



Ted Alejandre, County Superintendent

San Bernardino County
Superintendent of Schools
Transforming lives through education



Thursday, June 11
12:00pm

History Detectives
4th – 8th grades.

The History Detectives investigate four stories from the American West. Did a biography of legendary frontiersman Kit Carson once belong to members of his family? Then, from the rodeo to Hollywood, a saddle tells the story of Yakima Canutt, who made life safer for movie stunt artists. What is the meaning behind the mysterious inscription on sheet music of the popular western song "Tumbling Tumbleweeds"? Finally, did a pivotal character in the Modoc Indian wars weave this basket?

After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning

Question Box 1

Kit Carson's Biography

- Who was Kit Carson?
- What type of lifestyle did a frontiersman live?
- How did Carson gain fame in the 1840s?
- Why does Wes Cowan believe this book, Kit Carson's Biography, was written in the 1850s or 1860s?
- Kit Carson couldn't read or write so if Kit Carson didn't record the genealogy; who did?
- Carson was apparently a very private person, so why did he dictate his biography?
- What is meant by "not every story is as it entirely happened"?
- After Kit Carson's death, how did he become more famous?

From the Rodeo to Hollywood

- Where did Terry Garber find this saddle and what attracted him to it?
- The name on the cantle is Yak Canutt. Who is he?
- What brand is found on the saddle?
- What is the expected age of the saddle? Why do the experts infer that the saddle has been "ridden hard"?
- What do the numbers and the word "special" stamped into the saddle mean?
- List the western movies mentioned in this episode that Yak Canutt was in.
- How does Wes Cowen use these call movies to verify the authenticity of the saddle and its owner?
- Even though Yak was in Hollywood movies, he is better known for what?
- What does he discover about the saddle owned by Terry Garber?
- Why do they surmise that this saddle was not in the movies? Describe the features that tell what this saddle was used for.

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- Why does this saddle have Yak's name on it if it was used by Yak?

Tumbling Tumbleweeds

- Who wrote Tumbling Tumbleweeds and when?
- Who recorded Tumbling Tumbleweeds and when? And what were their names?
- What was the original name of the song?
- What is the meaning or message in the song?
- Bob Nolan wrote, "This was the second song I wrote in 1932. It has been both bad and good to me." What do you think he meant by both bad and good to me? Provide detailed specifics.

Modoc Basket

- What tales does this basket tell of the heroism of an American Indian woman?
- Who is Toby Riddle?
- How does expert Natalie Linn know that this basket is definitely Modoc?
- How old does she think the basket is and how can she tell?
- What is a maker's mark?
- Describe what materials are used to make a basket and how a basket is made?
- Describe the battle that made Toby Riddle famous.
- What does Toby Riddle do after the battle and why?
- Toby Riddle's Modoc name was Nanooktow which meant Strange Child, tell three things about Toby Riddle that indicates that she was an unconventional person.

Question Box 2

- What do you think it was like to live in a place and time where things were yet undiscovered and relationships with others were not yet developed? How would you feel? What would be your priorities? How would you survive and thrive?

Box 3 (Tasks)

- Research Kit Carson. Who was he and why did he become famous in the west?
- Create a timeline of the "settling" of your community in the West.
- Research the Modoc Wars. What happened to the Modoc people after the wars?
- What was it like in the American Frontier? Research life in the American West from 1850-1925. Include geography, history, folklore and cultural expression.
- Create a timeline of the American Old West to span approximately a hundred years. From your timeline, describe the change over time, point of views from the Native Americans and the settlers/cowboys/explorers, the ethics and the structure and rules that governed this region during this period of time.
- Write a list of unanswered questions.

Box 4 (Enrichment)

- Tumbling Tumbleweeds is the classic song of the American West. What makes the

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song so iconic? What iconic song is the song of your generation? Why?

- Research the Native American's that lived in your area. What is the tribe's history? What stories do they tell of their history? What happened to them as Europeans moved West?
- Check out: <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/techniques/>
- After reviewing detective techniques. What's a story in your family's or community's history that you want to know more about it. Use some of the techniques from the site to investigate the mystery. Discuss what you unearthed.
- Research the Modoc Wars. What happened to the Modoc people after the wars.
- Research Kit Carson at https://kids.kiddle.co/Kit_Carson.
- Learn about his education and how his biography was
- written. How do you think Kit's life would have been
- different if he were literate?
- Write a newspaper article, informing others what it was
- like to move to the wild west.

Box 5 (Extend/Real-Life)

- Watch two-three western movies, compare and contrast the real-life of those that live in the American Frontier to the way life was portrayed in Hollywood movies.
*Videos can be found on YouTube. Movies can be accessed via Netflix or Hulu.
- As you watch this episode write down the jobs that you see people working in. (As many as possible)
- Next to each of the jobs you listed write yes if the job still exists, write no if the job does not exist.
- For each one that you said yes list the similarities and differences between how the job was done then and how it is done now.
- For each one that you said no it does not exist try to think of a job that exists today that would serve a similar purpose. For example, a blacksmith is someone who puts horseshoes on. That job could be the equivalent of an auto mechanic today because they keep the transportation working.
- List one or two jobs that exist today that you think may not exist in 5 or 10 years. (If you get stuck ask a family member for ideas) Explain why you think they won't exist.
- To see why some jobs don't exist read this article.
<https://www.wonderopolis.org/wonder/what-jobs-did-people-have-in-the-past>