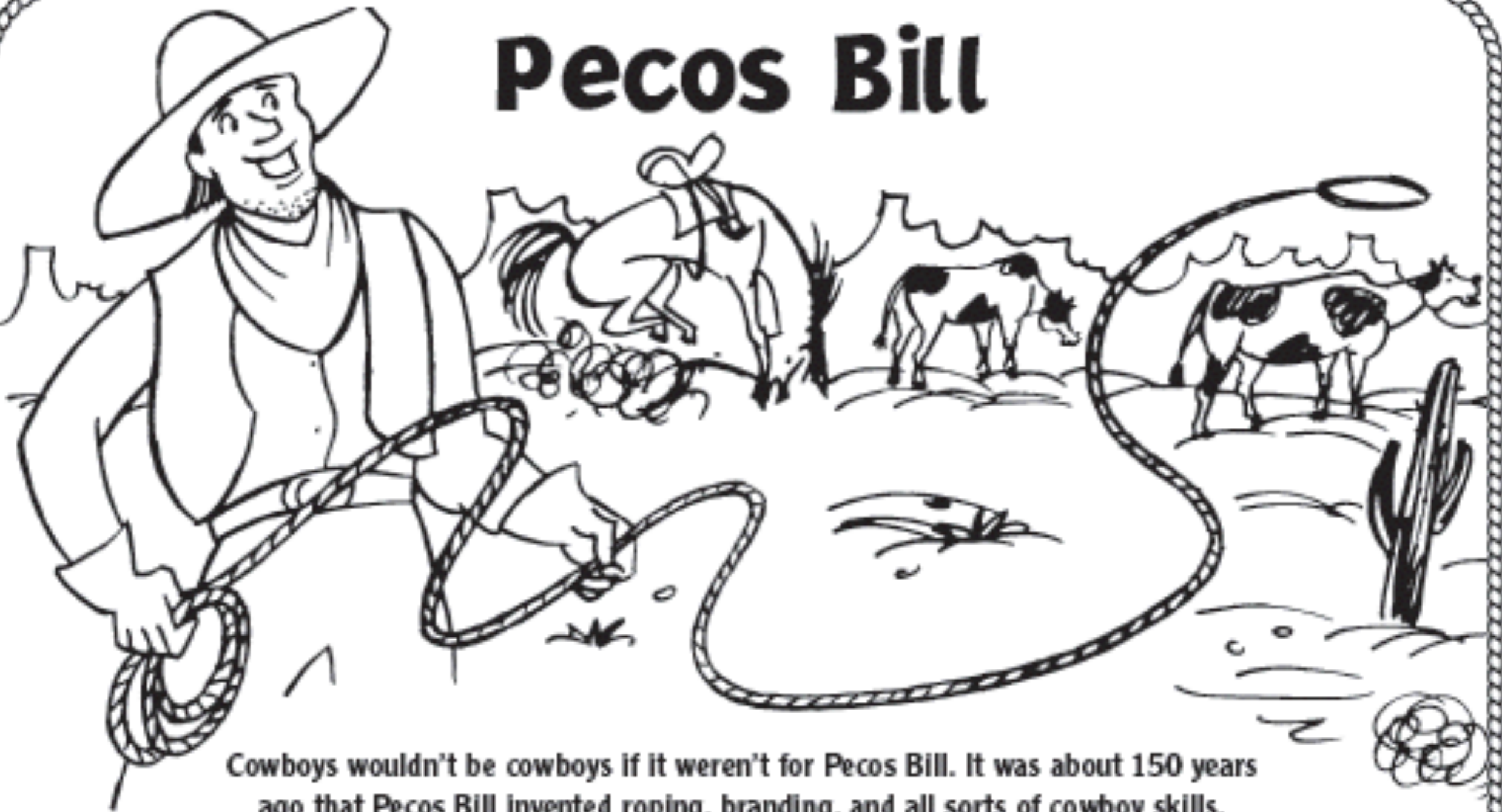
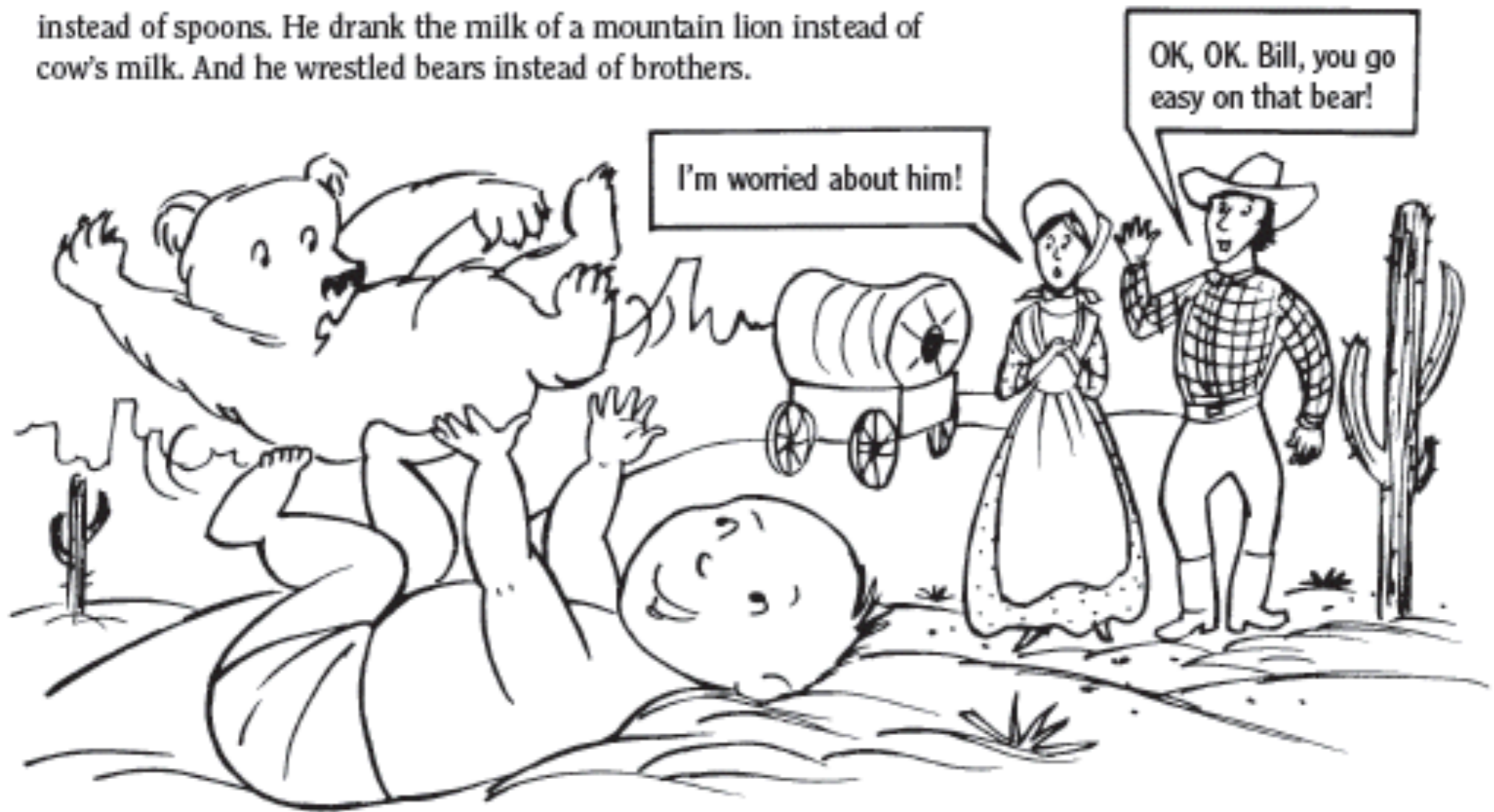


