Meanwhile Back At The Ranch
(GPN #44/PBS #44)
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Program Description:
Looking for some diversion, a bored Rancher Hicks drives to town not knowing that he will miss a very eventful, surprise-filled day back at the ranch. LeVar visits Old Tucson, an authentic western town. He gets a taste of western life as a cowboy when he dons true western garb, complete with spurs, chaps, and an official ten-gallon hat. We meet a talented stuntwoman who demonstrates rope tricks and thrilling stunts on horseback.

Social Studies Concepts:
• history/literature
• history
• careers/occupations

Classroom Activities:

History/Literature
Discuss the characteristics of a tall tale including why it is unbelievable. In what ways is Meanwhile Back At The Ranch a “whopper” of a tale? Check the library for other tall tales (e.g. Paul Bunyan by Steven Kellogg) to read with your students. After reading several, invite the class to create their own tall tale. Have them sit in a circle as if around a campfire. Ask for a volunteer to begin the tale with an imaginative start. Then each student has 20 seconds to continue the story, making it more unbelievable as they go. Record this activity so students can listen to it again in the classroom listening center.

History
Have students do research to find out what types of clothing were worn by children who lived when the “west was young.” Then have students draw two pictures of themselves – one in which they are wearing clothing from the late 1800s and the other in which they are wearing today’s clothing. Display the pictures and talk about how and why the styles are different.

—cont.
Careers/Occupations

Brainstorm a list of careers students think were important in the Old West. Examples might include blacksmith, sheriff, cattle driver, stablehand, cook, teacher, farmer, rancher and so on. Then have them list careers of today, and draw lines between those that are the same on both lists. Next have students compare the two lists. Do towns need a stable for horses today? What do we need instead? (car dealerships, auto repair shops, parking garages) Continue the discussion by examining how careers have changed over the years (i.e. teaching — one room schools, one teacher teaching all grades, keeping the school clean and heated).

Careers/Occupations

Have students write help wanted ads for a cowhand. The ad should list the skills needed for the job, the pay, the starting date, and other things students think are necessary requirements (horse, roping skills, bedrolls, and so on.)

Do-At-Home Activity:

The Good Old Days

Send home the “Good Old Days” activity so students can survey their parents and grandparents to find out what life was like 10 years ago, 20 years ago, and 30 years ago.

Suggested Reading:

Review Books:
Dakota Dugout by Ann Turner
Bossyboots by David Cox
Rodeo by Cheryl Walsh Bellville

Other Suggestions:
Gila Monsters Meet You At The Airport by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
Poinsettia And The Firefighters by Felicia Bond
Pecos Bill by Ariane Dewey
Beats Me, Claude by Joan Lowery Nixon
Pecos Bill by Steven Kellogg
Good Old Days

Ask parents, grandparents, other family members or neighbors these questions:

What was it like to live 10 years ago?

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What is the same as today?

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What is different?

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