

American West Mystery Riddles

PART 1 – A riddle is a statement or a question written as a mystery to be solved. Write your own American West mystery riddle by looking at the artifacts from the Autry Museum of the American West on the left-hand side. Artifacts are objects such as tools or documents such as letters from the past. Then read the artifact descriptions on the right-hand side.



Blanket: This blanket was made by a Native American tribe called the Navajo, or Diné, over 100 years ago. A tribe is a group of people who share a way of life. Woven with wool or soft, curly hair from animals like sheep, this warm blanket has stripes and diamond shapes. The colors in the blanket were added using dyes. Dyes are materials that change the color of something. Many Navajo people continue to weave blankets today.



Cuffs: Cowboys and cowgirls wear cuffs to protect their arms from rope burn while they are working. Rope burn is a burn caused by rope scraping against the skin. Cowboys and cowgirls throw different types of ropes to catch animals like horses and cows. They also use ropes to train animals. These dark brown cuffs were made over 90 years ago out of leather. Designed with flowers and lines, these cuffs also have metal snaps.



Drum: This small drum and beater (drumstick) were made by Pueblo Indians over 100 years ago. The drum and the beater were made out of natural resources like animal skin and wood. Natural resources are anything from nature that people use. Native Americans have used the natural resources in their environment for hundreds and thousands of years to make food, tools, clothing, homes, and items like musical instruments. Many Native Americans make drums and beaters today.



Scale: This shiny scale made of brass and bronze is over 150 years old. Scales are used to weigh many different things. In the mid-1800s, people came from all over the world to look for gold in California during the California Gold Rush. Gold miners, people who looked for gold, weighed their gold by putting weights on one side of the scale and the gold on the other side of the scale. Weights (the small pieces in front of the scale) tell you how much an object like gold weighs.



Stagecoach: This stagecoach made of iron, leather, paint, and wood is over 160 years old. This large, closed vehicle pulled by animals carried people and mail. In the 1800s, travelers rode in stagecoaches along the Gila Trail, one of the trails that people took out west. This movement of millions of people out west, which expanded the U.S. from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, was called Westward Expansion.

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PART 2 – Pick an artifact from PART 1 to write your American West mystery riddle about. Think of some clues that will help someone guess what artifact your mystery riddle is about by answering the questions in the chart. Write your clues on a piece of paper or in the space below.

CLUE QUESTIONS	CLUE EXAMPLES	YOUR CLUES
Which artifact did you pick to write your American West mystery riddle about?	Blanket Cuffs Drum Scale Stagecoach	
What are some describing words you could use to describe the artifact you picked?	Dark brown Large Shiny Small Soft Warm Other words (age/ color/shape/size)	
What materials is the artifact you picked made of?	Animal skin Brass and bronze Dyes Iron Leather Metal Paint Wood Wool	
Who made and/or used the artifact you picked?	Cowboys/cowgirls Diné Gold miners Native Americans Navajo Pueblo Indians Travelers Other	
What does the artifact you picked do?	Carry(ies) mail Carry(ies) people Make(s) music Protect(s) arms Provide(s) warmth Weigh(s) things Other	

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PART 3 – Before writing your own American West mystery riddle, read examples of American West mystery riddles using two different formats. Then decide whether you want to use Format #1 or Format #2 to write your own American West mystery riddle.

American West Mystery Riddle Format #1

What is dark brown,
made of leather and metal,
worn by cowboys and cowgirls,
and protects arms from rope burn?

COWBOY CUFFS!



American West Mystery Riddle Format #2

I am dark brown,
made of leather and metal,
worn by cowboys and cowgirls,
and protect arms from rope burn.
What am I?

COWBOY CUFFS!



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PART 4 – Pick which format you want to use to write your American West mystery riddle. This page includes Format #1. Format #2 is on the next page. Then write your American West mystery riddle on a piece of paper or in the space provided. Draw a picture of your artifact below it. Include the name of the artifact too. Fold the paper in half so the person solving your riddle can't see the answer or your drawing. Then ask someone to read and solve your American West mystery riddle. After they give you their answer, show them your picture and its name.

My American West Mystery Riddle – Format #1

What is (add describing words) _____

made of (add materials) _____

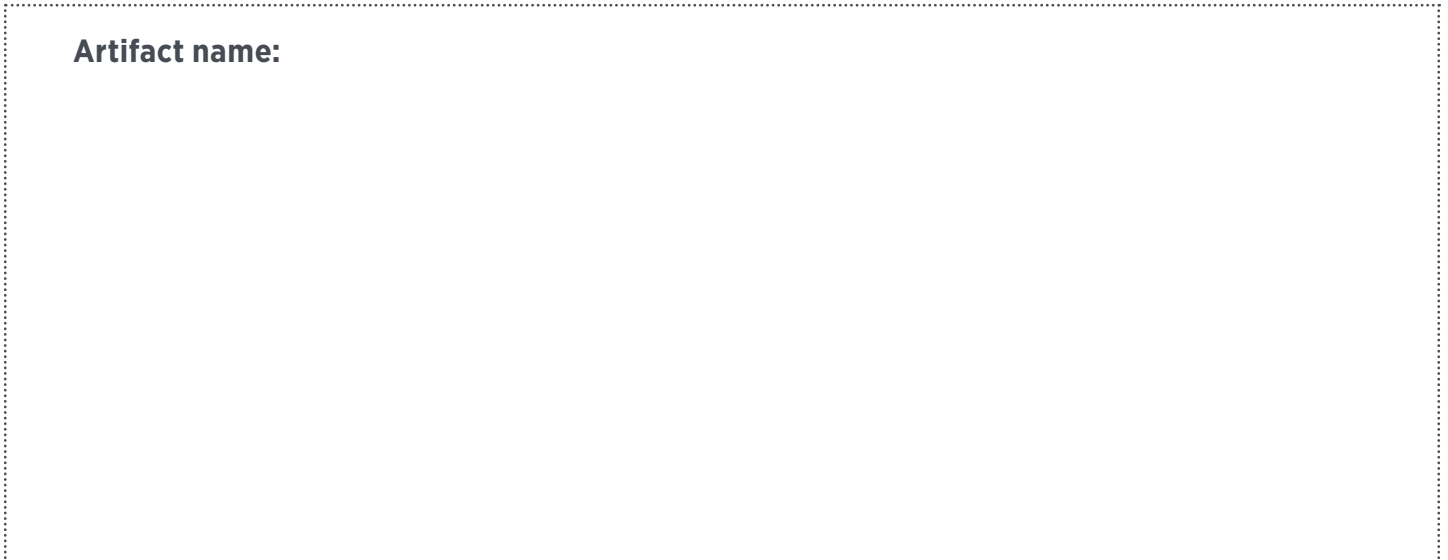
used by/made by (add name(s) of people) _____

