

BUFFALO BILL



COLLIER-MACMILLAN ENGLISH READERS

ENGLISH L

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BUFFALO BILL

Collier-Macmillan International
A Division of The Macmillan Company

Collier-Macmillan Limited, London

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Photographs were obtained from:

Brown Brothers	pp. fr., 34, 49
Bettmann Archive	p. 78
Culver Pictures, Inc.	pp. 81, 86, 97

The Macmillan Company, New York
Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario

Printed in the United States of America

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Buffalo Bill



PREFACE

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The movies and stories that are called "Westerns" have made the "Wild West," the cowboy, and the American Indian familiar to readers and film-goers all over the world. In fact, they have given some people in other countries the mistaken idea that the United States is still today, outside its big cities, a wild country of mountains and prairies where men travel on horseback and solve their arguments by gunfights.

The legend of the Wild West is based upon historical fact, even though it does not represent life in the American West today. From about 1840 to 1890, while the land west of the Mississippi River was being explored and settled, life was something like that described in Western stories. Out of that history, the legendary Wild West was made. Some of it is true, some is exaggerated, and some is pure invention. But the stories of cowboys, of heroic scouts, of Indian wars, of women and children braving the western trails along with the men, of unbelievable adventures in the wilderness—all these have more truth than invention in them. We have the life of one man to prove it, and this book tells his story.

This man, William Francis Cody, took part in the opening of the West. Unlike most of his friends, who were too busy having adventures to think about them, Cody sensed the historic meaning of the times during which he was living, and he dramatized the West for the rest of the world. He may be said to have lived the history and to have given birth to the legend.

Cody was known to everyone as "Buffalo Bill." His family were emigrants from the East, as were almost all the other settlers of the western territories. He himself was born on the plains, and he lived the many varied lives

of the plainsman. Having first thrilled his friends and companions around the campfire in his youth with tales of his adventures, he went on in later years to develop the "Wild West show," which delighted millions of people in many countries with exciting scenes from Western history and displays of the riding and shooting skills of the plainsman and the Indian.

Buffalo Bill was also the hero of hundreds of novels and stories, and he was the star of the first Western play. Toward the end of his life, in 1916, he appeared in the very first Western movie, made in New York City. More than any other one man, he represented the Western hero to the world. Most of the early books written about Buffalo Bill told exaggerated and unbelievable stories about him. But the true story of his life was full of enough adventures and brave deeds to satisfy the most romantic reader. It provides us with a good picture of the rough life of the plains in those early days.

This book is based on research into Buffalo Bill's own writings, on newspaper reports, official Army records, and other authentic documents on his career. It attempts to give a straightforward account of just some of the facts of the life of this really extraordinary man.

The story has been written for the use of students of English as a second language on the intermediate level. The vocabulary is on the 2,000-word level, and sentences have been kept simple. There are comprehension questions on each chapter, and exercises on the new words introduced in the text. A glossary defines all words beyond the 2,000 level, and common words used in unusual ways. Notes on the historical background of the story, the American buffalo, and the Plains Indians precede the glossary.

The 2,000-word vocabulary list within which the book is written was based on Michael West's *General Service List of English Words*. This was supplemented by taking all words of a frequency of 35 or more per million from the Thorndike-Lorge *Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words*. The list was then adapted to American usage in the

1960's by eliminating expressions that are out of date or not generally used in the United States. Certain words commonly used in discussing everyday subjects like food, clothing, health, the weather, and so on, were added. Inflections, whether regular or not, are not counted as different words, nor are about 250 common function words (articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, etc.), most proper nouns (except as explained in the notes), and the names of the days of the week and months of the year. By allowing the use of easy derivatives, the number of allowable words is extended still further, without putting an undue burden on the student. Other items are glossed. An asterisk (*) next to a word in the text refers the reader to the glossary at the end of the book, where a definition or explanation will be found.

Buffalo Bill is one of the COLLIER-MACMILLAN ENGLISH READERS, which, together with other English-language teaching materials, have been created for the Collier-Macmillan English Program by the Materials Development Staff of English Language Services, Inc., under the co-direction of Edwin T. Cornelius, Jr., and Willard D. Sheeler. The original research and writing of *Buffalo Bill* were done by Mary Raitt; Helena Newman did the simplification; exercises were supplied by Raynor W. Markley; and Earle W. Brockman served as consulting editor.

Glossary illustrations and maps by Al Fiorentino.

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Chapter 1

THE CODY FAMILY

The boy who came to be known as "Buffalo Bill" was born into a family that took part in the great westward movement which built the United States of America. Isaac Cody, Buffalo Bill's father, was born in Canada, and grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, which is on the south shore of Lake Erie, in what is now known as the Middle West. When one of Isaac's brothers decided to move farther west to the *Territory of Missouri, Isaac went along on the journey down the Ohio River, to help the family settle. On the way, they stopped for a few days in the town of Cincinnati, in southern Ohio, where Isaac met and fell in love with a young woman named Mary Lacock. Isaac kept his promise to help his brother move to Missouri, but as soon as possible he came back to Cincinnati to find Mary again.

