Buffalo Hunt

A Hands-On History Look at the Relationship Between the Plains Indians and the American Buffalo

Written by Mary Tucker

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Dear Teacher or Parent,

Is there a child who has not been enthralled by tales of cowboys and Indians in the old west? Combine that natural interest with an abundance of movies, TV programs and books on the topic, and you'll see that stories of the American West are a continuing lure (to young and old alike). History books can't afford the space to elaborate on this period with so much else to cover. Consequently, a study such as this one is ideal for teachers who want to engage their students' established interest and give them an opportunity to understand that the relationship between Indians and the white man, represented by traders and trappers, soldiers and settlers, was far more complicated than a TV show could ever illustrate.

Your students will love this hands-on investigation of the relationship between the Indians and the buffalo living on the American Great Plains during the 1800s. They'll see how much Native Americans depended on the buffalo and discover that when the buffalo were threatened, the whole culture was also threatened. Teachers are provided with background information and meaningful, fun activities that will give children an exciting glimpse of a time and place and a way of life that will never come again. They'll be challenged to think like the Native Americans and imagine the excitement of the buffalo hunt. Through crafts, games, discussion and creative activities, students will experience something of the thrill of living in this time, and they'll see how greed and apathy changed it forever. Hopefully, your students will learn compassion for the endangered buffalo, the mistreated people, and the ones who mistreated them through ignorance and selfishness. And they'll begin to understand the importance of striving for peace between all people.

Sincerely,

Mary Tucker
Resources
To enhance this study for your students, the following resources are recommended:

Videos
Adventures from the Book of Virtues, PBS Videos
This video series contains entertaining children’s stories to teach virtues such as honesty, responsibility, courage, etc. Though they don’t actually have anything to do with Indians or buffalos, one of the main characters in each video is a wise, cartoon buffalo named Plato who finds stories to help answer children’s questions.

Dances with Wolves, Orion Home Video
About halfway through this excellent film (about an hour and 10 minutes along) is an exciting buffalo hunt segment. The depiction is not bloody or gruesome, but you’ll want to stop the video before the last scene in the segment which shows a hunter cutting out the buffalo’s heart and eating it.

Land of the Eagle, PBS Video
“Across the Sea of Grass”
About 15 minutes into this video is an interesting 15-minute segment about the buffalo.

The West, PBS Video
Episode 5, “The Grandest Enterprise Under God”
Near the end of this first segment is a three-minute scene showing the dependence of the Native Americans on the buffalo. Be sure to stop the tape as soon as the buffalo part is over as it is followed by a gory scene of a man murdered by Indians.

Web Sites
www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/bison
Have students check out this web site for information and a sketch of the buffalo’s physical characteristics.

www.monterey.k12.ca.us~drey/buff.htm
Students will enjoy looking at this amazing list of ways Native Americans used the buffalo.

www.nwf.org/bufalo/buffalo–box.html
This site tells you how to obtain a box of buffalo artifacts, information, videos, puzzles and more from the National Wildlife Federation for your classroom, and it’s free!

wildlife.visitmt.com
www.nabisoncoop.com
The American Buffalo

The animal we usually refer to as the buffalo is more correctly called the American bison. It’s an impressive animal, the largest plant-eating animal in North America. Males can weigh up to a ton. Females usually weigh about 1000 to 1200 pounds. The largest buffalo are from five to six feet tall at the shoulder, which is raised in a large hump. They are often 10 to 12 feet long from nose to tail. The hair on their head, neck, shoulders and front legs is long and shaggy. The buffalo’s forehead is quite broad and has a short, slightly curved horn on each side. The horns may be used as weapons against wolves, coyotes or even each other; but are more often used to tear up prairie grass to make a dust wallow.

The buffalo are not animals to take for granted since they are unpredictable and have been known to charge cars and trucks. Don’t imagine they are slow moving because of their size. On the contrary, they can run at more than 30 miles an hour for short distances. Buffalo usually travel in herds except for the older males who stay to themselves and join the herd only at breeding time when they fight with younger males for breeding rights. The bulls’ roars and bellows can be heard for great distances. Each herd of buffalo may contain several families which include a bull, a cow and her offspring. The cow is the leader of the family group, and an old cow is usually the leader of the herd. Cows also serve as guards.

Mating season is from July to September. The male buffalos in the herd fight each other for breeding rights, but there is no “head bull” who does all the breeding as with some other groups of animals. A female buffalo is pregnant for about nine months so that calves are usually born from April to June. When it’s time for her to give birth to her calf, the cow leaves the herd. When the calf is able to walk, usually about four days old, the two return to the herd. Calves usually stay with their mothers about three years.

The buffalo’s diet is made up almost entirely of grass For this reason, they move around with the seasons to find the best feeding areas. Like cattle, buffalo chew their cud. They are most active in the morning and evening. They love to wallow in dust and mud (which helps get rid of biting insects) and rub up against trees and boulders (which is sometimes a bit hard on the trees and boulders).

According to the North American Bison Cooperative there are about 350,000 buffalo in North America today. Some of these are in public herds such as in Yellowstone National Park and others are owned by private individuals. This is an amazing number when you consider that less than 120 years ago only 500 buffalo were left in America!

Buffalo Sack Puppets

Copy the buffalo head pattern on page 7 for each student to color and cut out. Have them follow directions for gluing the pattern on the bottom of a small paper lunch sack. Then let students use their buffalo puppets to act out the skit on page 8 and sing the song on page 9.
Buffalo Hunt

Name __________________________________________

Buffalo Puppet Pattern

1. Color and cut out the pattern below.
2. Color a small paper lunch sack brown.
3. Glue the buffalo pattern to the flat bottom of the sack.
4. Cut a large tongue from pink paper and glue it under the flat bottom of the sack.
5. Glue raffia or yarn to the puppet for hair, especially under the head to make the buffalo’s beard.
6. Put your hand inside the bag to make the puppet talk.
“Buffalos and People”

Puppet Skit

Assign the following speaking parts to students: Tyson Bison (an adolescent buffalo), Mama, Colonel Buff, Snort and Great One (the older leader of the herd). The remainder of the class should speak the “Herd” part together. Remind students to make their paper sack puppets talk as they read their parts.

Setting: Yellowstone National Park

Herd: (Making chewing and smacking lips noises to show they are eating)

Tyson Bison: (Looking up and staring for a minute) Mama, look at those strange creatures over there. What are they?

Herd: (Look up and stare) Those are humans, Son.

Tyson Bison: Well, why are they just standing there looking at us?

Mama: They think we are interesting to watch.

