

The background is a vibrant red color. It is decorated with a pattern of triangles in various shades of red, orange, and yellow. Some triangles are solid, while others are outlined in white. The triangles are arranged in a somewhat irregular, overlapping pattern, creating a dynamic and modern aesthetic.

Hello



1 SPEAKING In pairs, choose the words that you think best describe a cowboy.

aggressive cooperative dangerous honest
independent mean short strong tall weak



THE NOT-SO-WILD WEST

“





“

2 Read the article. Do the words that you chose in exercise 1 match what real cowboys were like?

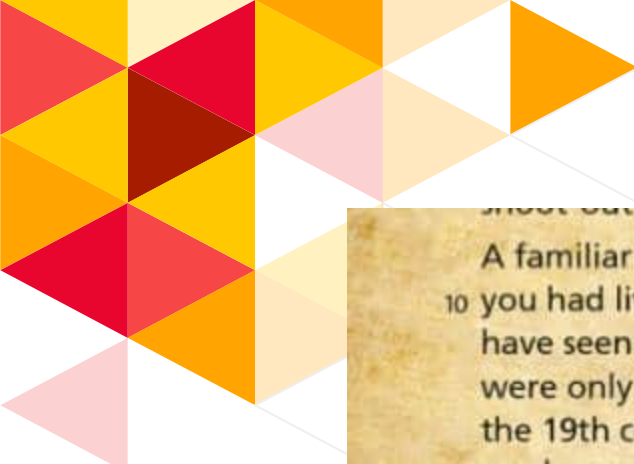


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🔊 4.22

The tall stranger stands in the sunlight and looks down the road to where his rival stands, nervously touching his gun with his right hand. Meanwhile, groups of frightened townspeople watch from the safety of shop doorways.


5 Suddenly, the rival pulls out his pistol, but before he can pull the trigger, the stranger shoots him. The man falls to the ground and dies: just another victim of a Wild West shoot-out.



10 A familiar scene, but only to fans of westerns, because if you had lived in the Wild West, you would probably never have seen a gunfight. According to official statistics, there were only three organised gunfights during the whole of the 19th century – less than in some films! And although cowboys did occasionally get involved in gunfights between

15 gangs, shootings were a rare occurrence. In fact, between the years of 1870 and 1885, only 45 people were killed by gunshot in all the major cowboy towns of the West.


20 But the violent history of cowboys is not the only invention that Hollywood has passed off as true. The whole cowboy image is a fake. The tall, strong, white cowboy who rides off into the sunset to face danger on



his own has only
ever existed on
cinema screens.

25 Forty per cent
of cowboys


were African Americans, Native Americans or Mexicans,
and they were usually short, thin men. Their horses had
to support their weight for up to fifteen hours a day,
30 so being tall and very muscular would have made this
extremely difficult. And cowboys always worked together
in teams, as controlling a large group of cattle was an
impossible job for just one man.





Why, then, did Hollywood manipulate the truth and create
35 a character that had little to do with reality? Some people
say that the cinema industry wanted to take advantage of
Americans' fascination with the West, but that the lives of
real cowboys were just not interesting enough and had to
be reinvented. Others, however, see a political motivation
40 to create a role model that would serve the social and
economic interests of the country.







3 Read the text again. Answer the questions in your own words.

5

- 1 What does the last sentence of the first paragraph suggest about the Wild West?
- 2 Why would someone living in the Wild West probably not have seen a gunfight?
- 3 What does the fact that only 45 people were shot in fifteen years suggest about the Wild West?
- 4 What does the writer suggest that Hollywood did?
- 5 Why were cowboys usually physically small?
- 6 Why do some people believe Hollywood reinvented the lives of cowboys?

4  4.23 Listen to a podcast about the actor Clint Eastwood's career. What jobs did he do in the film *Unforgiven*?

5  4.23 Listen again. Are the sentences true or false? Write T or F.

- 1 Clint Eastwood played a cowboy on TV before he played one in films. ___
- 2 Sergio Leone's films were very similar to Hollywood westerns. ___
- 3 Eastwood doesn't think Sergio Leone's films were of a very high quality. ___
- 4 Eastwood's character was seen as anti-American. ___
- 5 *Unforgiven* includes few scenes of violence. ___
- 6 *Unforgiven* shows a more realistic image of the lives of cowboys. ___



6 SPEAKING Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Why do you think the image of the cowboy has been so successful in popular culture?
- 2 Who or what do you think has replaced the cowboy as an icon in modern popular culture?