Pecos Bill

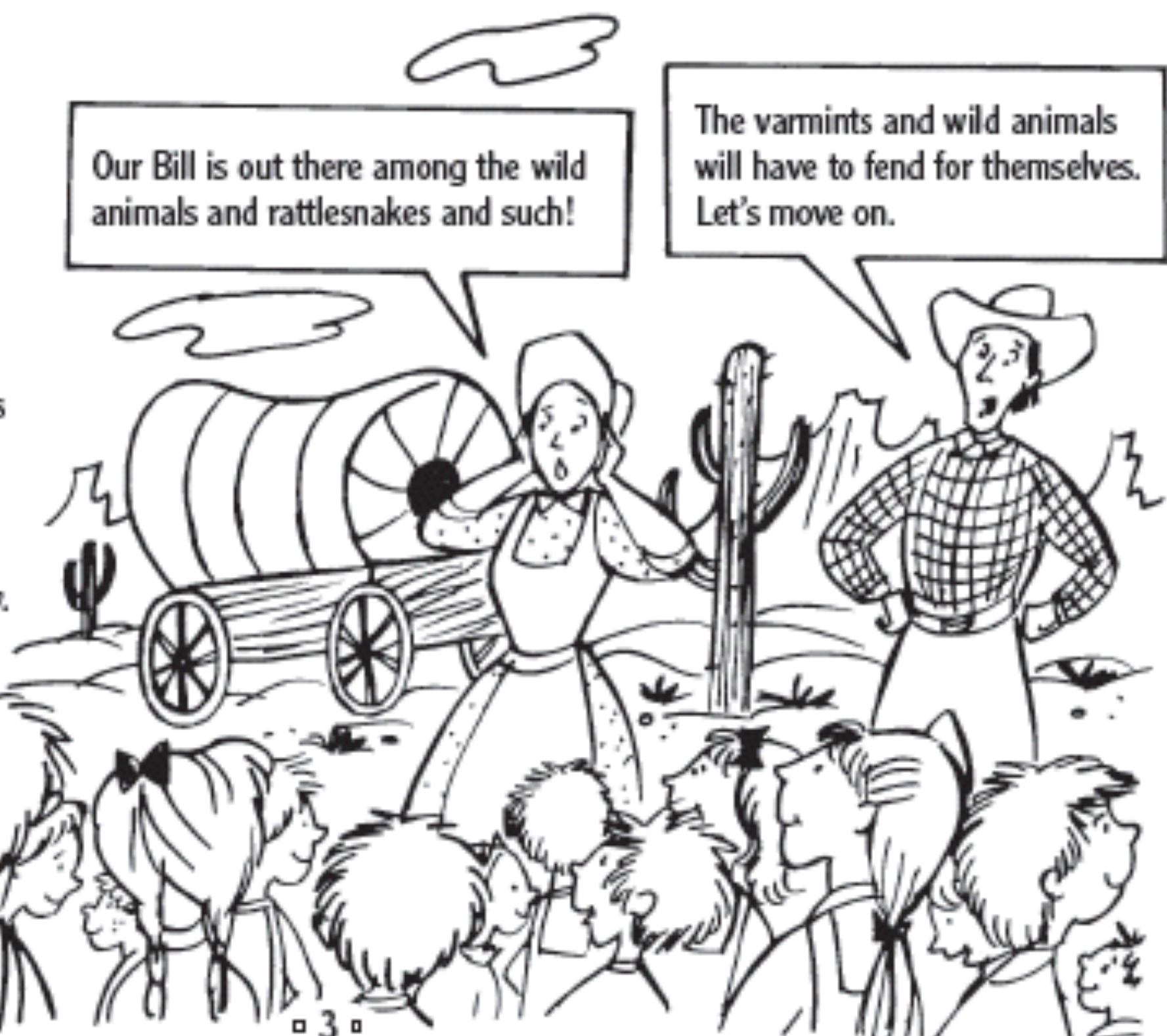


Cowboys wouldn't be cowboys if it weren't for Pecos Bill. It was about 150 years ago that Pecos Bill invented roping, branding, and all sorts of cowboy skills. Why, he even invented cowboy songs. Who was this cowboy of all cowboys?