Tyson Bison: (Giggling) They’re funny looking! They have almost no hair, no horns and not even any humps. And look, they only have two legs!

Herd: (Laughing) Now, Tyson, they’re just different from us. That’s no reason to laugh at them.

Tyson Bison: Sorry, Mama, but I wish I could see one of those humans up close.

Colonel Buff: (Gruffly) You stay away from humans, my boy. They’re nothing but trouble, nothing but trouble. (Shaking his head)

Herd: (Shaking their heads) That’s right. That’s the truth.

Tyson Bison: Would those humans hurt us, Mama?

Mama: Probably not, Son. But in the past humans have treated buffalo very badly. There used to be many millions of buffalo living on the plains, but the humans changed that.

Snort: (Snorting angrily) That’s right. They shot buffalo for money and sometimes just for fun! Before long, there was hardly a buffalo left on the prairie! Disgraceful!

Herd: (Snorting and shaking their heads) Terrible! Just awful!

Tyson Bison: Why would they do that? We didn’t do anything to them, did we?

Colonel Buff: (Sighing sadly) It’s just the way humans are sometimes, Son. They seemed to think buffalo didn’t matter. Except for the Indians. We were important to the Indians. Couldn’t get along without us!

Herd: That’s right! The Indians liked us.

Great One: (Spoken slowly in solemn tones) Back in those days people didn’t always think about the importance of taking care of the land and wildlife such as buffalo, Tyson. Today, many humans are more concerned about us. They even set aside land like this park where we can live in freedom. Humans are beginning to understand. They’re beginning to value Earth’s creatures and natural wonders.

Tyson Bison: Well, I hope humans realize how important we are. Why, America wouldn’t be the same without buffalo!

Herd: (Snorting and shaking heads) Got that right! Yes! Buffalo forever!
At the end of the skit on page 8 have students sing this song, using their buffalo sack puppets.

**A Home on the Plains**

*To the tune of “Home, Home on the Range”*

Oh give us a home  
Where the buffalo roam,  
For without us where would you be?  
We all have a part  
In America’s heart,  
And in this great land’s history.

Chorus

Home, home on the plains;  
Yes, that’s where we want to be  
To roam where we will  
Over meadow and hill,  
And live our lives happy and free.

The coyotes and birds  
And our thundering herds  
And the prairie dogs deep in the ground  
Belong to this land.  
(We were here before man!)  
Yes, the wonders of nature abound.

Repeat Chorus.
Buffalos Are Survivors

With long, thick hair that protects their bodies, buffalo can survive the worst weather. When a winter storm comes, the buffalo stands solid facing the wind. When it moves, it moves slowly to conserve energy. A buffalo can survive a blizzard that goes on for days. When their grazing lands are covered with snow, the buffalo moves its massive head from side to side to push away the snow with its face. When the grass is uncovered, it eats. In spring the buffalo sheds its heavy coat. It’s a scraggly sight with patches of thick fur on parts of its body and smooth fur on other parts. There isn’t much that slows down a buffalo, but when one becomes too old or sickly to keep up with the rest of the herd, packs of wolves prey on the animals that are left behind. Without the rest of the herd to help protect them, weaker buffalo are no match for hungry wolves.

Buffalo are very protective of one another. Sometimes when danger threatens, the mature bulls circle around the cows and calves with their heads toward the danger. They can flip wolves in the air with their large horned heads, then trample them under their hooves. Even when buffalo come upon the carcass of a dead buffalo, they show a protectiveness and concern that is moving.

Buffalo Survival Game

This game is best played outside on the playground. Divide your class into buffalo bulls, cows and calves. Tell students they are going to pretend to be buffalo and they must change their actions according to what you say. If you shout, “Blizzard!” they must stand still and face into the wind (if there’s no wind, have them face the school building). If you shout, “Snow!” they must move very slowly with their heads down as if they are pushing away snow to get to the grass underneath, then pretend to eat. If you shout, “Wolves!” they must gather together with the bulls, head down, circled around the cows and calves to protect them. If you shout, “No danger!” they can calmly walk around and graze or even play together as they think buffalo would. Encourage students to try to think like buffalo and react immediately when you shout to them.

Discussion

The buffalo has only two natural enemies—wolves and human beings. Ask students why they think human beings are considered enemies of the buffalo. Explain that later in this study they will hear more about people’s treatment of buffalo over the years.
More Than You Could Count

Coronado was one of the first white men to view the American west. King Charles V of Spain sent the explorer to North America during the sixteenth century in search of treasure. When Coronado saw the buffalo, he wrote to his king, “I found such a quantity of cows (buffalo) ... that it is impossible to number them, for while I was journeying through these plains, until I returned to where I first found them, there was not a day that I lost sight of them.” Coronado and his men killed the buffalo for food as they traveled.

From studying various sources, most scholars today estimate that there were once as many as 60 million buffalo roaming the Great Plains of America. In the early 1800s when Lewis and Clark explored the vast lands of the Louisiana Territory, recently bought from France by President Thomas Jefferson, they passed through mile after mile of grass so tall a man on horseback had to stand up in the stirrups just to see over it. With few trees, the prairie has been referred to as a “sea of grass,” and it was an ideal home for the buffalo. Of course, the buffalo were not the only inhabitants of the prairies. Their neighbors were badgers, ground squirrels, gophers, lizards, rattlesnakes, jackrabbits and hawks, and visitors such as deer, elk, antelope, fox, coyotes and wolves. And there were human neighbors, too—Native Americans of many different tribes: Comanche, Kiowa-Apache, Cheyenne, Osage, Pawnee, Arapaho, Sioux, Crow, Mandan, Blackfoot, Ojibway and many more.

Map Study

Cover a map of North America with clear adhesive plastic. Then use a washable marker to shade in the areas in the sketch below to show the extent of the Great Plains where the buffalo and Indians lived. Have students name the places that are covered or partially covered. Is your home included?
Buffalo Hunt

Indians and Buffalo

Some Native Americans named the buffalo “Pte.” They believed that the buffalo came up from a large hole in Mother Earth. They were thankful for this animal that met almost every need they had. Before going off on a buffalo hunt, some tribes held a buffalo dance and sang songs. The Mandans prayed to the Great Spirit. For generations the Indians hunted the buffalo on foot which made it difficult to kill them.