Mary Lacock had come from Pennsylvania on the east coast, where her (*ancestors) had been among the original settlers. Left alone after the death of her father and mother, she had crossed the Allegheny Mountains to join her brother who had already made the move to the Ohio Valley and settled in Cincinnati.

Isaac and Mary were married in 1840, and immediately set out for the Iowa Territory, north of Missouri on the west bank of the Mississippi River. They went by boat down the Ohio River to Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio flows into the Mississippi. There, they took another boat up the Mississippi to Davenport, Iowa. Isaac went into business as a *surveyor and trader in Davenport, and did well enough to buy a house in the nearby town of Le Claire, where his and Mary's first child, Samuel, was born. Meanwhile, Isaac had *staked a claim in the countryside

nearby, and was building a log cabin on it. The young family moved into the log cabin, where in time five more children were born: Julia, William, Eliza, Helen, and Mary.

Before her marriage, Mary Lacock had been told by a fortune teller that her third child would become famous. He did. William Francis Cody, born February 26, 1846, grew up to be Buffalo Bill, who had enough adventures to fill several ordinary men's lives. His fame has been celebrated in stories, plays, and movies, which helped form the *legend of the Wild West. Some of the stories about him were very much (*exaggerated,) but his life on the *frontier was (*dramatic) enough to satisfy the most *romantic reader.

In 1847, Isaac Cody cleared a large farm for the richest landowner in the district. Once it was cleared, Cody managed it, and he also had charge of the farm workers. His wife had to cook for all these men, as well as for her growing family. She was so busy that she sent the baby, whom they called Will, off to school with his big brother and sister when he was only two. This is rather early for any child to start his education, and Will was not a natural student. He got his education in other ways, trapping birds, stealing apples, and rowing on the Mississippi River. Never in his life did he learn to spell, nor did he ever learn to enjoy reading. But he learned many other skills in his life, and so perhaps his bad spelling may be *overlooked. Many people better educated than Buffalo Bill have had trouble in mastering the spelling of the English language.

Eighteen-forty nine was the year of the Gold Rush, when some eighty thousand men hurried to the California mountains, where gold had been discovered. Many of these men made the long hard journey over mountains and across *prairies on foot, alongside the wagon trains of farmers going to settle in the West. The Cody children used to watch the wagon trains rolling by—the *ox-drawn wagons with great white canvas tops, men on horseback driving cows, spare oxen, and *mules, and the fortune-seekers on foot. They all traveled together for help and

protection, for it was a difficult and dangerous journey. Many of them died on the way, and were buried beside the trail leading to the "golden" West.

Isaac Cody caught the "gold fever" too, and with some neighbors organized a wagon train, but then he fell ill and had to stay behind, while his friends went off to seek riches in the western mountains.

However, the *restless Mr. Cody did not stay in Iowa very long. In 1853, the older Cody boy, Samuel, was killed when he fell from his horse. Mary Cody was heartbroken, and could not bear to stay longer in a place where everything reminded her of her lost child. Therefore, when Isaac suggested that it was time to move on, she readily agreed.

Isaac had a brother in the Kansas Territory, located southwest of Iowa. Until then, the land to the west had been reserved for the *Indians, but now the government was planning to open the territory to *homesteaders. Isaac's brother wrote him to come and be ready when the land was officially opened up for settlement.

In the spring of 1854, Isaac's large household set out for Kansas in a carriage, with their belongings following behind in a four-horse wagon, moving slowly from one farm or village to the next, across the gently rolling plains of Iowa. It took a month to reach the western boundary, which was the Missouri River. There they crossed to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on the western shore. The fort had been established in 1827 as a starting point for the western trails used by the wagon trains. In the 1850's the fort consisted of a few small wooden buildings and workshops, some tents, and a *parade ground. There were a steam engine, a few *cannons with mules to draw them, and a number of soldiers. All around this tiny settlement stood white-covered wagons, waiting to carry supplies to the other army posts that guarded the frontier trails. Fort Leavenworth was also a trading post, and here Will Cody saw Indians for the first time when they came to trade furs and horses for *beads, guns, and liquor.

The Cody family settled in the Salt *Creek valley, a

few miles from Fort Leavenworth. Nowadays the settlement is part of the modern city of Leavenworth. While waiting for Kansas to be declared officially open for settlement, Isaac Cody contracted to grow hay for the army horses and mules.

The Territory of Kansas was created by an Act of Congress on May 30, 1854, and the news reached Leavenworth on June 10. Cody immediately filed a claim for his Salt Creek land, and became the first lawful settler in the Territory. (He had already settled there unlawfully.) He soon began to clear his *homestead of trees, and to survey and plow his land. He built a seven-room house, in which Mary's last baby, Charles Cody, was born in 1855.

Will, who was now nine, spent a lot of time playing with Indian children from the nearby reservation and learned to speak their language. Two Kickapoo Indian boys attended the neighborhood school, along with Will and ten other children. Indians often came to the trading post at Salt Creek. The women brought vegetables to trade for beads and cloth; the men traded furs and horses for saddles, guns, and tobacco. On the Fourth of July, the Indians were invited to join in the *celebration of *Independence Day. They did war dances and ran races on foot and horseback.