Pecos Bill was born in eastern Texas in the 1830s. Right away he stood out from his 17 brothers and sisters. He teethed on horseshoes instead of spoons. He drank the milk of a mountain lion instead of cow's milk. And he wrestled bears instead of brothers.



When Bill was two years old, another family settled about 50 miles away. Bill's father decided the place was getting too crowded. So they packed up and headed west. When their wagon hit a big bump near the Pecos River, Bill bounced out. He hit the ground so hard the wind was knocked out of him. He tried to shout, but couldn't. With all those kids, his mother didn't notice him gone 'til the next day.



Our Bill is out there among the wild animals and rattlesnakes and such!

The varmints and wild animals will have to fend for themselves. Let's move on.

Bill quickly found another family. He joined a pack of coyotes. They taught him everything they knew. He taught them everything he knew.



Bill grew up thinking he was a coyote. He might never have become a cowboy if Bowleg Gerber hadn't come along and set the ten-year-old straight.

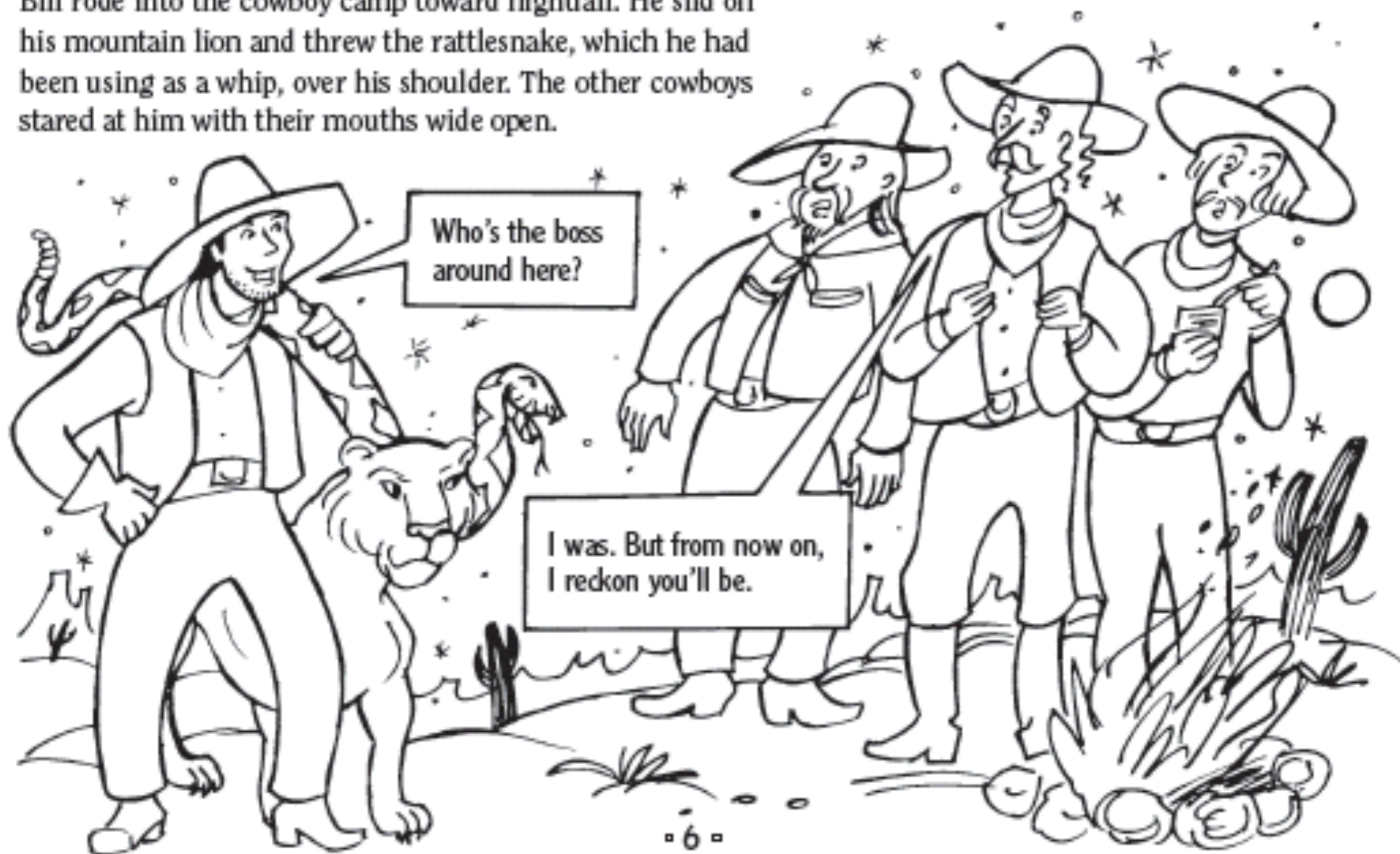


Once Bill realized he wasn't a coyote, he decided to become a cowboy like Bowleg Gerber. When Bill was a young man, Bowleg gave him directions to a cowboy camp down yonder a ways. Since Bill didn't have a

horse, he rode a mountain lion instead. Bill followed Bowleg's directions to the cowboy camp. He was about halfway there when a 30-foot rattlesnake started shaking its tail at him.