Various methods were used for killing buffalo. Some Indians sneaked up on them and shot them with bows and arrows. In order to get close to the herd, the hunter covered himself with a wolf’s skin. This made him look and smell like a wolf as he crawled on all fours toward the buffalo. A herd of buffalo would not be concerned about one or two wolves, so they ignored the disguised hunters as they approached until it was too late. The Blackfoot Indians used one of the buffalos’ character traits against them. Buffalo have a great sense of smell. The slightest scent of danger could frighten them and make them run. When one buffalo begins to run, the whole herd stampedes. The Blackfoot chose a strong runner to wear a buffalo head mask and robe to make him look like a buffalo. He ran toward the herd to start a stampede, driving them into a canyon or over a cliff where his tribesmen could easily kill them with bows and arrows or stone hammers.

Sometimes Native Americans followed buffalo when they were crossing a river. Some Indians hunted with bows and arrows from small boats and others waited on the riverbank to finish off the wounded animals. Good swimmers swam into the water after the buffalo and were able to kill the defenseless animals. Then they pulled the dead animals to shore by their tails. In the winter some Indians wore snowshoes to go after buffalo. The snowshoes allowed the Indians to move easily on top of the snow, while the big buffalo struggled to move through the deep snow and were easily killed. Another method of killing buffalo was a source of worry to early settlers on the Great Plains. The Indians set the prairie grass on fire to make the buffalo run in exactly the direction they wanted so they could be killed. The fires sometimes burned down settlers’ homes and barns and put the lives of their families and livestock in danger.

Stampede Story

Have students brainstorm verbs and adjectives to describe a buffalo stampede. Get them started with a couple of words such as *deafening* or *thundering*. Print the words they come up with on the board. Then challenge each student to imagine he or she is a prairie dog whose home is in the path of a buffalo stampede. The student should write or tell about the stampede using words from the list on the board. Students should include what the stampede looks and sounds like and how they feel about it.

Discussion

Explain that this game is not exactly like the Indians stampeding buffalo, because the Indians stayed behind the herd to stampede them. Why did the Indians stay behind the buffalo instead of leading them from the front as in our game?
One Animal for Many Needs

The Plains Indians lived simply, and the buffalo supplied almost all their needs. When the buffalo herds migrated from place to place to find better grazing land, the Indians followed them, breaking up camp and carrying their tepees with them. When a buffalo was killed, fresh meat, including the tongue and internal organs such as the heart and liver, were eaten by the whole tribe. The rest of the meat was pounded, dried and mixed with melted fat and berries to make pemmican. This food could be taken on long journeys since it didn’t spoil like fresh meat. Pemmican could be kept and eaten for years.

A Buffalo Snack

Bring some buffalo or beef jerky to class and let students taste it. Explain that it is similar in consistency to the dried buffalo that the Indians carried with them as they traveled from place to place following the buffalo herds, but it probably tastes better than what the Indians ate. The Indians made jerky from the buffalo too, but they added other ingredients to make it less tough and easier to chew, especially for the older people.

Then provide some buffalo burger which you have cooked before class so each student can have a taste. Ask them what they think of buffalo meat. How does it compare with the beef they are used to eating? Would they want to eat it more often? (Buffalo meat is available at many grocery stores or specialty meat markets.)

Buffer hides were used for the Indians’ tepees, clothes, shoes, blankets, shields, cooking pots, buckets, snowshoes and boats. The bones were turned into children’s toys, hoes, sewing needles and scrapers for treating the buffalo hides. Ribs were turned into the runners of sleds. Tendons and nerves were used as thread for sewing, bow strings and arrowhead wrappings. Buffalo hair was braided into rope or used as stuffing for children’s dolls and balls. Horns were heated and molded into spoon shapes. Dried buffalo dung was often used for fuel for the fire when wood was not available.

The buffalo robe was usually a beautiful robe which helped the Indian keep warm during bitter, cold winters. It was a combination blanket and coat with the buffalo’s hair on the inside. The outside of the robe was painted with colorful designs or scenes or decorated with dyed porcupine quills.

Web Site Discovery

Let students take turns on the computer to find out more about buffalo. Have them go to www.monterey.k12.ca.us/~drey/buff.htm to discover some of the other items for which Indians used the buffalo. Then challenge students to think of additional ways the buffalo could be used.

Advertising the Buffalo

Give students art paper, colored markers or crayons and some magazines. Have each student create an advertisement to make people want buffalo. The ad should be of the time period they have been studying, but they may look through the magazines to get ideas from the ads they see there. When the ads are done, mount them on the walls around the room.
Indian Dogs—More Than Pets

Dogs could always be found around Indian encampments, but they weren’t just pets. They served a purpose and were a real help to the Native Americans. When a herd of buffalo was located by scouts, the tribe would pack up everything, including their tepees, and get ready to move in order to be close to the buffalo. The largest items were strapped to a carrier called a travois, two poles tied together at the top with strips of rawhide across the middle of it. The upper part of the travois was attached to the dog’s shoulders to drag behind it. This was especially helpful before the Indians had horses. The dogs also pulled the travois loaded down with meat and hides after a buffalo hunt, or to bring firewood to the camp.

Dogs made life much easier for the Indians and were valued. They were even taken along on hunting trips sometimes to scare small animals such as rabbits out of their hiding places so they could be shot for food. And, of course, dogs helped protect the camp, alerting the Indians when danger was near.

Indian Camp Scene

Your students will enjoy reconstructing a Native American encampment with all the features they’ve been learning about. You’ll need a large shallow box with sides no higher than 4” or 5”. If you can’t find a large enough box, use three regular boxes. Cut down the sides to the specified size, then cut two sides out of one box and one side out of the other two boxes so you can fit them together to make one long box. Fill the boxed in area with sand about 2” deep.

Let students use twigs and tan fabric to make tepees. They’ll need about six straight twigs for each tepee. Tie them together at the top as shown. Let students use paints or fabric markers to draw Indian designs and symbols on the fabric. (Show them the designs and symbols on page 15.) Then glue the fabric around the stick frame. Leave an opening or flap for the door. Let students make several tepees to include in the scene.

Provide clay for students to make cooking pots and twigs and string for making bows. Toothpicks can serve as arrows after students glue bits of paper to one end. Show students how to use twigs to make racks for drying buffalo meat. They can cut strips from brown paper, wad them up to wrinkle them, then smooth them out and hang them on the racks for drying meat. (If you have an old item made of leather, let students cut strips from it or use an old leather shoelace.)

Let students gather grasses and weeds to stick in the sand near the campsite to represent the prairie. You can buy plastic toy Indians (usually in sets of cowboys and Indians), horses, dogs and even plastic buffalo to add to the scene, or you may prefer to let students make the people and animals from clay.

