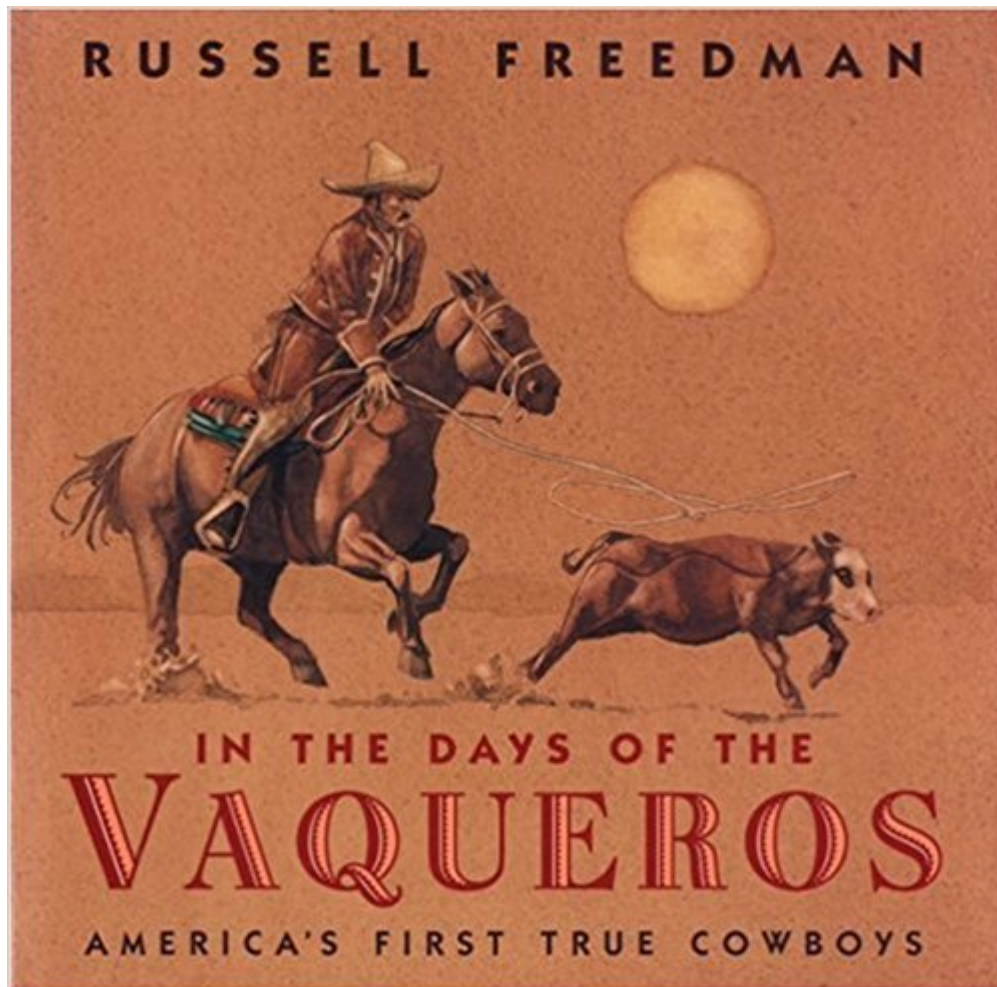




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# In The Days Of The Vaqueros: America's First True Cowboys



## Synopsis

In this rousing account of the first true cowboys, Newbery Medalist Russell Freedman brings to life the days when the vaqueros rounded up cattle, brought down steers, and tamed wild broncos. In the service of wealthy Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century, Mexican ranch hands began herding cattle, often riding barefoot. They soon developed and perfected the skills for this dangerous work and became expert horsemen. Hundred of years later the vaqueros shared their expertise with the inexperienced cowboys of the American West, who adopted their techniques and their distinctive clothing, tools, and even lingo. Yet today it is the cowboy whom we remember, while the vaquero has all but disappeared from history. The vaqueros are at last given their due in this dramatic narrative, lushly illustrated with beautiful period paintings and drawings.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Combining impressive research and the skill of a campfire storyteller, Freedman (Martha Graham; The Wright Brothers) describes the rugged and often violent life of the original "cowboys," as they are known today. The vaqueros, or cowherders (from vaca, the Spanish word for cow), began riding in Spanish Mexico in the 1500s after Columbus brought cattle and horses to the New World, then migrated to California in the 1760s. "Long ago before cattle came to Texas, before George