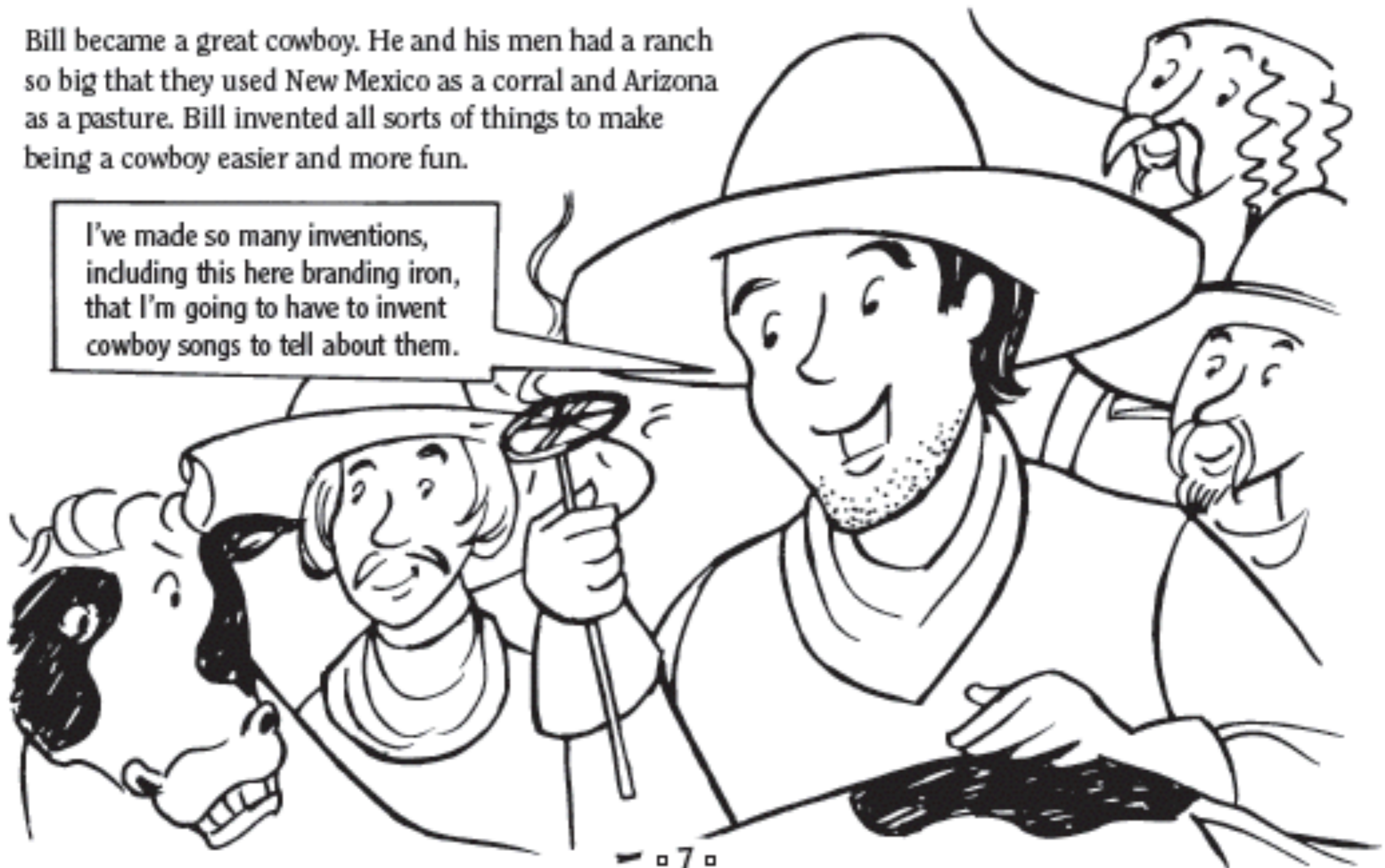


Bill rode into the cowboy camp toward nightfall. He slid off his mountain lion and threw the rattlesnake, which he had been using as a whip, over his shoulder. The other cowboys stared at him with their mouths wide open.