Students will also enjoy making drums and shields and other items to add to the scene. Be creative and let your students display their creativity. Make this a special activity they won’t soon forget. And be sure to set aside a time when parents and friends can come for a class visit to see the scene and hear what students have been learning.
Buffalo Hunt

Designs and Symbols

Lightning

Dragonfly

Feather

Buffalo or Horse Tracks

Elk or Deer

Morning Star or Four Directions

Popular Designs
Buffalo Hunt

Horses and Indians

During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, various explorers from Europe came to the American Great Plains. Many Plains Indians made contact with these people and did some trading with them. Probably the most important change these outsiders made in the Native Americans’ lives was the introduction of the horse. Horses were first brought to America by the Spanish. They brought horses first to Mexico, then to southwestern America. Through trading, and some raiding, horses were common on the Great Plains by the late 1700s. What a difference the horse made! The Indians could move around more freely and quickly. Some tribes who had lived in one place and waited for the buffalo on its annual migration to come to them, now became nomads, following the buffalo herds from place to place. Tracking buffalo was much easier on horseback and hunters could now take on larger herds of animals. Horses could also carry and pull heavier loads than dogs, so the Indians were able to build larger, more comfortable tepees and transport them from camp to camp more easily. The tribes grew and flourished, thanks to the horse.

Even with horses, hunters were not guaranteed successful hunting. Buffalo were so easily spooked, the Indians had to be careful days before the hunt, even in camp, not to make any loud noises that might scare the buffalo and cause a stampede. A dog barking, a horse neighing, or people shouting could send the buffalo away and leave the people hungry for weeks. When buffalo were near camp, Indian women were not allowed to even chop wood for the fires. They had to break up the twigs and branches by hand to cause less noise. There were also severe punishments for those who tried to sneak out and kill a buffalo on their own. This kind of selfish action could ruin the hunt for the rest of the tribe, so it was not tolerated.

Buffalo hunters had to be good riders since they usually had to ride fast through or alongside the herd with both hands on the bow and arrow to aim their shot at exactly the right place on the buffalo to kill it. Their horses rarely wore saddles and their bridles were simple ropes. Hunters and horses both were in danger of being gored by the buffalos’ horns. And as the buffalo were killed and fell down, horses and riders had the additional challenge of not tripping over the bodies. If a rider fell off his horse, he was almost sure to be trampled under the stampeding buffalos’ hooves. As Indians and their horses became more experienced in hunting buffalo together, they learned to target one buffalo and separate it from the herd to have a clear shot at it and avoid being trampled by the herd. A hunter, once he had killed a buffalo, left it temporarily and headed back to the herd to pick out another animal. In fact, he would continue until his horse was too exhausted to do more.
Prosperity

Thanks mainly to the buffalo and the horse, the Plains Indians became prosperous and some tribal customs began to change. By the 1800s, fur traders were asking for more and more buffalo hides. Indian women, who prepared the skins for market, held a more important place in the tribe. A hunter with a good horse could kill enough buffalo to keep several wives busy tanning the hides. Some Indians became wealthy with many wives and many horses.

A few Indians cooked and ate buffalo skins, but they were much more valuable when traded or used to make robes. A buffalo hide weighed about 80 pounds. Tanning it was hard, boring work left for the women. First the hide was scraped, then the hair was removed, unless the hide was going to be a winter robe. In that case, the hair was left on for warmth. When it was scraped clean, the hide was oiled with a mixture of fat, cooked buffalo brains and liver, then left to dry in the sun. Later it was saturated with warm water and rolled into a bundle to soak overnight. The next day the moisture was wrung out of the hide and it was stretched on a frame, then pressed with the hands to get rid of every drop of moisture. It was left on the frame to dry and bleach until it was ready for the next step. A rough stone or piece of bone was rubbed over the hide to smooth it; then it was dried again. The final step was to hang the hide over a line like a freshly washed sheet. Then it was seesawed back and forth over the line to limber the leather. When that was done, the hide was “soft-tanned.” A buffalo hide which was going to be used for clothing was also smoked before it was used. This made it dry soft rather than stiff after getting wet in rain or snow.

It took from seven to 20 buffalo hides to make a tepee and more hides were used for the inside furnishings. They were hung to partition off the inside of the tepee into separate areas and hides were stretched between four posts to make a bed. They also served as covers and pillows.

The Indians now were able to trade buffalo hides for guns, ammunition and tobacco. Some Indian hunters began using guns instead of bows and arrows to kill the buffalo, but before long they went back to the old method. An Indian could aim his bow more surely than a gun and shoot it more rapidly.

Native Americans traded horses and buffalo hides for food such as corn or grain and some even began trading for cloth fabric to make clothes and beads for decorating them. Trading “rendezvous” were held at certain times of the year where tribes traded goods with one another and with white traders. The Indians’ lives became easier because they could trade buffalo hides for blankets, knives, scissors, combs, needles and other household items they had either done without or made for themselves.

A Trading Rendezvous

Send a note home with students to tell parents they are to bring something to class to trade, up to three items. Explain how the Indians traded, not accepting the first offer made but “negotiating” to get the best deal. Display all the items brought and let students look them over to decide what they want. Then let them deal with one another to make good trades. Ask an adult to oversee the trading with you to make sure no one gets cheated.
Storytelling

Indian children did not go to school but were taught at home about their tribe’s culture and history. Storytelling was one method used by the older generation to pass along the stories of their ancestors and folklore. Since winters on the Great Plains were long and cold, gathering around the fire in a warm tepee was a good way to spend the evening. Here’s a legend of the Blackfoot tribe that was probably one of the children’s favorite.

Napi and the Buffalo-Stealer

A great famine had come to the Blackfoot people because the buffalo had not appeared. Many hunters went out searching for buffalo, but they always came home empty-handed, not having even seen a buffalo. There was no meat for the cooking pots. The people grew hungry, then hungrier. Some of the old and sick ones died. Then the weak ones died, and soon the young babies began to die of hunger. When even the strongest Blackfoot braves began to get sick from having no food, the chief prayed for help to Napi, the great creator.

Napi heard the chief’s prayers and came to help. The chief explained that because the buffalo had not come to graze in the nearby grasslands as they usually did, his people were starving. “Don’t worry,” Napi said. “I will find meat for your hunters and I will find out why the buffalo have not come.”

Napi and the chief’s son went in search of the buffalo. They traveled a great distance when they saw a small lodge near a river. “Here is the problem,” said Napi, “The one who lives in that lodge has taken all the buffalo for himself and left nothing for anyone else.”