Washington crossed the Delaware, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock cowboys rode the range in Spanish Mexico," begins Freedman's inviting narrative. Readers interested in cowboys and all things Western will pore over the detailed descriptions of the techniques and equipment used by the largely unsung vaqueros to herd cattle on the open range; they essentially invented the lasso (from lazo) as well as rodeos (from rodear, meaning "to surround or encircle"). Freedman deftly sketches the rigid class system that confined the vaqueros to lowly status of p&#x82;on ("man at the bottom of the social ladder") and tied them to wealthy landowners and he documents how these skilled laborers taught their trade to American settlers. Drawings by Jos&#x82; Cisneros and Frederic Remington plus period photographs highlight this tribute to the lifestyle and daring of the vaqueros. Though their contribution to the building of the West may have been eclipsed by the legends of U.S. cowboys, Freedman sets the record straight. Ages 8-12. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Gr 4-8-Freedman explores the often-overlooked role of the Central American cowherders who preceded by centuries the cowboys of popular lore and legend. With clear and engaging prose, he describes how the 1494 arrival of cattle and horses in Hispaniola led to a need for skilled and rugged horsemen able to control the eventually vast herds. While tracing the geographic spread of the vaqueros' work over time and the tasks and tools involved in the trade, he also weaves in some thought-provoking social history. Freedman notes that the vaquero lacked status in his own culture, and "remained for hundreds of years a poorly paid laborer." North American cowboys, who flourished for a far shorter time, as well as much later, enjoy the romanticized image that has never applied to vaqueros. The author characterizes the typical vaquero, rather than using individual examples, discussing the pride, skill, and courage required to succeed at the work. Each of the seven chapters begins with a full-page color reproduction of a painting, and other full-color and black-and-white paintings are generously included on virtually every spread, most from the 19th century. Period photographs also add visual impact. Martin Sandler's *Vaqueros: America's First Cowboys* (Holt, 2001) covers similar ground. Freedman's book has a slightly more attractive layout, but both are excellent resources on a topic that was previously difficult to research at a child's level. Steven Engelfried, Beaverton City Library, OR Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Great

Good - I just do not like the brutality! But good photos and art work that enhance the text!

Russell Freedman's, "In the Days of the Vaqueros" was written for young adults and in this endeavor it succeeds. It is a 70 page hard back book with numerous high quality paintings, sketches and photographs. He tells the story of the Vaqueros from the arrival of the Spanish in Mexico up to modern days. When I purchased the book, I was hoping to find a book written for adults. Yet, I was not dissatisfied. The book's production values are very high and I really enjoyed the art work.

If you like western history this book might really open your eyes with respect to where our cowboy culture started. A fast read, but has many really nice illustrations. It should be in the library of every cowboy, and wannabe.

Excellent! Comprehensive, colorful.

Nice book if you like history

I loved this book so much, that after I read it at the Library, I bought it over . It is intended for young people, but since I was doing research for a book I am writing, I didn't want to be overloaded with dry facts. This book gave me just enough, not too much, and the artwork is wonderful too.

Finally a young persons book with a different perspective on cowboys. The origins and role of the vaquero in America is discussed in a scholarly and insightful manner geared for young readers. If you are looking for a book about the traditional view of the cowboy than look elsewhere. The author, Russell Freedman does an excellent job describing how the Vaqueros were the first of their kind, their role in rodeos, where and how they lived on haciendas and ranchos, what they did at rodeos , the tools they used , the contests and games and the last of the vaqueros. These original cowherders were poor Indian laborers who were subject to the rich Spanish land owners who dominated the landscape of America after the conquest by the European Spaniards. This book is a good history lesson about life in the southwest and Mexico(one and the same at this particular point in history)during Spanish rule. This book is an excellent choice for a classroom or library in the middle or high school level for further enrichment in the education process. Limited English speaking students may find the language difficult but there are many Spanish words intersperced throughout the lessons to draw their interest. The drawings and photographs are well done; I only

wish this book was presented in a larger format. This is a good book for a student to write a book report on and share the information within to the class. Highly recommended for students and adults alike who enjoy history.

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