and (add what the artifact does) _____

FOLD ON THE DOTTED LINE TO HIDE YOUR ANSWER

Draw a picture of and write the name of the artifact on a piece of paper or in the space below.

Artifact name:



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PART 5 – Pick which format you want to use to write your American West mystery riddle. This page includes Format #2. Format #1 is on the previous page. Then write your American West mystery riddle on a piece of paper or in the space provided. Draw a picture of your artifact below it. Include the name of the artifact too. Fold the paper in half so the person solving your riddle can't see the answer or your drawing. Then ask someone to read and solve your American West mystery riddle. After they give you their answer, show them your picture and its name.

My American West Mystery Riddle – Format #2

I am (add describing words) _____

made of (add materials) _____

used by/made by (add name(s) of people) _____

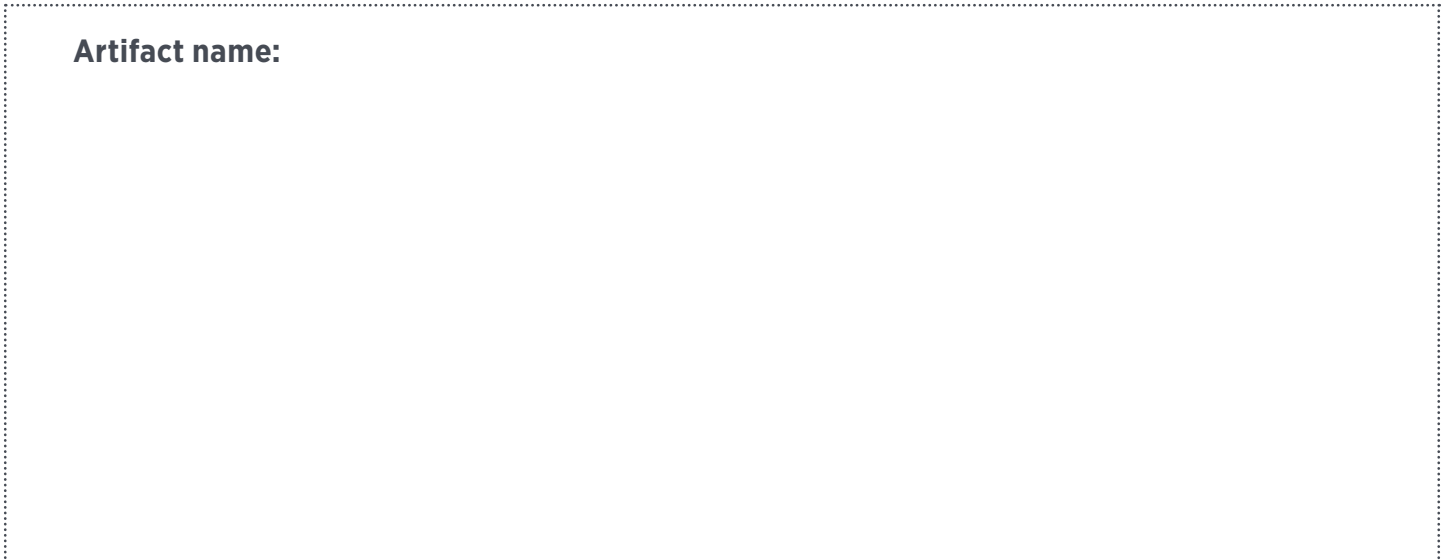
and (add what the artifact does) _____

What am I?

FOLD ON THE DOTTED LINE TO HIDE YOUR ANSWER

Draw a picture of and write the name of the artifact on a piece of paper or in the space below.

Artifact name:



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Do you think your American West mystery riddle has what it takes to stump the Autry Museum's followers? Do you want to see your American West mystery riddle appear on Instagram or Twitter? Then send your American West mystery riddle to outreach@theautry.org for a chance to be featured on our social media!

Resources

Images

Navajo third-phase chief-style blanket, 1880–1910, wool with aniline and indigo dyes. Autry Museum of the American West; 761.G.8

Cuffs made by R.T. Frazier, 1900–1925, leather and metal. Autry Museum of the American West; 88.125.10

Pueblo drum and beater, 1910, rawhide and wood; deerskin and wood. Autry Museum of the American West; 457.G.505A-B

Scale with weights made by William A. Schmolz, circa 1860. Autry Museum of the American West; 86.24.12

Concord Mail Stagecoach, circa 1855. Autry Museum of the American West; 93.21.261