Napi turned himself into a little dog and the chief’s son into a strong stick. Just then a little boy came running along the riverbank with his mother. He begged his mother to let him take the little dog home, and she agreed. Then she picked up the stick to take home for digging up roots. They walked home to the small lodge where they lived with the buffalo-stealer.

When the buffalo-stealer returned home with buffalo meat, he didn’t want the little dog in the house, but his son cried and the man’s wife convinced him to let the dog stay inside. When the family fell asleep for the night, Napi and the chief’s son took back their normal shapes and ate some of the buffalo meat. Then they once again became a dog and a stick.

The next morning the buffalo-stealer was very angry when he found that some of the meat had been eaten. He blamed the dog and said he must be gotten rid of. But once again the boy and his mother convinced him to let the dog stay. When the man left, his wife took the stick outside to dig for roots and her son and the dog went with her. After working half the morning the woman put down the stick and rested for a while. The stick, actually the chief’s son, heard the boy and dog playing in the bushes. The stick wriggled like a snake to get to them where they had found a cave with many herds of buffalo inside. The buffalo-stealer had put them there. The dog ran into the cave and chased out the buffalo. The stick helped by hitting the buffalo to drive them back to the lands of the Blackfoot Indians.
Suddenly the woman and her son realized that the dog and the stick were missing. The buffalo-stealer heard their cries and came to see what was wrong. “Where are my buffalo?” he shouted angrily when he saw the empty cave.

“We don’t know anything about your buffalo,” his wife replied, “but the dog and the stick are gone.” With that, the buffalo-stealer took off after the dog, the stick and the buffalo. Napi heard him from a long way off, and he and the stick hid in the long mane of one of the buffalo where the buffalo-stealer could not find them. Though the man ran back and forth trying to herd the buffalo back to his cave, they would not go.

When the buffalo herds came running across the plains, the Blackfoot Indians were happy. Thanking Napi and the chief’s son who were again in their normal shapes, some of the Indians built a fenced area to keep some of the buffalo near their village. Just then a large, gray raven perched on the fence and scared the buffalo away. The bird acted so strangely Napi was sure it was actually the buffalo-stealer.

Napi turned himself into an otter, then he lay down near the gray bird and pretended to be dead. The raven flew down for an easy meal and Napi grabbed its leg. Once again in his normal shape, Napi tied the big gray bird over the smoke-hole of a tepee. The bird’s feathers turned from gray to black and it began choking. It begged for mercy and confessed that it was the buffalo-stealer. “Release me,” he begged, “or my wife and son will starve without me to hunt for them.”

Napi let the buffalo-stealer go but warned, “Hunt only what you and your family need. If you take more, I will find you and destroy you.” The bird flew away and from then on the Blackfoot Indians had no more trouble with the buffalo. But ever since then, the feathers of the raven have been black.

Discussion
What does this legend tell us about the Indians’ relationship with the buffalo?
What does it teach us about selfishness?
What is mercy? Why did Napi show mercy to the buffalo-stealer? How should we show mercy to other people?

A Story About Kindness
Let students make up their own buffalo legend about kindness. Set up the story with the following beginning. Then stop and call on a student to continue the story from his or her imagination. After a couple of minutes, call on another student to continue the story. Give every student a chance to add to the story; then you bring it to a conclusion.

Long ago when buffalo roamed the plains of America, there was a boy called “ Barely There” because everyone said he barely had enough sense to get up in the morning. The boys and girls in his tribe laughed at him and even the adults smiled when they saw him having trouble doing the simplest things. When he carried water, it always spilled. When he gathered berries, he always picked the most sour ones. And when he brought wood for the fire, the wood was always too wet, even in dry weather! He just couldn’t do anything right.

*Have a student continue the story from this point.*
Picture Writing

Some Native American tribes used picture writing to record the history of their people. Each tribe used a different style. The simple pictures were often painted on buffalo hides or on the inside of the tepee. This work was always done by the men of the tribe.

Other tribes, such as the Cheyenne, handed down historical events by word of mouth. A few men were chosen to be the “keepers” of their tribe’s history. This was an important responsibility, and the keepers checked one another’s facts to make sure they were correct. They had a lot of facts and dates to remember and to pass on to new keepers before their time was up. In this way the knowledge passed from one generation to the next.

Many of the Plains Indians counted the years by winters and used a calendar called the winter count. Someone painted symbols of the tribe’s activities each year, adding to previous years until the calendar contained the tribe’s history for many, many years.

Sometimes Indians used flint tools to carve pictures into soft sandstone rocks or on the walls of caves. They can still be seen in various places throughout the Great Plains.

Some Indian braves painted battle scenes on their clothing to show their bravery in war.

Reading a Picture Story

Give each student a copy of page 21. Have them “read” the pictures to discover what is happening and write the story in their own words in the box. Then have them share what they wrote and compare stories with one another.

Writing a Picture Story

Challenge students to write (or draw) their own picture stories about memorable events in their lives. To make this activity more interesting, cut tan or light brown paper in the shape of a buffalo hide and give it to students for them to write their picture stories on.

Enlarge this buffalo hide pattern if you need help with the shape.
Buffalo Hunt

Name __________________________________________

A Picture Story

“Read” the pictures to find out what is happening in this story about an Indian boy. Then write the story in your own words in the box.
Buffalo Fun Facts

The Indians were so closely connected to the buffalo, they came to know all its characteristics and habits. The more they knew about the animals, the easier it was to hunt them. Here are some interesting facts about the buffalo.

- The buffalo has an excellent sense of hearing. It can hear the sound of a twig breaking under a man’s foot 500 feet away.
- A newborn buffalo calf weighs about 30 or 40 pounds. By the end of its first year, it will weigh 10 times that amount.
- When a buffalo calf is born, other buffalo in the herd come over to inspect the new arrival, to sniff it and lick it. The mother tolerates the visitors, but may occasionally chase one away.
- A buffalo calf will try to stand up for the first time when it is only 20 or 30 minutes old. As soon as it can stand, it begins nursing.
- Buffalo rub against trees to scratch their heads, necks and sides and to groom themselves, especially when their fur is molting. They smooth and polish their horns by rubbing them back and forth on tree trunks. A settler in western Pennsylvania told a story of buffalo rubbing against his log cabin and tearing it down!
- When the first cross-country telegraph lines were set up, the telegraph poles were rubbed so hard by buffalo many of them were toppled. The company attached metal spikes to the poles to keep the buffalo away. After that the buffalo rubbed the poles even more, apparently enjoying the great massage the spikes gave them!
- Wallowing in the dust is the way a buffalo grooms itself. The dust seems to clean its hair as a powdered spot remover draws dirt from clothing.

