

TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

# AMBUSH IN THE FOOTHILLS

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*Ambush in the Foothills* is a story about the early days of ranching in Southern Alberta. Canadians, often retired officers of the North West Mounted Police, went to the ranches in Montana and brought herds of cattle north into the foothills country of Canada. In the novel Jamie and Kate Bains are hired by their friend Patrick for just such an expedition. The story is fictional but it is based on real events from Canada's past.

Ideas for stimulating classroom discussion and student projects based on the novel:

## THE NOVEL

- In *Ambush in the Foothills* Patrick, the leader of the venture, is reluctant to hire Kate. Does this reflect his prejudice, or the values and attitudes of people in the 1870s?
- The Canadians go to the Kohrs ranch in Montana to buy a herd of cattle. Kate is impressed with Augusta Kohrs, the wife of the ranch owner. Why does she make such a strong impression on the young girl?
- The cowboys are an undisciplined group of men that Patrick finds difficult to control. Why are the cowboys so unruly?
- Billy is an outlaw when we first meet him in the novel but over the course of *Ambush in the Foothills* he changes. Why do you think he goes through this change?

## CANADIAN HISTORY

- Ranching was the second major industry introduced by Europeans into Alberta. What was the first, and what other industries have shaped the province?
- The cattle drive described in *Ambush in the Foothills* must go through Blackfoot territory. Who were the Blackfoot and why were they respected and feared?
- Why are the foothills a good environment for ranching?
- Some of the early ranch owners of Alberta were wealthy British people. What is the connection between Britain and Canada that encouraged this investment?

## GEOGRAPHY

- The foothills country, like the prairies, is dry with reduced rainfall, but a number of rivers flow across this country from west to east. Where does the water of these rivers come from, and why are the rivers important to ranchers and farmers?
- In the foothills it is relatively easy to travel north and south and to the east but very difficult to travel west. Why?
- Why are the foothills so hilly?
- Edmonton is an older European settlement than Calgary. What economic factors encouraged the early growth of Edmonton?

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

- The Blackfoot are a tribe of the Plains Indians. What are common features of all of the people who live on the Plains?
- Why were horses used by both native people and the early European settlers on the plains?
- Before the introduction of cattle into the foothills, buffalo roamed the country. What is common to both buffalo and cattle?
- The railway arrived in southern Alberta in 1883. Why were railways so important to ranchers?