

## Lesson Plan: Texas Longhorn

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### Summary

In this episode, Blade sketched a Texas Longhorn figurine while discussing the breed's origins, survival adaptations, horn size, and historical decline and recovery. He highlighted how Spanish cattle became feral and developed into Longhorns, their near extinction due to crossbreeding for fattier meat, and their eventual revival as a hardy symbol of Texas.

[https://www.youtube.com/live/1dqdM1mSIOs?si=79Bq\\_M2rsGjRBnKc](https://www.youtube.com/live/1dqdM1mSIOs?si=79Bq_M2rsGjRBnKc)

### Objective

Students will learn about the history, adaptations, cultural importance, and conservation of Texas Longhorn cattle by analyzing facts and discussing their significance.

### Standards

- NGSS 3-LS4-3: Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3: Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text.
- C3.D2.His.2.3-5: Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

### Materials

- Vetted 9 Fun Facts on Texas Longhorns (required)
- Worksheet (required)
- Optional: paper, pencils, images of Texas Longhorn cattle, projector or whiteboard

## Activity

1. Distribute the 9 Fun Facts sheet to students.
2. Read through each fact together, pausing to highlight adaptations, historical events, and cultural significance.
3. Have students work in small groups to answer the worksheet questions.
4. Conclude with a group discussion about how the Texas Longhorn's survival connects to broader themes of adaptation and cultural identity.

## Introduction

Begin with a discussion on how animals adapt to their environment. Ask students to think about how a cow might survive if left on its own without people. Introduce the Texas Longhorn as an example of an animal that developed unique traits through survival rather than human design.

## Assessment

- Participation in group discussion.
- Completion of the worksheet.
- Contributions during the review and reflection portions of the lesson.

## Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Content Understanding	Demonstrates full understanding of all 9 facts	Understands most facts with minor errors	Understands some facts with gaps	Limited or no understanding
Discussion Participation	Actively contributes with thoughtful responses	Participates with relevant input	Minimal participation	No participation
Worksheet Completion	All answers accurate and complete	Most answers accurate and complete	Some answers correct	Few or no answers correct
Reflection	Provides insightful reflection	Provides adequate reflection	Provides limited reflection	Provides no reflection

## 9 Fun Facts

**1. Texas Longhorn cattle developed without human intervention.** Their traits developed from natural survival rather than selective breeding; over generations they evolved tolerance for heat, drought, and predators.

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/longhorn-cattle>

**2. Spanish explorers brought their ancestors to North America.** In the late 1400s and early 1500s, Moorish and Andalusian cattle were brought by the Spanish. Some became feral—once-domesticated animals that escaped or were abandoned and survived on their own—and over many generations these feral populations contributed to what became the Texas Longhorn.

<https://news.utexas.edu/2013/03/27/texas-longhorn-genome-decoded/>

**3. They thrived in the harsh Texas environment.** These cattle developed long legs for traveling, darker or varied coats for dealing with sun and brush, and brisk temperaments to defend themselves; together those are survival adaptation features.

<https://livestockconservancy.org/texas-longhorn-cattle/>

**4. Their horns served multiple survival functions.** The horns often grew over 90 inches from tip to tip, useful not only in defense against predators but also helping to clear brush in arid, rough terrain.

<https://gvrlonghorns.com/cattle-blog/f/longhorns-have-long-horns/>

**5. Record horn width has reached about 130 inches.** That is so wide one could lie between the horns of a huge Texas Longhorn; an extreme example of how large their horn spread can become.

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2020/10/texas-bull-breaks-record-for-having-worlds-longest-horn-spread-634039>

**6. They are large but lean animals.** Bulls can weigh between 1,800 and 2,200 pounds; cows between about 1,000 and 1,400. Despite that size, their build tends to be leaner than many modern beef breeds.

<https://www.thecattlesite.com/breeds/beef/18/texas-longhorn/>

**7. Their numbers nearly vanished in the early 1900s.** As beef markets favored fatter meat, other breeds were used more; by the 1920s there were only a few hundred pure Texas Longhorns left.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2012/10/12/why-texas-longhorns-owe-their-survival-oklahoma/>

**8. Conservation efforts revived the breed.** From the 1940s onward, state and private herds were organized to preserve historically accurate Longhorn genetics. By the 1980s people interested in leaner meat, heritage breeds, and ranching history helped boost their numbers.

<https://www.americanheritage.com/saving-longhorns>

**9. The Texas Longhorn is a state symbol.** In 1995 the Texas Legislature designated the Longhorn as the official large mammal of Texas, cementing its role as a cultural icon.

[https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/education/texas-symbols#:~:text=The%20longhorn%20became%20the%20large,%2Dtailed%20bat%20\(1995\).](https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/education/texas-symbols#:~:text=The%20longhorn%20became%20the%20large,%2Dtailed%20bat%20(1995).)

## Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Review

1. What makes the Texas Longhorn unique compared to most cattle breeds?
2. Which explorers first brought the ancestors of the Texas Longhorn to the Americas?
3. How did the Texas Longhorn adapt to survive the harsh Texas environment?

### Discussion

4. Why were the Longhorns' horns useful for survival beyond defense?
5. What nearly caused the extinction of Texas Longhorns in the early 1900s?

### Data Analysis

6. How wide was the record horn spread measured in 2020? Convert this to feet.
7. Compare the weight of a bull to the weight of a cow. How much heavier is a bull?

### Reflection

8. How do you think the story of the Texas Longhorn reflects the spirit of Texas?
9. Why might it be important to preserve heritage breeds like the Texas Longhorn?