- Buffalo are constantly communicating with one another in the herd with grunts, snorts and bellows. Mothers and calves especially keep in close touch with grunts only they understand. A cornered buffalo may make a squeaky noise by grinding its teeth together.
- A buffalo’s tail shows its moods. A tail switching rapidly back and forth shows playfulness or tension. When the tail is held rigidly erect, the buffalo is usually feeling anxious. Buffalo usually raise their tails in this way when they are investigating unfamiliar objects.
- Buffalo seem to enjoy the company of the herd. They bunch most closely together in bad weather or when facing danger.
- Buffalo are excellent swimmers and sometimes seem to swim for the sheer fun of it. In 1806, Lieutenant William Clark and his fellow travelers had to take their canoes to shore and wait for large herds of buffalo to swim half a mile across the river before they could go on.
Buffalo Shields

Indians used buffalo hides for a variety of purposes, but one important one was the shield. The Indian’s shield was a very important piece of armor in battle. It was made carefully and thoughtfully and while it was being made, the owner’s friends prayed, sang and danced around the buffalo hide disk. They asked the spirits to give the shield the ability to protect the owner in battle. Then the owner painted and decorated the shield with colors and symbols that were special to him. The sun, moon and buffalo were favorite symbols to paint on one’s shield and were thought to give added protection to the owner.

Before horses became available to the Indians, they went into battle on foot. At that time, they made their shields about three feet wide. Later when they began doing battle on horseback, the shields were made smaller so that they were easier to carry.

Making Shields

Enlarge the sketches of the Indian shields below and show them to your students. You may also want to display the Indian designs and symbols on page 15. Then let students make their own shields.

You’ll need cardboard circles about 15” or 16” across. (Try purchasing cardboard of just the right size from a local pizzeria so you don’t have to cut them out by hand.) You’ll need to also provide paper, pencils, paints and paintbrushes, glue, decorative items such as beads and shells, feathers, construction paper, cardboard strips about 2” x 8” and scissors.

Instruct students to make pencil sketches on paper to try out their designs before they pencil them on the cardboard circles. Then they can paint the designs. Let them choose the additional decorations they want and glue them on their shields. Some students may not want to add extra decorations. When the shields are finished, show students how to glue a cardboard strip to the back of each one for a handle.
Buffalo Hunters

In the early years of the nineteenth century American hunters and fur trappers were busy killing beavers. Beaver pelts could be sold to traders who took them to Missouri and sold them for $3 to $6 apiece and a good hunter or trapper could get up to 400 pelts a year. But by 1840 the bottom dropped out of the market. A hunter was lucky to sell a beaver pelt for $1, so he looked for work that would bring him more money. He found it in the buffalo.

Indians had been selling buffalo hides to traders for some time, but easterners were beginning to value the warm buffalo robes and wanted more. Buffalo meat was also becoming popular. Huge herds of buffalo still roamed the Great Plains. Travelers to the west told of seeing buffalo herds that covered 50 or more square miles. Major Richard Irving Dodge reported seeing a herd in Kansas in 1871 that was so large it took five days to pass. Hunters didn’t waste any time before they began hunting the buffalo.

Even men from outside the United States got into the act. St. George Gore, a wealthy Irishman, traveled to America to experience what he called “the wild delights of the chase” in the west. In 1854 he led an expedition which lasted three years and cost him $500,000. He hired mountaineer Jim Bridger as a guide. When the expedition was over, Gore and his party had killed about 2000 buffalo.

The buffalo hunters who were in it just for the money rode across the plains killing buffalo as they went. But the numbers they killed didn’t seem to make a big difference in the buffalo population. It took the railroad to do that.

In the 1870s railroads were being built all over the west. Hunters were hired to kill buffalo to feed the men who were building the railroads. One historian has said, “When the railroad met the buffalo, the west was changed forever.” William F. Cody was one of the hunters hired by the railroad to supply the crews with buffalo meat. It was said of him that he could approach a herd of buffalo on foot and kill more than 15 in three days. An author, writing about frontier heroes, nicknamed him Buffalo Bill. He became a well-known figure of the west. There was even a popular jingle about him:

Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Bill,  
Never missed and never will;  
Always aims and shoots to kill  
And the company pays his buffalo bill.

Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show

Explain to students that when Buffalo Bill became an older man, he formed his own wild west show to entertain easterners. His show even traveled to Europe to perform. The show included cowboys and Indians, mock gun fights, bandits robbing stagecoaches, Indians attacking wagon trains, some live buffalo and much more. Then take students outside and let them put on their own wild west show. Assign a student to be Buffalo Bill to lead a parade around the school yard. Then assign parts to other students: sharpshooter, cowboys, Indians, bandits, etc. Have the student Buffalo Bill announce each “act.” Watch the activities closely to make sure some enthusiastic students don’t get too rough.
Face to Face with a Buffalo

Other buffalo hunters did not have the same skill as Cody. Colonel George Custer once accidently shot his wife’s horse which he was riding to chase buffalo. The horse fell down dead and Custer was left standing alone facing a huge bull buffalo. After glaring at his enemy for a moment, the buffalo turned and trotted off.

Face-Off Song and Activity

Have students sing this song as two students do a “face-off.” One is the buffalo, one is the hunter. With hands behind their backs, the two students face each other. The hunter tries to get around the buffalo by quick footwork. The buffalo must move quickly to bar the way.

*To the tune of “Jimmy Crack Corn and I Don’t Care”*

What do you do with a buffalo
When you’re face to face with a buffalo?
Will you stay or will you go
When you’re face to face with a buffalo?

The Death of the Buffalo

It wasn’t long before buffalo hunting became a popular sport. Easterners traveled by train to the west and were amazed by the huge herds of buffalo they saw. The railroads took advantage of this interest and began providing low-priced buffalo-hunting trips across the Kansas prairies. For $10 you could buy a trip on a luxury coach with a gun and ammunition. As the train rolled slowly by the herds, or even stopped briefly, you could shoot buffalo out the window until your ammunition was gone or your gun barrel got too hot. Most of the dead animals were left to rot by the train tracks.

It was considered an unfair slaughter by many hunters and some easterners who heard about it were enraged. Before long, public pressure made the railroads curtail their buffalo-hunting expeditions. But the slaughter of the buffalo continued.

