



# CHUCK WAGON



NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS



# Chuck Wagon

**Grades 3-5**

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## Vocabulary:

Chuck Wagon  
Dutch Oven  
Cattle drive  
Cook  
Chuck Box  
Livestock  
Boot/Pan Box

## Materials for Activity:

Plain paper for roof  
Glue sticks  
Liquid glue  
Scissors

In this activity, students will learn the history of the Chuck Wagon and how it improved the quality of life on a cattle drive.



## **Chuck Wagon**

**In 1865, towards the end of the Civil War, a man by the name of Charles Goodnight had a plan to make money. The Texas cattleman wanted to round-up the three million longhorns that had been turned loose during the War and were roaming through the Southwest. Goodnight realized the way cowboys ate on cattle drives, every man cooking for himself, was not efficient and he decided it needed to be changed. He believed it would be better if there was one designated cook who would be responsible for all of the food and equipment.**

**With that idea, Goodnight set out to construct a small, portable kitchen or “Chuck Box” that was fastened to the back of a large wagon. The design would include drawers, shelves, cubby holes to store kitchen utensils and condiments in the rear of the wagon. His design also included a hinged door that would drop down to be used as a surface for food preparation. The rest of the wagon would work as storage for the food and larger equipment.**

**After the construction of his revolutionary idea, Goodnight completed his very first cattle drive. It began in Belknap, Texas and followed the Pecos River into New Mexico, ending near Fort Sumner. This first drive provided cattle to be used to feed the Navajo and Apache people who were being held on a reservation at the Fort.**

**The purpose of the Chuck Wagon was to assist those on long-haul cattle drives with a reliable way of food production. A cattle drive is the act of moving large numbers of livestock from one place to another. Cattle drives in the 1800s began in 1848 because of the demand for fresh beef during the Gold Rush and continued through the Civil War and into the Indian War period.**

**During this time, the most efficient way to move large numbers of livestock long distance was by herding them on horseback. Many of these cattle drives had anywhere between 2,000-4,000 head of cattle, and required many cowboys and equipment. The average Chuck Wagon had to haul thousands of pounds of food to be prepared and eaten on the trail.**

**For example, the following provisions were needed for a 1,000 mile drive which averaged about 100 days:**

- 300 pounds Salt Pork (Bacon)**
- 500 pounds Flour and/or Cornmeal**
- 50 pounds Salt**
- 50 pounds Sugar**
- 100 pounds Coffee**
- 50 pounds Baking Powder**
- 10 pounds Pepper**
- 200 pounds Onions**
- 500 pounds Beans**
- 50 pounds Sour Dough Starter**

- 500 pounds Potatoes**
- 50 pounds Dried Chile**
- 50 pounds Lard**
- 200 pounds Dried Fruit**

**Approximate cost in 1880 - \$350.00 (total weight – 2,610 lbs.)**

In order to provide meals for those on the drive, the Chuck Wagon also carried lots of cooking equipment. During this era, the most common cooking appliance was the Dutch oven, which was a large pot and lid made of iron that could be placed directly on the fire. Cooks replaced breakable glassware with more durable tin ware. The Chuck Box also carried supplies needed to build a campfire for cooking such as shovels, coal, tripods to hang pots on, and grates for cooking directly over the fire. Most all these heavy cast-iron tools were carried in a wooden “Boot” or “Pan Box” located below the chuck box at the rear of the wagon.

Food preparation tools were important as well and included items like wooden rolling pins, potato mashers, measuring cups and spoons, and a cutting board. Wooden or tin mixing bowls were common, and a good supply of skinning and carving knives for butchering wild game or an injured cow were a necessity. Most of the cowboys brought their own drinking cups, plates, bowls, and utensils. However, the cook kept a few extra around just in case.





# Chuck Wagon

O R H B E V X I Y X Y K E Q E J A W V O Z I G H F  
 B E P Y M K X S Z T A U Q D K Q N K Z Y Q L E F C  
 R D I E D Z A S N B Q H K T N O Z D L T U W E J H  
 I Z N U C P I U U U F C W L S N I F E J H L O A A  
 C K A S I O O H W V J G A B E L K N A P S Y J H R  
 R Z W B Q M S P I N C S A T M E F S F V K Y A L L  
 P F I O L G Z R J C O Q L P T C H U C K B O X E E  
 T B R O V O I T I Y O D P O R L M F R S F F M V S  
 S P U T V R R R J V K L T B Z O E W O P Z H G X G  
 I K Z B H Q L R R N E B A O M F V D A I H B W C O  
 K H T O Q E O J M B I R B F L I G I R A S F A T O  
 P E W X X C A T T L E M A N W E X W S I L F S P D  
 S T O Z V D G X D D I Y J P X W B P A I V J M K N  
 O J I F O R T S U M N E R S O Y W C C U O E R D I  
 B L M B C U R R Z U F K X N N J E U M D K N X N G  
 Y N I C U B X B V E B Q I C D K G V U C E T S X H  
 S G N V C S M D W E A H Z Q Z O K N T H S A G C T  
 D J D P E I J M A E K C H Z Z Q C I K U G U W V U  
 L M C J A S G D C X O I K E S T N G T C Y C K C G  
 Z Q F U I N T W N J V R T D A R Q X O K L T I U C  
 X X U T A O B O Q H G Q L C X I Y I T W V O K L B  
 H U J C G S C O C X M Z P V H F L G M A A X M Y P  
 X U C J R O C S X K Z R W Z V E S I L G B D U G H  
 U F L O N G H O R N K S M I F P N Z Y O J B V J H  
 E K N Q Y V B A G G U D U I I V Y Y G N O Y E T S