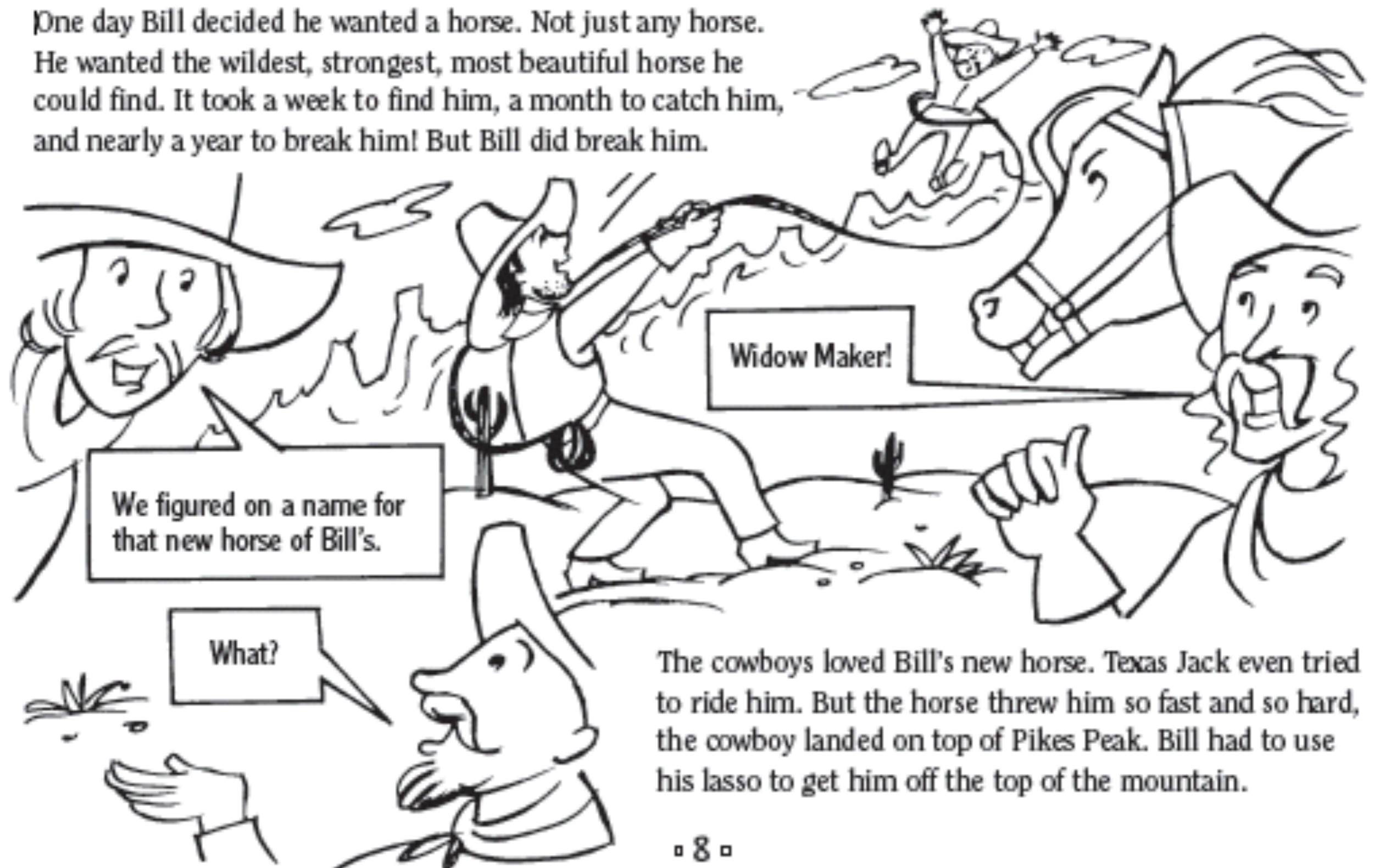


Bill became a great cowboy. He and his men had a ranch so big that they used New Mexico as a corral and Arizona as a pasture. Bill invented all sorts of things to make being a cowboy easier and more fun.

I've made so many inventions, including this here branding iron, that I'm going to have to invent cowboy songs to tell about them.



One day Bill decided he wanted a horse. Not just any horse. He wanted the wildest, strongest, most beautiful horse he could find. It took a week to find him, a month to catch him, and nearly a year to break him! But Bill did break him.



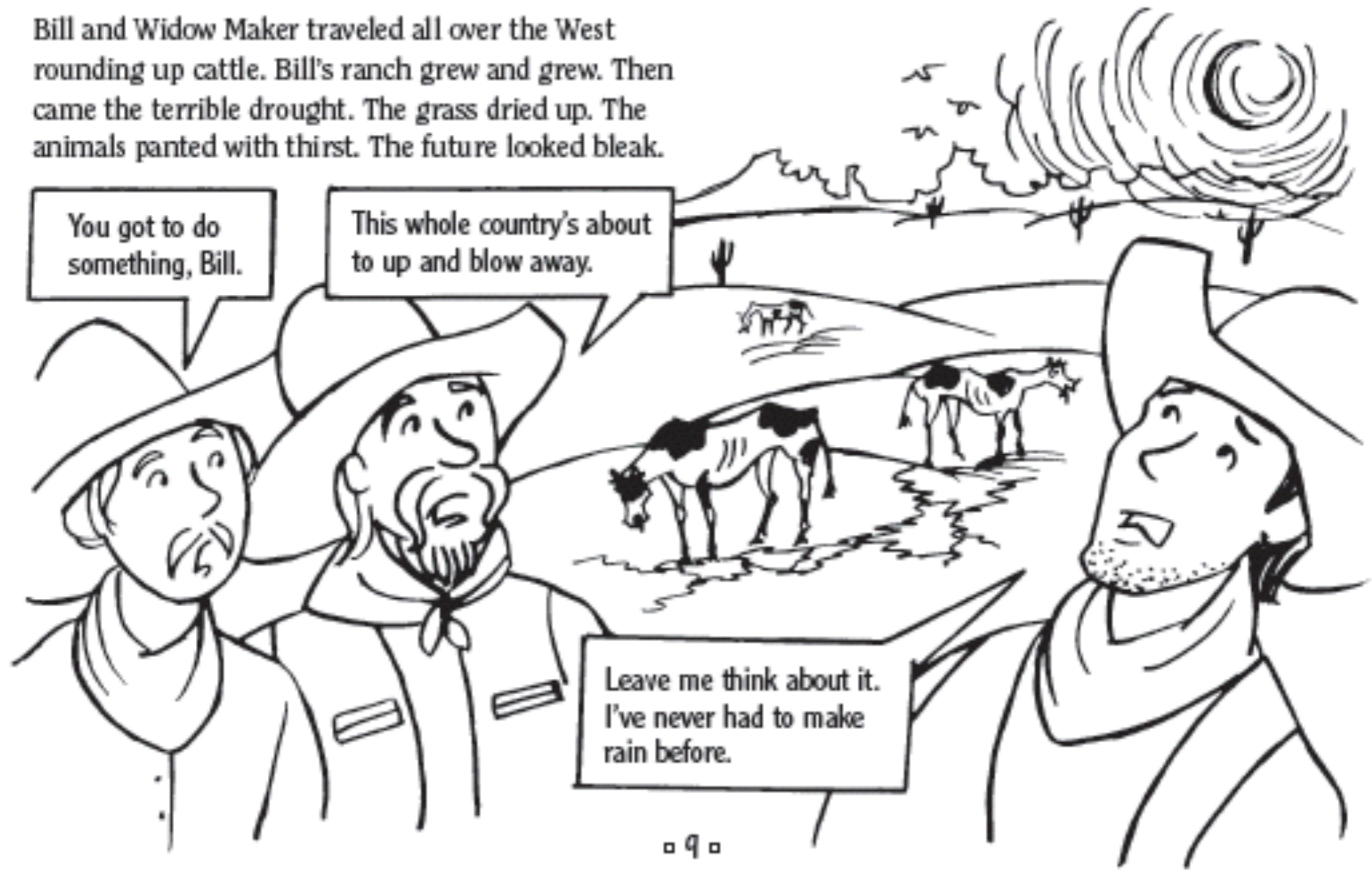
The cowboys loved Bill's new horse. Texas Jack even tried to ride him. But the horse threw him so fast and so hard, the cowboy landed on top of Pikes Peak. Bill had to use his lasso to get him off the top of the mountain.