Isaac Cody bought a *pony for Will from the Indians. Will had already learned to ride when he was four. Now he rode the pony, which he named Prince, all the time. He loved to race with the Indian boys. He also got some unusual training from a cousin, Horace Billings, who came through Salt Creek one summer with a herd of wild *mustangs that he was taking east from California. Billings had worked as a *circus rider, and he taught young Will to ride standing up. He taught Prince to come when called and to do all sorts of other tricks. Although Billings had to deliver his mustangs, and so could not stay long, young Will never forgot that visit, or his cousin's lessons. He said in later years that Billings was the most *expert rider he had ever seen.

Chapter 2

ISAAC CODY, *FREE-SOILER

Like most settlers, Isaac Cody moved to Kansas chiefly because he thought it offered him a chance to make a better living for his family. But he was interested in political affairs and took sides in an argument which was tearing Kansas apart. The issue was whether or not Kansas should permit *slavery when it became a state. At that time, the existing thirty states were evenly divided between those which permitted slavery and those which did not. Naturally, each group was eager to have the new state on its side. Many of the settlers were more interested in this argument than they were in homesteading. The Territory was *split into two armed camps, the Free-Soilers, who opposed slavery, and the *pro-slavery group.

Isaac Cody was a Free-Soiler, but most of his neighbors came from the slave state of Missouri nearby. These pro-slavery men made life hard for the Cody family by stealing their horses, burning their hay, and even *stabbing Isaac through the lung during a political argument. He never fully recovered from this wound.

Cody and some other Free-Soil men founded a new town some miles away from Leavenworth, where they could be among friends. They called the town Grasshopper Falls. Although his family did not move there, Isaac spent a lot of time in Grasshopper Falls on business.

One day, Cody happened to be at home, and was lying in bed upstairs because he was not well. A pro-slavery neighbor came to the house and demanded a meal. While Mrs. Cody was nervously preparing the food, the visitor sat sharpening a long knife with which, he said, he was preparing to kill her husband. Mrs. Cody said that her

husband was away at Grasshopper Falls. The unwelcome guest threatened to wait until his victim got home, but he finally went away quietly, after eating the meal he had demanded.

Although that particular event ended without violence, life continued to be uncomfortable for the Cody family. Later in the summer of 1856, a wagonload of Missouri *raiders came to the gate. They had brought along a barrel of gunpowder with which they planned to blow up Cody's house. They also intended to kill Cody when he returned from Grasshopper Falls. (This time he really *was* in Grasshopper Falls.) Some friendly neighbors managed to drive the raiders away.

Will, who had been ill, got out of bed, feeling very weak, and rode away on his pony, carrying a warning to his father. When he passed the raiders' camp, he was recognized and followed. He *galloped away as fast as Prince could go, but the raiders were right on Prince's heels, and Prince and Will were both at the end of their strength when they reached a friendly farmhouse. The farmer and his men were just coming out from dinner, and they scared the raiders away. They pulled Will off his tired pony. Will wanted to continue the ride to warn his father, but the farmer told him that his father was not planning to leave Grasshopper Falls for another week and so was not in immediate danger. Will was taken into the house, bathed, and put to bed. The next morning Will rode the rest of the way to Grasshopper Falls and gave his father the message.

Isaac Cody decided that it would be wiser not to go home at all for a while. Instead of going east toward Leavenworth, he and Will went south to the town of Lawrence, on the Kansas River, which was the headquarters for the *anti-slavery forces. Isaac and Will stayed there for a couple of weeks, happy to be among friends.

It was no longer safe for Cody to stay in eastern Kansas. When he came back from Lawrence, his friends in Leavenworth encouraged him to go farther east. While there, he

could encourage more Free-Soil settlers to come to the territory. He went first to visit one of his brothers who had remained in Cleveland, Ohio, and there he was able to have a good rest. Then he and his brother went to Chicago, where the *Republican Party was being formed, and met Abraham *Lincoln. Isaac Cody stayed in Chicago for two months, finding Free-Soil settlers for Grasshopper Falls. He invited them all to make his home their headquarters when they arrived in Kansas.

It was common practice in those days for the established settlers to take the new arrivals into their homes, and Mary Cody had run a small hotel in the house in Le Claire, Iowa. But when Isaac Cody got home after issuing his invitation in Chicago, he found that too many people had accepted it. The house was crowded with people, and tents were set up in the yard. The overcrowded conditions caused an *epidemic among the newcomers. Isaac Cody, helping to care for the sick and dying, grew ill himself and died in March, 1857. He was only forty-six years old. He left his widow with six children, some land, a lot of debts, but no money.

Chapter 3

THE MAN OF THE FAMILY

At Isaac Cody's death, his oldest living son, eleven-year-old Will, became the man of the family. He got a *temporary job with a neighbor, driving an ox-team to Leavenworth and back. Not long after that job was completed, Will accompanied his mother on a shopping trip to Leavenworth, where they visited the store of Russell, Majors, and Waddell. Will got his mother to introduce him to Mr. Majors, and asked for work. When Majors asked Will if