



A Wild Cowboy

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by Dana Kessimakis Smith

Illustrated by Laura Freeman

About the book:

Grandma's baby-sitting today, and the frontier's best cowboy gathers his things for the long journey there, where his blanket, his jump rope, and make-believe will help his cowboy dreams come true.

This darling drover tells his fantastic tale in a mellow rhyme that's fun to repeat and reads with ease. So pack your bags to go on an imaginative ride with the cutest buckaroo in the wild, wild West!

About the guide:

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of this book, including imagination, routines, family, and the wild, wild west.

Author Interview:

1. What inspired this darling book? Believe it or not, I had a dream I was writing a story...this story! I wrote the first two lines in my dream "I am a boy, a wild cowboy. A real live buckaroo". When I woke up I took those two lines and created the story around them.
2. Do you like working in rhyme best? Why? Yes! I love writing in rhyme best. I was introduced to rhyme at an early age when my uncle used to make up funny rhymes about any ordinary situation. I started writing rhyming poetry when I was about eight years old. It's how I expressed myself. Writing in rhyme challenges me too, it's sort of like a word puzzle.
3. How, do you think, kids develop a keen imagination? Were you an imaginative kid? For most children "pretending" at a young age is a great way to exercise their imagination. Role playing is a great example. Children play "school", they "go to

work” with Dad’s briefcase, they make menus and “serve” their parents, etc. It’s great fun and lets them experience new things. Yes, I was very imaginative as I child. I was always pretending, doing crafts and inventing things.

4. What’s the best part of being a children’s author? It’s much more than seeing my ideas and words in print. It’s a good feeling to think I am contributing to a child’s life, even in a small way. As a children’s author, I get to meet children everywhere and share my love for books with them...that’s very rewarding.
5. Did you always want to be a cowboy too? I’ve always liked to read about the history of the Wild West but since I was never around a real cowboy or a real herd of cattle, I had to imagine what it would be like. I grew up with lots of animals but I never had a horse, I did have a cowboy hat once.

Questions for your buckaroo:

1. Who is the boy’s “pardner?” Who is his horse? Do you ride piggy back on anyone’s shoulders?
2. Where do the boy’s go? What do they play there? How do you know?
3. What is a stray? How do you round one up? Have you ever seen a stray in your neighborhood?
4. Who are the coyotes? How many are there?
5. Which picture is your favorite? Why?

Projects:

Art:

Create glow in the dark stars for your little cowpoke to sleep under. Cut out stars from strong cardboard or paper plates and use neon colored paint. Consider adding glitter around the edges so it shimmers during the day too.

Horizon:

Cut out shapes that are typically western motifs (pronged cactus, boots, horseshoes, stars, etc.) and then have children make a western sunset using an orange semi-circle construction paper and water-based markers. After the children make horizontal lines they use water to smear the colors together. Then, add the shapes to the scene!

Cowpoke art:

Cut out the shape of a cowboy boot from brown paper grocery bags. Then use brown paint (or for an authentic look use garden variety mud mix) to break in these old boots!

Cowboy charades:

Add slips of paper with these words and have your cowpokes figure out what western activity is going on:
riding, cooking, setting up camp, lassoing, branding, singing

Cowboy Music:

Sing some cowboy songs:
"Home on the Range"

Sing this tune to "Mary Had a Little Lamb"

Cowboy took his buckaroo, buckaroo, buckaroo,
Cowboy took his buckaroo,
on his way to Grandma's

Other verses:

Cowboy crossed a canyon
where bandits hide at night

Cowboy sets up his camp
and eats some cowboy grub

Cowboy sleeps beneath the moon
and rides a horse in dreams.

