

Classroom Spice

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The Bronze Buckaroo

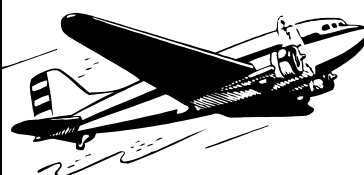
The Bronze Buckaroo does not refer to Roy Rogers with a suntan, but rather to Herb Jeffries. If you saw Herb today, he would probably be singing classical jazz tunes. This impressive 94 year old, still has a four-and-a-half octave range, and can belt out a song whether it be a jazz classic like “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” or a western tune such as “I’m a Happy Cowboy.” While American society readily labels him as black, his heritage includes Sicilian, Irish, Ethiopian, and French Canadian. He was not the first black to portray a cowboy, so why is he so special? And “How does a young black boy growing up in **Detroit, Michigan**, end up as a famous cowboy?” Herb, born Humberto Balentino, was raised by a single mother, and spent time on his grandfather’s dairy farm where he learned to ride horses, a skill that later would be of great use. Music was always a great love of Herb’s, who joined the church choir as a youngster. Growing up during the depression led Herb to drop out of school to get a job and help with the family expenses. (Note that he did eventually go back and compete high school and some additional degrees.) It was with his voice, singing jazz and blues, that he could earn money. Herb claims that his interest in making black cowboy movies was the result of seeing some white chil-

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Women Airforce Service Pilots—WASP

The story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots is well hidden from most Americans. Few know the contributions and sacrifices these women made. As early as 1939 Jacqueline Cochran, America’s most famous woman pilot, tried to bring attention to the skills women pilots had and the contributions they could make in non-combat areas to help free up men if war came. But no one would listen. Similarly in 1940 Nancy Harkness Love a prominent pilot tried to persuade the military to use women pilots to ferry aircraft. It was not until 1941 that Cochran was authorized to fly a Lockheed Hudson Bomber to Britain and study the use of British women pilots. Eventually in 1942 Cochran was empowered to train a corps of women pilots to replace male pilots being sent overseas, and to ferry planes across the ocean. The requirements were tougher for women pilots: they had to have 500 flying hours compared to men’s 200, women’s pay was less than men’s, and women paid for their own way to Texas for training, and room and board.

They underwent the same officer’s training as men: ground school, flight school, cross-country flying, night flying, instrument flying, daily calisthenics, flying link trainers, and lots of marching. Anyone who flunked out had to pay their own way home. Of the 1,830 who started, 1,074 graduated. While initially they were to fly the smallest trainer and liaison planes, ultimately they flew every type of aircraft the Air Force owned—from trainers to bombers. They ferried personnel and cargo, delivered aircraft, tested new and repaired aircraft, trained male cadets, and even towed targets for



ground-to-air anti-aircraft gunnery practice and targets for air-to-air-gunnery practice (meaning that they were under live fire). WASPs were used to prove to male pilots that B-26s and B-29s were safe. In two years they flew over 60 million miles for their country with many injured, and 39 killed. But unlike male pilots who were killed in action, the families of WASPs had to pay for

the return of the body for burial and received no Gold Star or even a flag to drape the coffin. The WASP was disbanded in December of 1944. Unlike the male pilots, the women pilots had no GI benefits, no fringe benefits, and no dress parades. For the next thirty years the records of bases where WASPs were stationed were classified “Top Secret,” and their contributions were unrecognized. It was not until December 1977 that WASP veterans persuaded Congress to recognize their war service and President Jimmy Carter signed the G.I. Bill Improvement Act granting them military veterans status and “limited” benefits. Even as we lose WASPs today, they are not allowed burial in Arlington National Cemetery with officer’s honors, but rather only as enlisted personnel.

It was primarily through the efforts of Jackie Cochran and Nancy Harkness Love and General “Hap” Arnold, that WASPs were organized, trained, and able to make a sizable contribution to the war effort. Collectively WASPs qualified for 78 different kinds of planes, with

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Go-Bang

You may know “Go-Bang” by one of its other names, Go-Moku or Five-in-a-Row. It is similar to tic-tac-toe, Pente, and Connect. It is played with black and white stones on a 19x19 intersections Go board, one of the oldest games in the world, reportedly invented in China over three thousand years ago. The purpose of Go-Bang is to get five pieces in a row, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. It requires a great deal of anticipating future plays, much like chess. With the constant attack and defending of positions it can be very exciting. It was a particularly popular game in America during the nineteenth century, and even today players can compete against the computer on such websites as www.zlroom.com/zbm1.htm. But since the computer is much faster than a person, it may be a bit discouraging to novice players. So, it is recommended you let two students play and sit back and watch the critical thinking that starts to develop.

