

Study Guide For Teachers

I, Nat Love: **The Story of Deadwood Dick** ...a program by

Rochel Garner Coleman

presented by

Young Audiences

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ROCHEL GARNER COLEMAN

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Many people do not know that thousands of black men and women helped to explore and settle the West. Most of these Westerners were ex-slaves who had been freed after the Civil War. There were cowboys, hunters, trappers, mountain men, pony express riders, horse wranglers, cooks and trailblazers. They joined wagon trains, herded cattle or headed West for adventure. More than 5,000 black cowboys rode the range from Texas to Montana.

After the Civil War, dangerous wild cattle roamed the plains. Only the brave and skillful cowboys could stalk the wild animals. One such cowboy was Henry Beckwith, "The Coyote." He could sniff the air, find the cattle and bring them in for branding. He was called "The Coyote" because he worked alone, usually at night. He was tough, smart, and brave. Bose Dcard was another skillful cowboy. He was born a slave in Mississippi and later moved to Texas. As a boy he could rope, tie and brand a steer as well as any grown man. When he was older, Bose hired himself out to Charles Goodnight, a famous cattle rancher, and helped to herd more than 2,000 cattle north to Colorado. For the next four years, Bose and Goodnight became true and loyal friends; he once saved Goodnight from a herd of stampeding cattle.

Bill Pickett was a rodeo rider. He was born in Texas. He rode ranches in South America as well as the United States, and became known as "The Dusty Demon." He could catch a steer by its horn and make it fall to the ground by twisting its neck and biting into its upper lip. This is called bulldogging, and Bill Pickett was the best of the bull-doggers. In fact, he invented the technique which is still used in rodeos today (without the lip biting). In 1907, Bill signed a contract with the famous "101 Ranch Wild West Show of Oklahoma" and became internationally famous for his rodeo performances.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

I, Nat Love is a one-man show which brings United States history to life through the journeys of a Black cowboy. Rochel Coleman recreates the life and times of Nat Love, a.k.a. "Deadwood Dick" in a series of stories based on Love's autobiography. Born a slave in Tennessee, Nat Love went West at the age of fifteen to seek freedom and equal opportunity. He earned the name "Deadwood Dick" on July 4, 1876 by being the best cowboy in a competition (in Deadwood, South Dakota) which included roping, riding, and shooting. Nat took on all challengers and was the best at every event in the competition.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Become familiar with the art of storytelling.
- Learn about the history of Black cowboys.
- Learn about the life of Nat Love and other cowboys who explored the pre-industrialized West.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Discussion Topics: Can you imagine and describe the life of a cowboy in the Old West? How do you think life in the West might have been different than life in the North for a black individual in the late 1800's?

2. Theatre Game: Role-play the life of a cowboy, drawing upon information with which students are already familiar (allowing for stereotypical depictions).

3. Have students look up and define the vocabulary words that will be used in the performance (see box to the right). You can break up the list for students to tackle in small groups. Then, have each group share what they learned.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Badlands	bit	brand
branding iron	break (a horse)	bridle
buckskin	buffalo soldier	bushwhacking
cattle drive	cattle king	chaps
cow chips	chuck wagon	Colt 45
corral	cowpoke	cutting out
foreman	herd	horn
jack rabbit	lariat	line camps
longhorn	outfit	pitching pony
prairie schooner		range
reins	rustle	rustler
scalp	spurs	steer
tenderfoot	Winchester	wrangler

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. **Review the story of Nat Love** in the following ways:

- Oral retellings between students
- Having a student act out a particular scene from the performance while others guess what is being depicted
- Have students draw a scene prompted by the performance
- Have students use figurines and toy models representing the Old West to depict the story or a certain event in Nat Love's life.

2. Critique

Have students answer the following questions verbally or in writing, either individually or in small groups:

- How do you think Rochel Coleman learned enough about Nat Love to portray him in this performance.
- What things did Rochel Coleman do to help you learn about and remember the life of Nat Love?
- If you could add one thing (perhaps a prop, music, another person) to this performance, what would it be and why would you add it? Why would adding this element help tell the story of Nat Love?

3. Across the Arts

- Brainstorm as a class any cowboy songs students or you know about the Wild West. Try singing them together. What elements of these songs were depicted in the performance?
- Find and display any paintings which depict the Wild West. Discuss elements of the paintings with your students. How are they similar to the stories you heard about in the performance? How are they different?
- Listen to Aaron Copland's "Hoedown" from Rodeo and pretend you are celebrating Nat Love's accomplishments at the rodeo in Deadwood, South Dakota. What would the dancing have been like? Can you recreate the spirit of that dancing celebration in this classroom?

ARTIST INFORMATION

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, Rochel Coleman started singing professionally at the age of nine with the Men and Boy's Choir of Christ Church Cathedral and then with the Berkshire Boy's Choir. He later distinguished himself as a soloist, performing with Pablo Cassals, King's College Choir, and the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood.

When opening the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with Leonard Bernstein's Mass, he had his first taste of acting. He toured with the show for two years, ending the run at Lincoln Center in New York City. Rochel continued to study music and drama at Indiana University and toured nationally with several opera productions. Moving to New York City after college, Rochel worked on a number of daytime dramas. When the opportunity came to study at Trinity Repertory Conservatory, he moved to Providence, RI. His one-man show, "I, Nat Love" was written by Rochel and developed at the Langston Hughes Center for the Arts.

RESOURCES

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