



I tell ya...everybody wants to be a cowboy.

But cowboy life ain't just tough talkin'. It's tough LIVING...And then, some tough talking.



A lotta folks dispute the facts of my life, saying it's all too incredible to be true.

That's why I wrote my book in 1907, *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love*.



1854: I was born a slave in Tennessee.

It was illegal for slaves, but my dad, Sampson, taught me to read. He died pretty soon after the Civil War ended slavery.



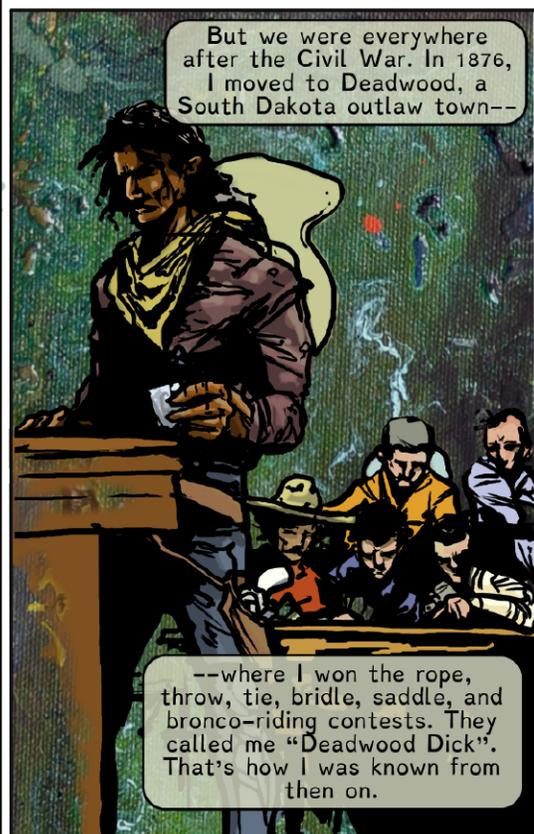
At 15, I won a horse in a raffle...and sold it back to its owner for \$100.



I gave half to my mom. Then I moved out to Kansas, where I learned to ride, rope, and shoot.

I was pretty darn good at it, too.

Folks nowadays like to act like there were no Black cowboys.



But we were everywhere after the Civil War. In 1876, I moved to Deadwood, a South Dakota outlaw town--

--where I won the rope, throw, tie, bridle, saddle, and bronco-riding contests. They called me "Deadwood Dick". That's how I was known from then on.



At least, until some others tried to lay claim to that nickname.

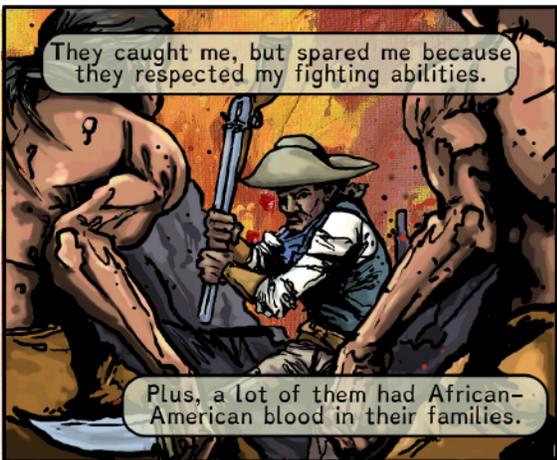
Like I said, folks dispute my accomplishments. My life was full of wild adventures: chasing stampeding cattle, roping wild mustangs--

--even sharing drinks with Billy the Kid.