Materials: A traditional Asian Go table is a large yellow square marked off with 18 squares on each side made up of 361 points of intersecting lines, and play is made on intersection points. However, it can also be played on a simple board of 100 squares (10x10), with play made on a square instead of on an intersection. The latter is what will be described here. Fifty markers each of two different colors are also required.

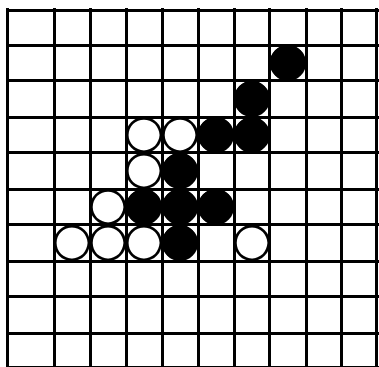
Players: 2 players

Preparation: Duplicate 50 markers on black poster board, and 50 on white poster board, sizing them in accordance with your 100 square board.



To Play: Decide who is white and who is black. Black always starts. Take turns placing a stone (marker) on an empty square keeping in mind that you want to get five in a row of your color, while blocking your opponents attempt to do the same. The winner is the first player to get an unbroken row of five stones (markers) horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Sample Winning Play: Note the black five in a row diagonal.



(Bronze Buckaroo—cont'd from page 1)

dren taunt a black child who wanted to play cowboy. They told him there was no such thing as a "black cowboy." While, historically there were indeed black cowboys, Hollywood's portrayal of cowboys was very much white. Herb felt that cowboys stood for honesty, hard work, and fair play, and judged others on their work not their ethnicity, and so felt they would be great heroes for black and white children. With much determination and hard work, Herb found a producer, Jed Buell, who was willing to take the risk of producing an all-black western, and a dude ranch which was willing to serve as the location for the first black western, "Harlem on the Prairie." Herb did his own stunts, as well as acting and singing, and when fear arose that he was not "black" enough he accepted getting stage makeup that somewhat darkened his skin tone. Amazingly "Harlem on the Prairie" was not restricted to black theaters, and was shown to some extent in a few white East and West Coast theaters. And while the movie had to overcome racism from both black and white, it was reasonably successful and was followed by three other Bronze Buckaroo movies. He made four westerns. He could have made many more but in 1939 he met Duke Ellington and joined the band as a jazz singer, giving up his film career and further establishing his singing career. This was followed by a stint in the army during WWII, then operating a jazz club in France and learning French, going on tour in the U.S., acting on television dramas, and surviving a plane crash in the desert. Today he continues to sing and is working on his autobiography. His awards have been many. He's even sung at the White House and been inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. Check out his website www.herbjeffries.com and listen to his beautiful voice. Herb Jeffries has earned his "White Hat" and is definitely one of the good guys.



The Literature Connection

This issue's literature has a common theme of geography. Let's start off with *Do Alaskans Live in Igloos?* Bernd and Susan Richter, ISBN 0-9663495-2-0, wrote this primary book. Having dreamt of seeing a real igloo since a child, the author jumps at the opportunity to go to Alaska. But on the trip the author discovers that big cities like Anchorage and even small towns do not have igloos. The author is quite surprised that not even miners, mountain climbers, or Alaskan Eskimos live in igloos and that Alaskan Eskimos never have! The reader learns that "Canadian" Eskimos and Greenlanders have lived in igloos and that Alaska terrain provides enough variety in building materials that Eskimos have not had to live in igloos, although on occasion some may have built one for temporary shelter. A cute book illuminating myths about Alaskan igloos. If you get a chance check out www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/houses/igloo.html and research how Canadian igloos / snow dome winter homes are constructed; it's fascinating.