Charles Goodnight   Cattle Drive  
 Fort Sumner         Pecos River  
 Chuck Box            Longhorn  
 Kitchen               Pan Box

Chuck Wagon       Provisions  
 Livestock           Cattleman  
 Belknap             Boot Box  
 Cook

# Chuck Wagon Craft

## Materials

Chuck wagon template

Wheels (4)

Plain paper for roof

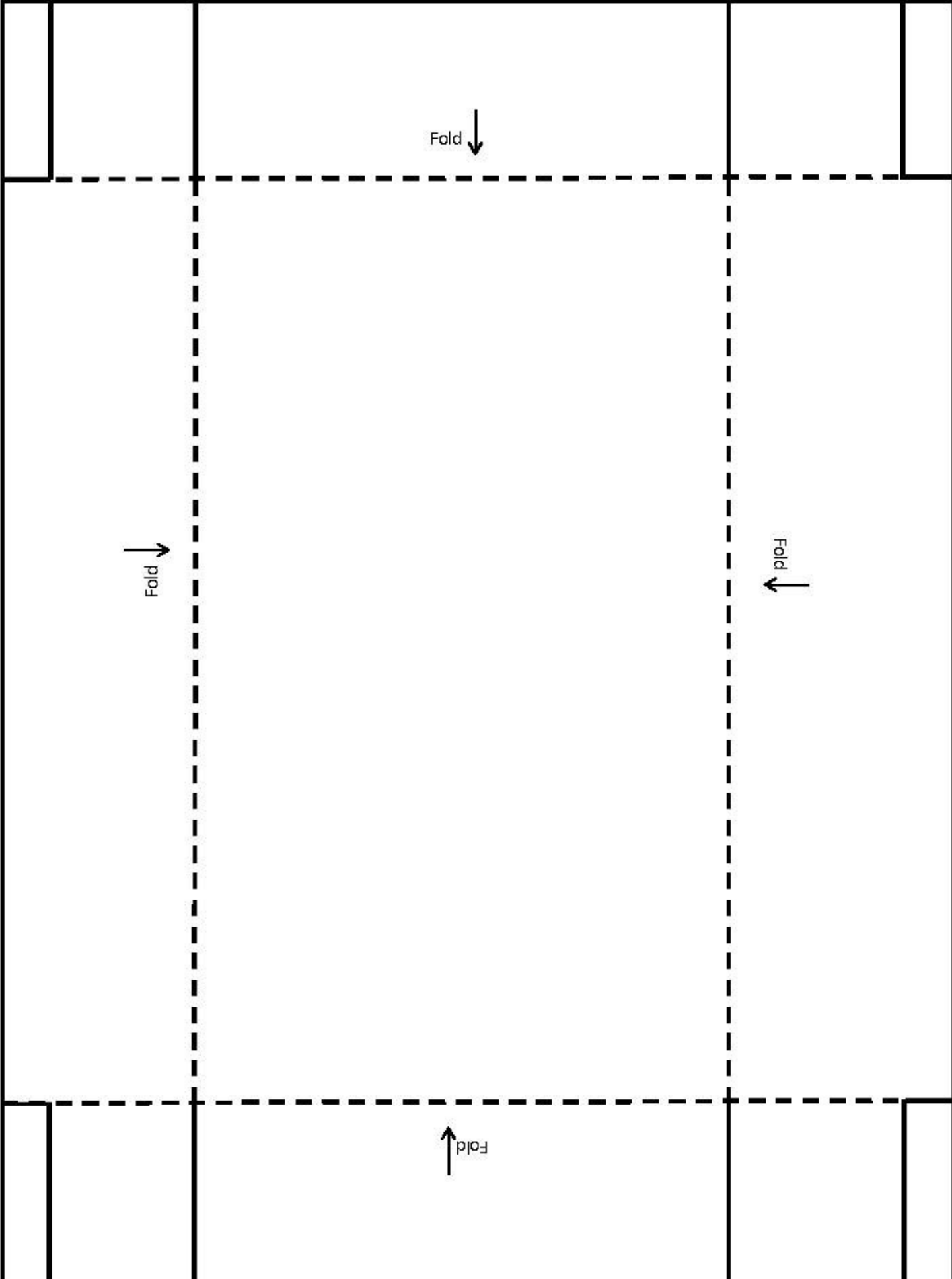
Glue sticks

Liquid glue

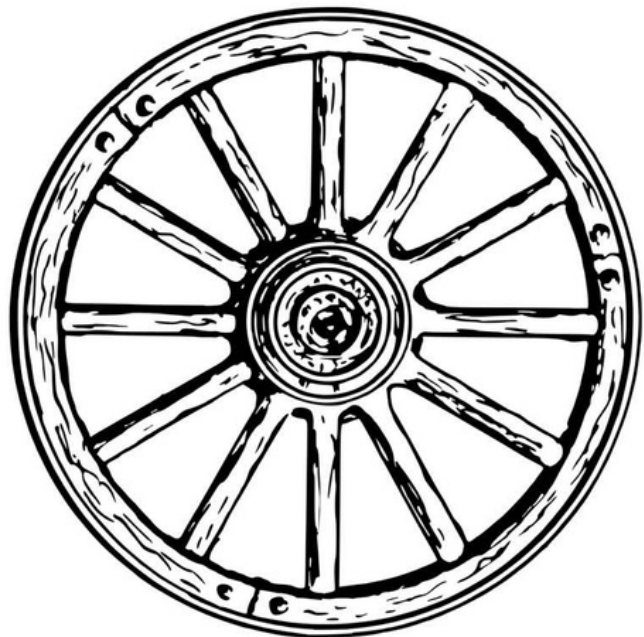
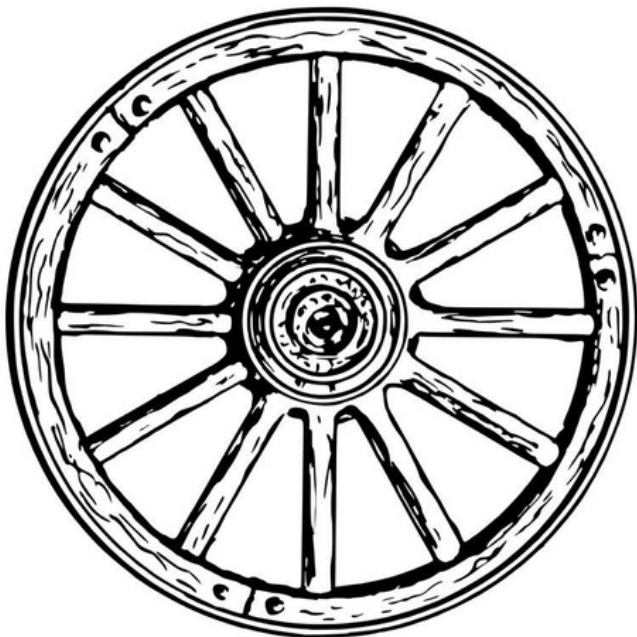
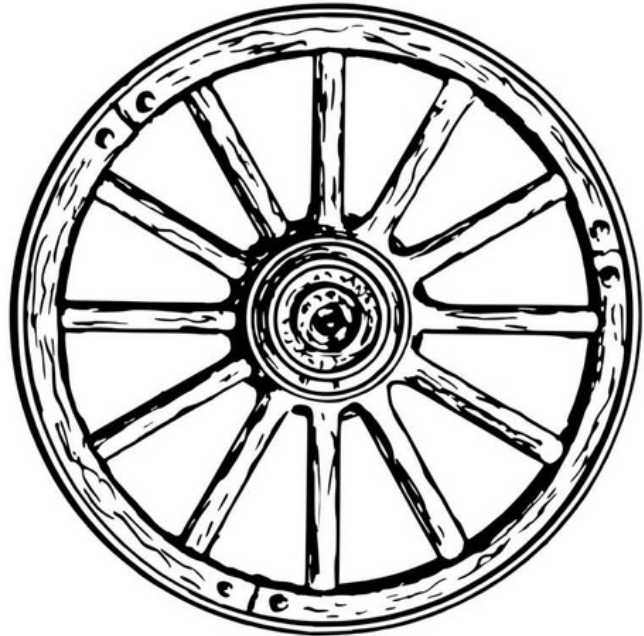
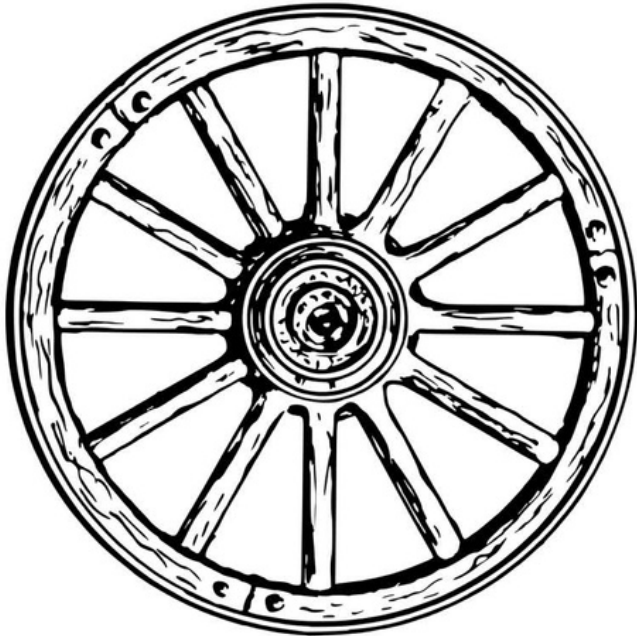
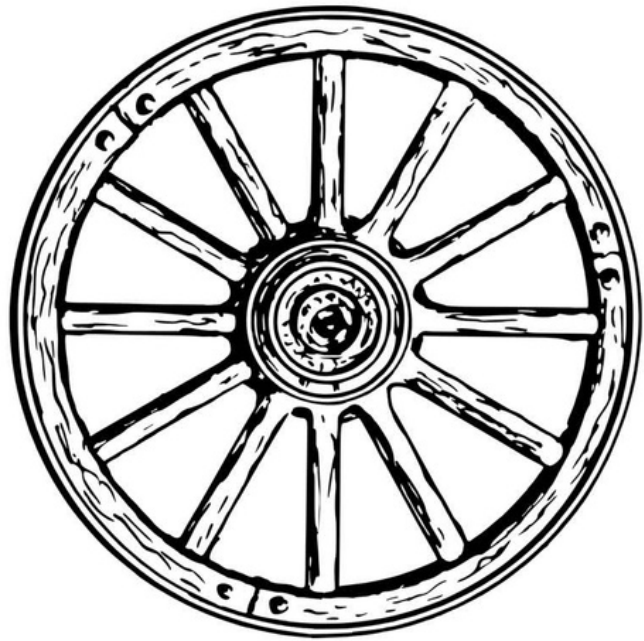
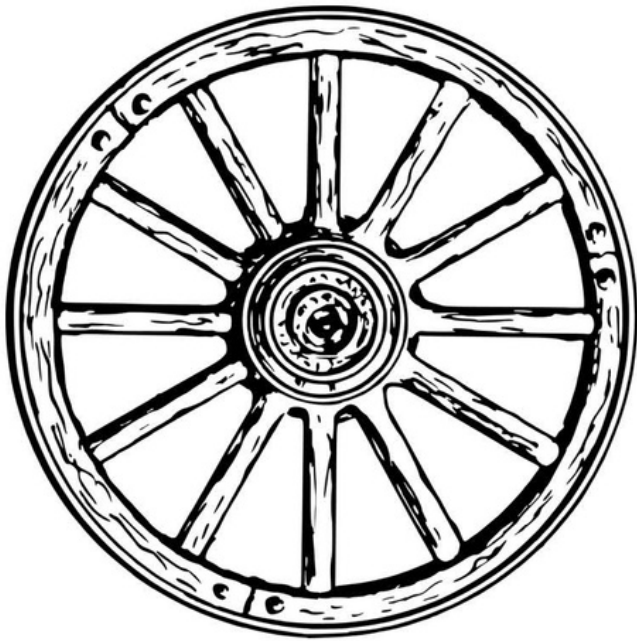
Scissors

## Instructions

- Using the Chuck wagon template, create the body of the wagon. Cut along the solid black lines. Fold along the dotted lines.
- The corners of the wagon should be glued on the inside, so they don't show.
- The plain piece of paper that forms the cover for the wagon should be glued on the inside of the wagon. Four wheels are glued on the outside of the wagon.







### **3-5 Standards:**

#### **History**

**K-4 Benchmark I-A—New Mexico: Describe how contemporary and historical people and events have influenced New Mexico communities and regions.**

3 - 1. Describe how the lives and contributions of people of New Mexico influenced local communities and regions.

4 - 1. Identify important issues, events, and individuals from New Mexico pre-history to the present.

**K-4 Benchmark I-D—Skills: Understand time passage and chronology.**

3 - 1. Interpret information from multiple resources and contexts to determine chronological relationships.

4 - 1. Describe and explain how historians and archaeologists provide information about people in different time periods.

**5-8 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico: explore and explain how people and events have influenced the development of New Mexico up to the present day:**

5 - 1. describe changes of governance of New Mexico (e.g., indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, French, Texan, confederate, United States).

#### **Literacy**

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1**

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2**

Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3**

Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3**

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9**

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