Explorer Josiah Gregg, who traveled across the Great Plains in the early 1800s, said of the herds of buffalo he saw, “Were they only killed for food . . . their natural increase would perhaps replenish the loss; yet the continual and wanton slaughter of them by travelers and hunters and the still greater havoc made among them by Indians . . . are fast reducing their numbers, and must ultimately effect their total annihilation from the continent.”

Mr. Gregg was right, but it wasn’t the Indians who caused the death of the buffalo. Buffalo hunters who killed for the hides killed more and more as the price of the hides went down. In Kansas in 1872, Thomas Linton killed more than 3000 buffalo. George Reighard set a record of about 100 buffalo a day for a month in 1872. And other hunters shot similar numbers. As the years went by, more than a million buffalo each year were killed by hunters, Indians and settlers. Huge loads of buffalo hides were shipped down the Missouri River and taken by train to the east. When the herds in one area were almost gone, hunters simply moved to another area.
Indian Attacks

As white hunters continued to kill more and more buffalo, the Native Americans who depended on the buffalo began to fight back. At first the Indians’ contact with white people had been peaceful, involving trading with one another. But when the trading posts were sold to the U.S government and were turned into military forts, the friendly relations began to change.

Buffalo hunters enraged the Native Americans, killing off by the thousands the animals which the Indians felt the Great Spirit had given them. Hunters had to spend much of their time fighting off bands of angry Indians instead of shooting buffalo.

Indian uprisings only became more frequent as greater numbers of easterners migrated to the west. Most of these settlers traveled along the Oregon Trail every summer in covered wagons. As they crossed the Indian territories, they spread white man’s diseases such as cholera and smallpox to the Indians who had no resistance to them. Thousands of Indians died. To make matters worse, the white men killed or scared off the wild animals. That left the Native Americans with no local game for food when the ever-diminishing herds of buffalo could not be found. Some Indians began attacking the wagon trains, killing the settlers and stealing their cattle and possessions.

Traveling west on a wagon train may have been a dangerous business, but it didn’t stop the settlers who were longing to find a better way of life. They went prepared for hardship and ready to fight off bands of Indians to get where they wanted to go. Covered wagons drawn up in a protective circle with every man, and many women, with a gun aimed at approaching Indians in war paint is a more common sight in movies and TV than it was in reality, however. The largest wagon trains had more guns than a small party of raiding Indians, and wagon trains often traveled closely together to minimize the risk. Documented accounts of Indian attacks on wagon trains are rare. It was much more likely that Indians would steal any cattle or horses that were not kept close.

Settlers traveling alone or in small groups were in more danger from Indians, and they were far more likely to be killed by cholera or by their harsh traveling conditions.

Wagons were drawn up in a circle most nights to keep the animals from running or being stolen by Indians. Oxen were used to pull the wagons and were not usually in danger of being taken. The wagons were often loaded heavily with furniture and possessions, but as the wagon train traveled across the country and oxen tired out or even died, all but essential items were left behind, especially once they reached the mountains. The Oregon Trail became littered with the castoffs of the settlers.
# Buffalo Hunt

**Wagon Train Supplies List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveling Equipment</th>
<th>Medical Aids</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>covered wagon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
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<td>Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
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<td>Other Items</td>
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Name ____________________________
Buffalo Hunt

A Way of Life Ended

A few men in Congress tried to act to protect the buffalo, but they were strongly opposed by people of influence such as Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano and General Phil Sheridan. Sheridan even praised buffalo hunters: “These men have done in the last two years, and will do in the next year, more to settle the vexed Indian question than the entire regular army has done in the last 30 years . . . . For the sake of a lasting peace, let them kill, skin and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated.”

The American army stationed in the West meant a difficult way of life for its recruits. In 1874 less than 10,000 poorly equipped soldiers, isolated from one another in about 100 forts from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean were expected to control about 300,000 Indians, many of them considered hostile. With white men intruding into the Native Americans traditional lands almost every day, the soldiers faced almost constant resentment and violence on both sides.

The army learned by experience and many mistakes how to successfully fight the Indians. For example, many of the Plains Indians never fought in the winter, so soldiers often made surprise attacks on the Indians’ winter camps. Though Indians outnumbered soldiers about 30 to 1, the army was better equipped with swords, rifles and pistols. Few people spoke up against the unfairness of it all.

As the years passed, more violent encounters occurred between the white army and the Native American followed by peace treaties which were soon broken, usually by the U.S. government. Red Cloud, a Sioux chief, criticized the policies of the government and even made several trips to Washington, D.C., in his later years to speak up for the Indian. Though the Indian fought hard, causing the death of many white men and much trouble for the army, it was a losing battle. The decisive battle of the Little Big Horn, when Sitting Bull’s warriors defeated General Custer and his troops, encouraged some Indians to think they might be able to win. But the U.S. government eventually forced the Indians onto reservations, bringing about the death of the Plains Indian culture before the end of the 1800s.

Chief Joseph, leader of the Nez Perce Indians was only one of many who came to realize that the Indian couldn’t win against the U.S. government. When he and his people surrendered to federal troops he told his warriors, “I am tired of fighting. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.”

General Sheridan, who once spoke strongly in favor of getting rid of the buffalo in order to “control” the Indians wrote in 1878: “We took away their country and their means of support, broke up their mode of living their habits of life, introduced disease and decay among them, and it was for this and against this that they made war. Could anyone expect less?”

Discussion

Discuss with students what they think of the way the Plains Indians were treated by the American government. Was it fair? What could have been done instead to have peace?
Sign Language

Many different dialects and languages were spoken by the Plains Indians. Most tribes had people who could speak more than one language, but almost all Indians used sign language to communicate with other tribes and sometimes with the white man. Sign language was useful for trading or making treaties. The signs made with the fingers and hands conveyed an idea rather than an individual word. Demonstrate these simple signs and let students guess what they mean.

Creating a Sign Language

Let students make up their own sign language for communicating with one another. If possible, let each student demonstrate his or her idea for a sign. Print the words and sketch their signs on the board or make a sign sheet for each student. Practice using the signs together. Explain to students that this will be your “tribe’s” special way of communicating with one another, not for other people to understand.

Suggest that students come up with signs for these ideas to start with:

- How are you?
- Thank you.
- Time to study.
- Let’s play.
- I am fine.
- Let’s eat.
- I need help.
- Time to go home.