The next few books deal with a much warmer topic, namely the rainforest. *Amazon Alphabet* by Martin and Tanis Jordan,



ISBN0-590-06860-1, has beautiful pictures of animals of the Amazon, easily appropriate for lower elementary, although at the end it gives interest notes for upper elementary students. *The Living Rain Forest: An Animal Alphabet*, by Paul Kratter, ISBN 1-57091-603-9 is in a similar vein, but its text is for upper elementary and includes a world map and key to find the animals. *The Umbrella* by Jan Brett, ISBN0-399-24215-5, follows a young boy into the cloud forest with his umbrella, but when he puts the umbrella down to investigate the forest he fails to see all the adventures his umbrella is encountering with the forest animals. The pictures are lovely, the story includes Spanish phrases, and the story is a great complement to Brett's *The Mitten*. Many of you may be familiar with Lynne Cherry's *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest*, ISBN 0-440-84944-6. It does more than showcase animals, however. It also emphasizes community and interdependence, and raises environmental issues. Use it to address the Amazon rain forest, the temperate rain forest in the Pacific Northwest United States, and the rain forests of Africa, Asia and Australia as well. Most of these books can be used for instruction in geography, science, and culture.

Who was Dorothea Lange?

Perhaps her name does not ring a bell, but her work will. Her most recognized piece is "Migrant Mother, 1936" which shows a thirty-two year old mother surrounded by her three children, with hunger and the despair of the Dust Bowl reflected in her face. Dorothea Lange was born in 1865 in Hoboken, New Jersey. Her life was in part defined by two powerful events: contracting polio as a child which left her with a limp the rest of her life, and her father abandoning the family when she was twelve. And while she was lucky to move in with her Grandmother and Aunt, and have her mother get a job as a librarian, the humiliation she endured not only from children but even from family helped her develop a compassion and ability to relate to the less

fortunate. Against her mother's wishes, she studied photography at Columbia University and took a job with a famous portrait photographer. But Dorothea went beyond portraits of the rich and famous. She was inexplicably drawn to the human drama of the streets, from breadlines to labor strikes, from ethnic neighborhoods, to sharecropper homes. This street work led to the government hiring her to document the Dust Bowl exodus (note that and her work is in the Library of Congress). However, her work spanned a lifetime and she documented much more than just the Dust Bowl. For example, she recorded the internment of Japanese-Americans in camps, the women and minority shipyard workers in San Francisco, the founding of the United

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In This Issue...

Women Airforce Service Pilots; Bronze Buckaroo; Go-Bang; Dorothea Lange; Literature

**Who developed
the drug Nystatin?**

**Why should not
only patients, but
tree lovers and art
lovers be thankful?**

Lee Hazen and Rachel Brown, researchers for the New York Department of Health, developed the antifungal drug, which helped cure many disfiguring fungal infections, balanced the effect of some antibacterial drugs, helped with Dutch Elm disease, and the restoration of water-damaged artwork.

(Lange—Continued from page 3)
Nations, and Native American life in the Southwest. For *Life Magazine* she did photographic essays of life in Vietnam, Ireland, Pakistan, and India.

From the time she was a young girl Dorothea was sensitive to the destitution and despair of the streets. She once said “You force yourself onto strange streets, among strangers. It may be hot. It may be painfully cold. It may be sandy and windy and you say, ‘What am I doing here? What drives me to do this hard thing?’” Her willingness to do this hard thing prompts us to ask “How can such things be?” and “How can we make them better?”



(WASP—Continued from page 1)
the average woman pilot current in 10-12 different planes at any given time.

Interesting trivia: 1) At her death Jackie Cochran held more speed, altitude and distance records than any other pilot, male or female! 2) Barbara Erickson London made four successive transcontinental flights from coast to coast in three different kinds of planes (two fighters and a transport) and was awarded the Air Medal in July of 1944. 3) While American women could not fly in combat Russian women pilots could, and one even received the highest medal of honor for shooting down 17 German Luftwaffe planes. 4) The WASP’s mascot “Fifinella” or “Fifi,” a lucky gremlin was designed by Walt Disney. 5) The WASP’s theme song was “Pistol Packing Mama.” 6) Before joining the WASPs

Cornelia Fort was actually in the air flying with a student during the Pearl Harbor attack and saw the billowing black smoke and a Japanese fighter closing in on her. Somehow she managed to escape the gunfire from the plane above and the two below her.

Some great websites for additional information include www.stg.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/tocCS.html relating to “What Did you Do in the War Grandma?” and www.womenofcourage.com with a WASP trivia quiz; and www.WASP-WWII.org a Wings Across American project out of Baylor with all kinds of information and resources.

On the last graduation day General “Hap” Arnold promised the women pilots that “... we will never forget our debt to you.” Help keep his promise—share their history.