



OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESENTS

THE HISTORY OF THE CIRCUS & THE BIRTH OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Cirque Éloize Saloon

Thursday, February 22, 2018

7:30 PM

tickets.occc.edu

Phone: 405-682-7579

www.occc.edu/pas

A circus is customarily made up of a traveling conglomerate of entertainers and performers. This group typically includes acrobats, trained animals, clowns and individuals with a wide range of unique talents. Traditionally, circuses were put on in large tents that could easily be moved from place to place. The circus has a rich history in the United States that dates back as far as 1793. As various forms of travel began to emerge in the U.S., the impact on the traveling circus was a dramatic increase in mobility.

1850's

The Golden Age of the River.
New boating technology made
river travel more popular.



1869

The Union Pacific railroad and
the Central Pacific Railroad came
together to connect, having a
significant impact on railroad travel.



1872

Coups gives Barnum the idea to
design a special circus train. This
was the first year that a train would
carry a circus designed specifically
for railroad travel.

Despite the traveling circus' rich history, immense popularity and increased mobility, a disastrous tent fire in 1944 almost brought the industry to extinction. Bob Brooke describes the disaster in an article published in *History Magazine* titled *Step Right Up* (2001), "In all, 168 persons were trampled or burned to death - at least 80 of them were children. Another 487 people, including 60 circus employees, received burns and injuries. Insurance claims came to almost \$4 million" (Brooke, 2001).

The fire was catastrophic and was almost the end of the traveling circus. In 1957, an idea offered by Irvin Feld would be put into action that would save the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey from permanently closing their traveling circus. Their new tour would take place in arenas rather than in tents (Brooke, 2001).

Cirque du Soleil, or the circus of the sun, is a more modern type of circus that eliminates performances by animals and emphasizes dramatic acrobatic performances that are accentuated by vivid lighting and unique and colorful costumes. **Cirque Éloize Saloon** uses these techniques to tell a story about a guy and a gal in the Wild West.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Students will need access to the following:

- ARTICLE: *Step Right Up: Bob Brooke presents the history of the circus in America*
<http://www.history-magazine.com/circuses.html>
- ARTICLE: *Cirque du Soleil: History*
<https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/about/history>
- The Oklahoman Archives – teachers, can gain free access to a classroom login by visiting,
<https://nieonline.com/theoklahoman/order.cfm>

Ask students to create a timeline showing the history of the circus and the birth of Cirque du Soleil. Timelines should be visual and include significant events and historical influences found in the articles listed above. Students can use magazine clippings, newspaper clippings and additional articles found in The Oklahoman Archives to create their timelines. Ask students to share their timeline with their classmates.



NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION
THE OKLAHOMAN

Oklahoma's future begins in the classroom.