Let them come up with their own ideas and phrases to sign.
Smoking the Peace Pipe

Many Indians made pipes and smoked them at special ceremonies and just for enjoyment. They were able to trade buffalo skins and other items for tobacco. One of the special ceremonies when a pipe was used was when a peace treaty was made with another tribe or with the white man. The peace pipe was usually an ornate, very long pipe with decorations and symbols carved or painted on it that had special significance to the Indians. When the two groups were in agreement about the treaty, the peace pipe was lit and passed around from man to man until everyone had a chance to smoke it. Many Indian chiefs smoked the peace pipe with U.S. government officials at various times, but the peace treaties were almost always broken by one side or the other before long. Unfortunately, the treaties were usually too one-sided to be kept for long, or one party or the other decided something else was more important than honoring the agreement.

It’s too bad that the Indians and the U.S. government couldn’t have smoked a peace pipe and finally settled their differences amicably, but though there were willing individuals on both sides, there were more people on both sides that harbored anger, bitter feelings and an unwillingness to compromise. Today almost everyone, government officials included, agrees that the American Indians were treated unfairly and shamelessly used by the government. For good or bad, the lives of many thousands of people were changed forever, and what was taken from them can never be fully replaced.

Making and keeping peace between people is important, whether it’s nations or individuals. Wouldn’t it be nice if everyone who had a disagreement could settle their differences by sitting down together with something as simple as a peace pipe?

Of course, knowing what we do today about the harmfulness of smoking tobacco, settling an agreement by smoking a pipe wouldn’t be such a good idea. But how about if people used a bubble pipe instead? How could people continue to argue or disagree when blowing beautiful “peace bubbles” together? Just imagine the President of the United States and the leaders of other countries sitting on the floor with their legs crossed passing a bubble pipe around, each person blowing bubbles to float in the air! Instead of being angry, they would probably start to laugh (and maybe pop the bubbles). Soap bubbles are fragile, like people’s feelings, so blowing bubbles into the air could help people release their bad feelings. An angry person could blow a bubble to represent his anger, then watch it pop and disappear just like his anger.
Bubbles of Peace Pipes

Let students make their own peace pipes for blowing peace bubbles. You’ll need plastic drinking straws (as wide as possible), plastic soda bottle caps; household glue or caulk; colored permanent markers or paints and paintbrushes; feathers; string; decorative items such as colorful beads, metal buttons, etc.

Before class, use a sharp paring knife or drill to make a small hole in the side of the plastic cap, big enough for the straw to fit through snugly. Ask some parents to help you with this preparation task.

Give each student a straw and a plastic cap. Have each use markers or paint to decorate the cap. Then demonstrate how to carefully poke the straw through the hole in the cap. The straw should be pushed about two-thirds of the way through the cap. Give each student a small amount of glue or caulk to spread around the area where the straw goes through the cap to make it watertight. Leave the pipes overnight for the glue or caulk to dry thoroughly.

When they’re dry, the pipe stems (the straws) may be decorated by hanging feathers, beads or other decorations from them on strings.

When the peace pipes are completed, provide a bowl of water mixed with dishwashing liquid or use a pre-mixed bubble liquid. Let students dip their pipes in the bubble mix and blow peace bubbles. The bubbles children blow with these pipes will not float in the air as those made with wands do. Let students see how big they can blow the bubbles before they burst. You may want to keep some paper towels or wipes handy for damp faces when the bubbles pop.

Encourage students to take their peace pipes home and explain their use to their families. Then the family members can use the peace pipes to settle disputes and disagreements. Remind students to explain the concept of blowing bubbles to represent bad feelings with the bad feelings disappearing as the fragile bubbles do.
Buffalo Today

Many people were horrified when they learned how few buffalo were left on the American Great Plains by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1905 some who wanted to save the few buffalo herds left organized the American Bison Society. Theodore Roosevelt was one of its leaders.

An Indian named Walking-Coyote brought a small herd of buffalo to Montana. Others were added from another small herd. Beginning with only 37 buffalo, the herd at the National Bison Range increased to about 450. Other groups and individuals raised small herds of buffalo. Today many American ranchers raise buffalo. The meat is gaining in popularity because of its low fat content.

Some ranchers have crossbred buffalo with cattle. These animals are called beefalos or cattaloes. They are strong like the wild buffalo and can face harsh winters much better than other cattle. They are able to find their own food in winter and will eat snow when water is scarce.

There are about 350,000 buffalo throughout North America today. There will never be the huge herds there once were because the Great Plains where they once flourished have been divided into ranches and farms and cities with large populations of people. But many people in the United States want to make sure that the buffalo never faces extinction again.

Describing Buffalo

Print the word *buffalo* vertically on the board. Have students suggest words beginning with each of the letters to describe buffalo. These words may describe how they look and act (big or fierce), what they meant to the Indians (bed or food) and their history (fortune for hunters or unfairly treated).

Buffalo in Your State

Go on the internet or check with your State Department of the Interior to find out if buffalo are being raised in your state. Perhaps your state has several buffalo farms or ranches in it. If so, make a list of their locations. Have students look at a state map and point out these locations.

If a buffalo farm or ranch is located nearby, arrange to take your students there on a field trip. A description or a picture of buffalo doesn’t begin to compare with seeing, hearing and smelling the real thing! And now that your students know more about what buffalo have gone through in the last 200 years, they’ll be able to truly appreciate the animal in real life. If possible, have someone take a photo of you and your class with the buffalo in the background and make copies for everyone, or take a photo of each child with the buffalo. Glue each photo on a construction paper frame on which you have printed *I Live in a Home Where the Buffalo Still Roam*. It will be a fun, educational keepsake for each student.

Indians Today

The U.S. government “solved” the Indian problem by moving Indians to reservations. Many of these reservations uprooted the tribes from their homelands and relocated them to unfamiliar places where they found it hard to adapt. Some government programs designed to supposedly help the Native Americans merely forced them into adapting to the white man’s way of life.

Today, many Indians have left the reservations to live in cities and areas where good jobs and meaningful occupations are available. They have lost contact with the tribal way of living except for yearly or seasonal festivals or encampments when their people get together to talk of the old ways, dance the old dances and fondly remember their heritage.

They are called Indians by some, Native Americans by others; but most prefer to be called by their tribal names: Cheyenne, Kiowa, Lakota Sioux, Comanche, Pawnee, Mandan and all the others whose ancestors made their homes on the American Great Plains with their brother the buffalo.

Indian/ Buffalo Chant

Teach students to say this chant to the rhythm of a drumbeat, or let them beat lightly on their desks as they say it.

Cheyenne, Kiowa, Oglala Sioux
People of the Great Plains
Under skies of blue.
Pawnee, Comanche, Mandan and Crow
Lived with the buffalo,
Many years ago.
Osage, Arapaho—tales of days gone by.
May their tribes go on and on; may they never die!