Bill and Widow Maker traveled all over the West rounding up cattle. Bill's ranch grew and grew. Then came the terrible drought. The grass dried up. The animals panted with thirst. The future looked bleak.

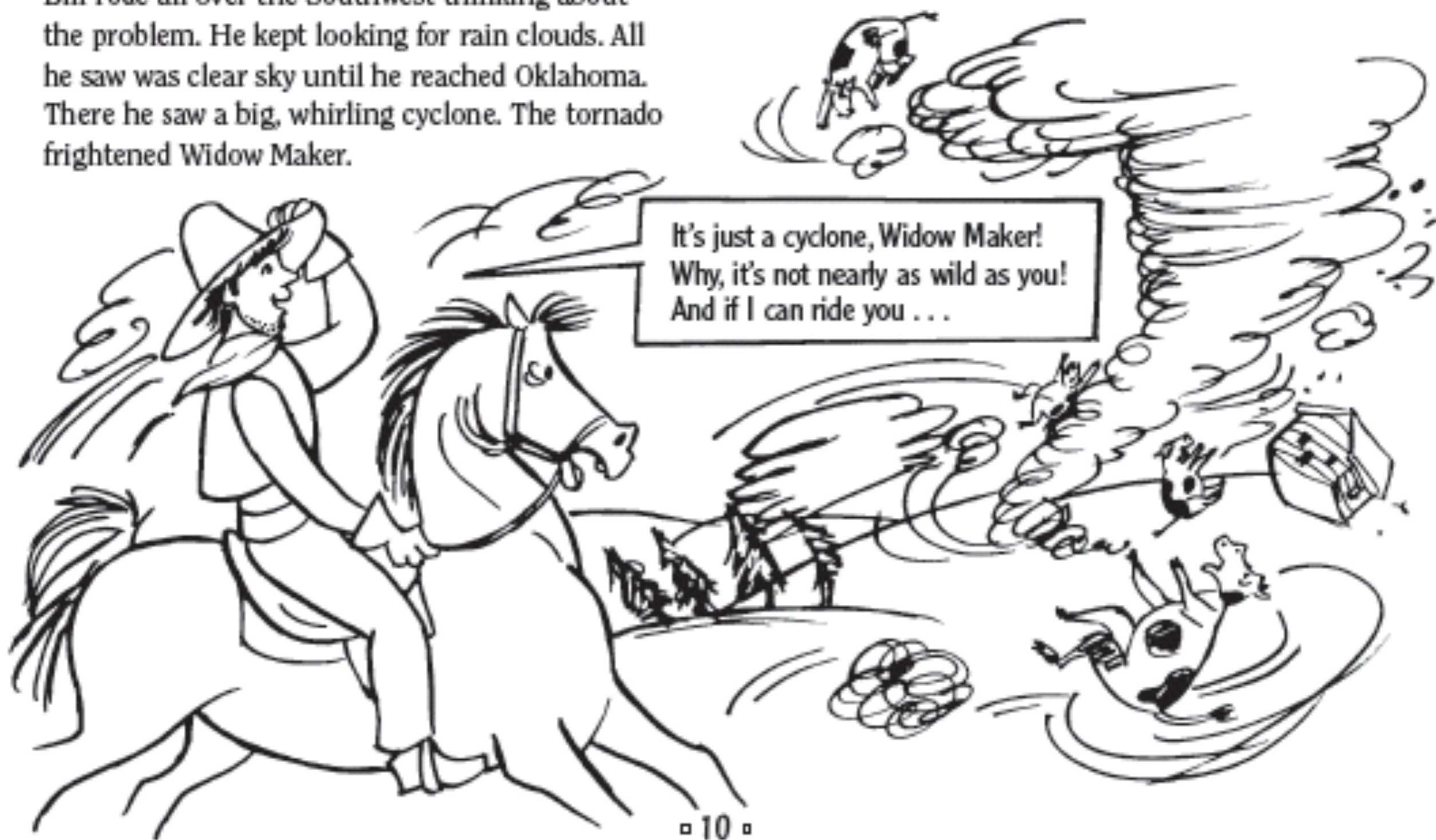
You got to do something, Bill.

This whole country's about to up and blow away.

