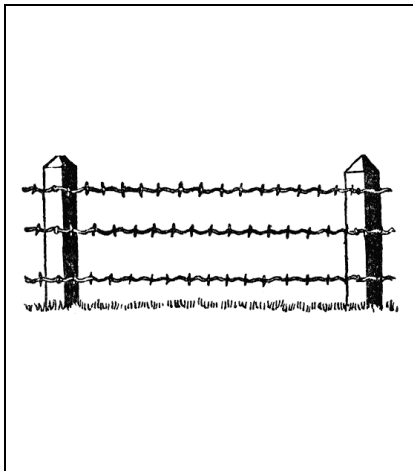
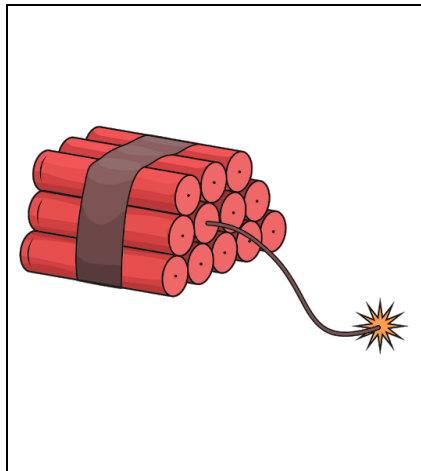


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Dynamite Stick- Ira Aten's plan to put a stop to the fence cutting was to plant bombs along the fence line</li></ul>
Elaborate/ Evaluate	<p>Independent Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ask students to fill out the bottom of the worksheet. They can do so by themselves or in groups to create more discussion. The questions are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ If you were Texas Ranger Ira Aten, what would you have done about the Fence Cutting Wars?</li><li>○ List four pros and cons of barbed wire.</li></ul></li></ul>



## THE FENCE CUTTING WARS

Each of these pictures represents a step of the Fence Cutting Wars, from why they started to how they were ended. Cut out each picture and put them in the order in which you think they happened.



## THE FENCE CUTTING WARS

Using the images you cut out, tape or paste them into the correct order in the boxes below.


If you were Texas Ranger Ira Aten, what would you have done about the Fence Cutting Wars?

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List four pros and cons of barbed wire. If you run out of space, you can use the back of this worksheet.

Pro:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Cons:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