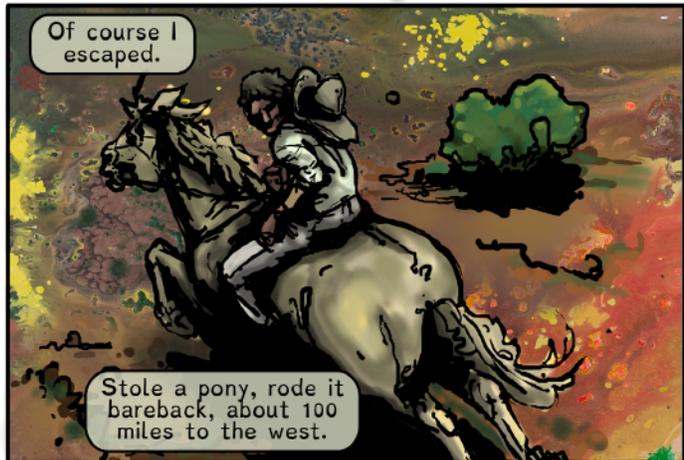
In Arizona in 1877, I was attacked by Native Americans from the Pima Tribe.

Turns out I had gotten into their territory.



They caught me, but spared me because they respected my fighting abilities.

Plus, a lot of them had African-American blood in their families.



Of course I escaped.

Stole a pony, rode it bareback, about 100 miles to the west.



In 1889, I got married. Cowboy work was dying. So I moved to Denver.

Got work as a railroad pullman sleeping car porter.

I loved Denver, but I always liked being on the move.



So, by the time I died in 1921, I was living in Los Angeles.

One thing about cowboy life: Talent and hard work were always appreciated, no matter what your color.

The Wild West allowed me to be not just a man, but also a hero.

Nat Love

1854 – 1921

Story: R. Alan Brooks

Art: Cody Kuehl

Discussion Questions:

3-5th Grade

- When you think of a cowboy, what do you see in your mind? What do they wear? What do they do with their day?
- What do you want to be when you grow up? What would you do if someone told you that you are not allowed to do that?
- Why did the members of the Pima Tribe let Nat go when they caught him? What does it mean to have respect for another person?
- How does the comic make Nat's experiences come to life? Which pictures show him engaging in an exciting activity?

MS

- Nat Love was born a slave and, as such, was not allowed to learn to read. Why do you suppose that law existed?
- In the second panel of the first page, Nat says “a lot of folks dispute the facts of my life, saying it's all too incredible to be true.” Are there any parts of this story that you find hard to believe?
- Nat Love took the name “Deadwood Dick.” What would your cowboy name be if you could choose it for yourself?
- In both the fifth panel of the first page and the second panel of the second page, Nat is shown firing his gun from horseback. How does including two images that are so similar to one another enhance your understanding of the character?

HS

- The artwork of this comic contains a lot of thick lines and an abundance of deep shading. How does this style inform the tone of the story being told here?
- Why do you suppose that people today do not believe, as Nat points out in the comic, that there were any African American cowboys?



Teacher Guide



- Not only was Nat literate, he wrote a book about his life. Why would there be laws against slaves learning to read? Consider the nature of racism in America today as well as what it was like in the mid to late 1800's.
- At the end of the comic, Nat says that the Wild West gave him the chance to be a hero. What, in your opinion makes a hero and how is Nat Love heroic?

Lesson Ideas

ART:

- Choose a historical figure who defied societal norms and became an icon of their time. Create a minicomic celebrating this accomplishment.
- Consider the use of deep browns and blacks and the almost painting like quality of the artwork. Have students find paintings that are similar to this style and compare the mood of those works to this comic.

Language Arts

- Read excerpts from Nat Love's book (linked in the "Resources" section of this teacher guide) and analyze the style of the narrative. Have them establish a theme and use the text as evidence to explain this theme in a short essay.
- Choose one of Nat's experiences from his book and write a fictionalized narrative based on this information with Nat as the central character.
- View the video "The Black Cowboy" (linked in the Resources section). Have students write short responses based on the following prompt: "What fact about African American cowboys most surprised you?"

Social Studies

- Have students research the role of African Americans in the history of the military in this country. Have them choose a specific regimen or unit and report out to the class via a digital presentation their selection and offer their own thoughts about the military and historical impact of their contribution.
- The comic recounts Nat's run in with the Pima Tribe but was spared due to their respect for him. Have students research Native American tribes in North American in the late 1800s and explore how their culture informs choices like this one.

Resources:

The Life and Adventures of Nat Love ; Better Known in the Cattle Country as Deadwood Dick
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/natlove/menu.html>

Nat Love at Legends of America
<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/we-natlove/>