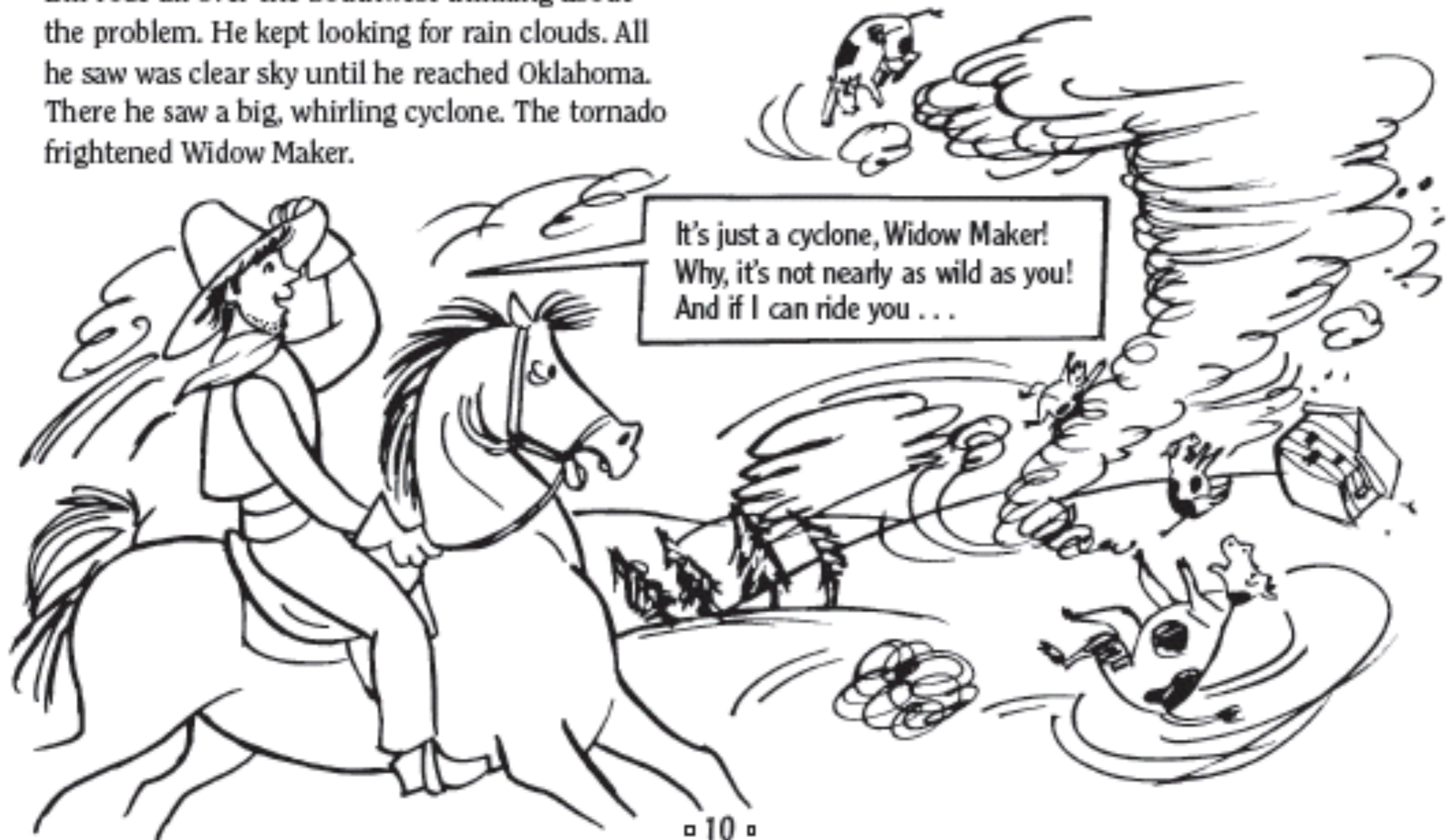
Leave me think about it. I've never had to make rain before.



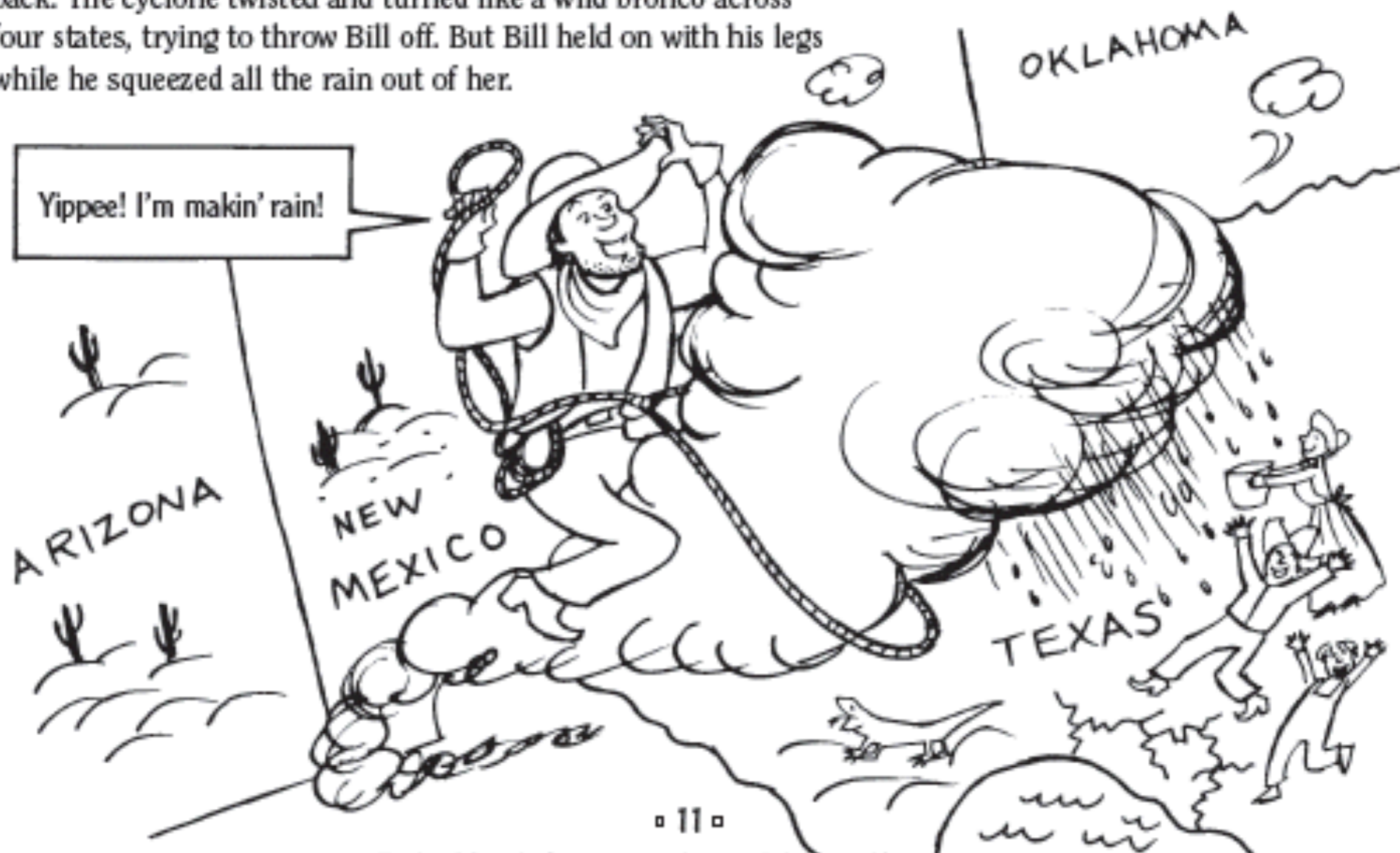
Bill rode all over the Southwest thinking about the problem. He kept looking for rain clouds. All he saw was clear sky until he reached Oklahoma. There he saw a big, whirling cyclone. The tornado frightened Widow Maker.



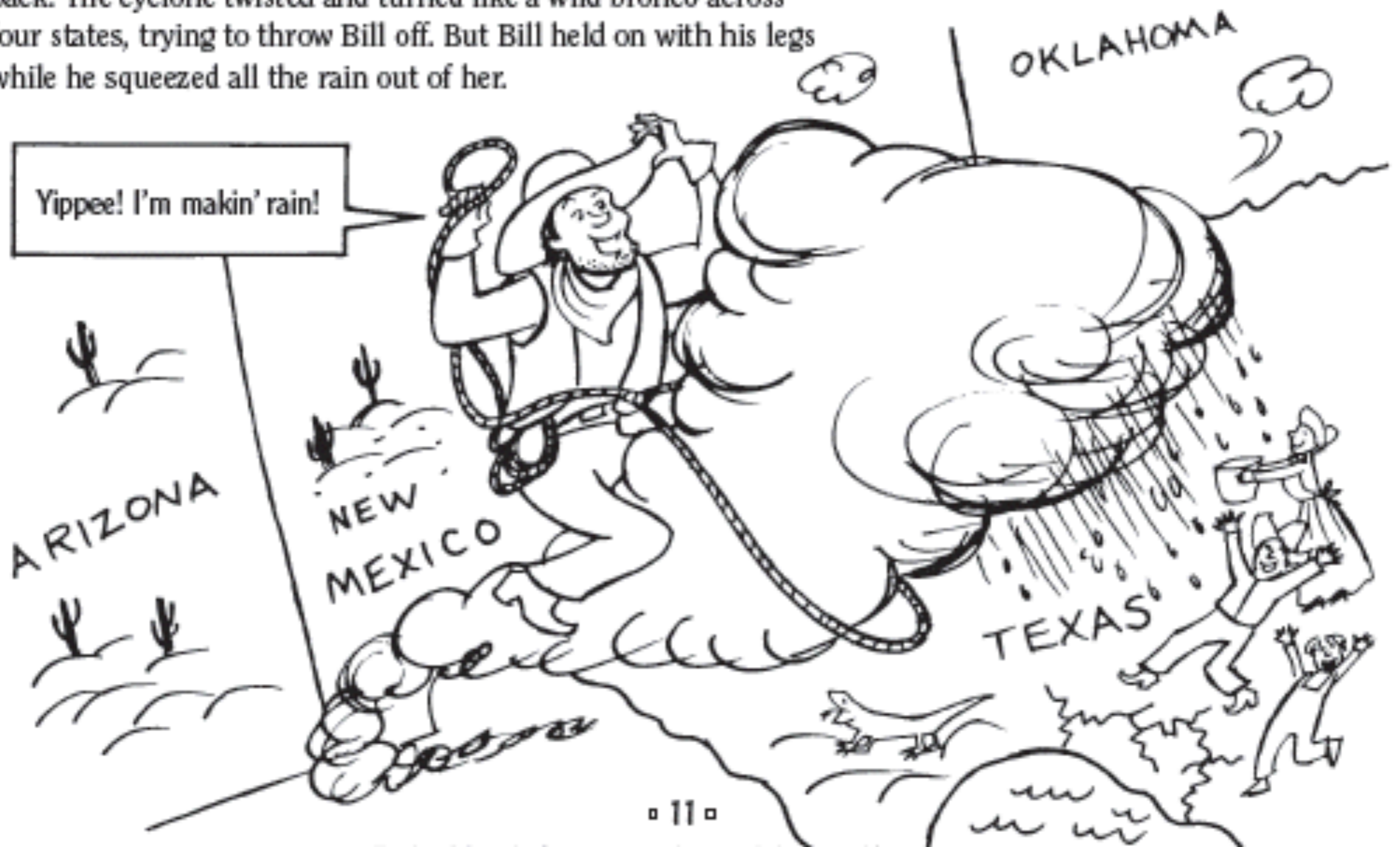
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Bill let go of the rained-out cyclone in California. He fell so hard he made a giant hole in the ground. Today we call the place Death Valley. Bill didn't die there, though. It was a city man in a fancy cowboy suit that eventually killed Bill. Bill took one look at him, and he died laughing.

