

Where the Buffaloes Begin



Unit Study

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SOCIAL STUDIES

Geography: Using an outline map of the USA, color the center area where the Plains Indians lived. Color the following states: Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Arkansas. The Blackfeet lived from Mississippi River to Rocky Mountain, Canada to Mexico! This area is known as the Great Plains, and it is where one group of Plains Indians called the Blackfeet lived. We will be studying about these Native Americans while reading this book.

For placing our story disk, we used context clues within the story as well as general info about the Blackfeet and bison. We choose Montana and a time period of early 1800s, prior to the Lewis and Clark expedition, a time when the bison were plentiful. You may wish to choose another state and/or time period. (Note: Little Wolf rides a horse in the story and Blackfeet did not have horses until the 1730s and by the late 1800s, there were not many bison herds left, so choose your time period accordingly.)

Social Studies -- Blackfoot Culture: “Siksika” is another word for “Blackfoot.” The Blackfoot was a nomadic (wandering) tribe, following the bison. They lived in tepees, were great hunters and warriors, and were excellent horsemen. They made beautiful crafts. The name Blackfoot originated from the legend that their moccasins became black from the ashes of the camp fires and tramping the prairies. Later these Indians dyed their moccasins black. Blackfeet or Blackfoot are both accepted names for the Indian tribe.

Let's discuss some of the specifics of the Plains Indians' culture.

HOUSING - TEPEES: Plains Indians lived in tepees (also correctly spelled as *tipis*). The tepee was set up by the women in less than an hour. The tepee always faced East and tilted toward the East. Average size was 16 feet in diameter. Three pine tree poles provided the basic frame set in the ground. Other poles were added to

form the circle, and rawhide was used to connect them together at the top. Buckskin was sewn together to form the outer covering of the tepee. It took between 8 and 20 hides to create the covering for the tepee. They left a hole at the top for a smoke hole (chimney). Poles were attached to these flaps of the smoke hole to control the opening and closing of the flaps for weather and smoke. Plains Indians painted two wide bands on the outside of the tepee, one at the top and one at the bottom. The top band was painted in a bright colored dot - space pattern and represented the planets and stars in the sky. The bottom band was painted the same way with dots and spaces but it represented the plants and animals of the earth. Their goal was to keep life balanced between these two worlds. It was common to see buffalo tails pinned to outside of tepee.

FOOD: The Plains Indians' main staple was bison. (Bison is the correct terminology for what most of us think of as "buffalo.") They hunted and used the bison for not only for food but for many other everyday items as well. All parts of the bison were crucial to the Indians. The bison provided everything the Indians need. The Indians often would chase the bison off a cliff. Sometimes they wore a bison hide over their back and head and pretend to be a crying baby bison. The "baby bison" would then lure the herd to the nearby Indians with spears. Later, the Indians learned to hunt bison from horseback. The Plains Indians used many different parts of the buffalo.

The Blackfoot ate a variety of fresh berries including Choke Cherries. Pampas Root were collected and dried to provide starch and sweetener. They also frequently ate pemmican (dried bison meat mixed with berries and fat/oil). They did not eat snakes, dogs, worms, insects, frogs, toads, or lizards.

CLOTHES: Men wore tunics and leggings or breechcloths. A tunic is a long shirt. A breechcloth is a large rectangular piece of fabric and a belt. The fabric was between the legs and the front and back of the fabric went up over the belt and draped down in the front and back. They had beaded aprons they attached to their breechcloths to dress them up for special occasions. Women wore below-the-knee dresses and both women and men wore buffalo robes.

Men wore hair in two braids. Women did not spend time on hairdos or wear head coverings. An interesting fact is that they did beautiful bead work on the bottom of their moccasins so those sitting across from them could enjoy it!

TRANSPORTATION: Before horses were introduced, the Blackfeet mainly walked carried what they could with dogs carrying other things. The dogs would drag a travois to pull along loads of food, clothing, and more from place to place. A travois (trav-wah) used two very long tepee poles, crossed into an "A" and attached to the back of the dog. Later, in the 1700s when the Spanish introduced horses to them, they quickly became excellent horsemen and they used the horses to pull a travois. The Blackfeet would sometimes use boats and birch bark canoes, though there is no record of Blackfeet ever having made boats.

FAMILY & RESPONSIBILITIES:

([Source](#))

MEN: The men hunted; protected; fought; made tools, weapons, and shields; and taught the boys to hunt and fight. When a young man reaches adulthood, he was given a prized eagle feather for bravery or heroic deeds and he wore the feather proudly in his headdress.

WOMEN: The women were responsible for raising the children; setting up/taking down the tepee; packing up the camp when it was time to move on; gather berries, plants, and firewood; prepare meals; prepare the bison hides; do bead work and teach the girls to do the same.

BABIES: An Indian baby was wrapped in a moss bag and attached to a cradleboard. Use the source link to see a baby in a cradleboard.

BOYS: (This section will especially help your student better understand our story.) Boys went on their first hunt when they were 12 years old. When a young man, he would go on a vision quest. During this time, he would leave the village and not eat for days. He stayed in a lonely quiet place until he had a vision or a dream. This taught the boys to become strong fighters and hunters.

GIRLS: Girls were taught the things that would make a good woman when they grew up. They learned to sew and bead, how to cook, and how to tan hides.

Native American Culture (Character): Resourcefulness

The Blackfeet relied on the buffalo for survival. In what ways did they use the buffalo? (food, clothes). They also found ways to use every other part of the buffalo. They didn't waste anything.

Gather household items for visuals to discuss what the Indians used. (fork, bowl, barrette, pocket knife, blanket, canned soup, plastic water bottle, etc.) We called this our Buffalo Box.

Compare your needs to the needs of the Native Americans.

They needed something to store water in-- the buffalo provided them a water bag made from its stomach.

They needed food-- that ate the tongue and hump ribs; made soup from the bones; they dried the meat (you may want to try some jerky this week) or pounded it into powder and mixed it with berries and suet (these are ingredients for Pemmican)

They needed utensils-- horns provided them cups, spoons, etc.

They needed shelter-- teepees were made from the hides (12-20 hides sewn together for one teepee)

What other parts of the Buffalo were used?

HIDE (BUCKSKIN): The hide of a bison was stretched and dried (a process called tanning) and then used to make moccasins tops, winter robes, bedding, clothing, and more

SKIN OF HIND LEG were used to moccasins and boots.

The **RAWHIDE** was used to make containers, clothing, shields, drums, and much more
(belts bullets pouches saddles horse masks armbands knife cases stirrups)

The **TAIL** was used to make a fly brush, whips, and to decorate the of tepees.

Even the **HOOF/FEET** were used to make glue and rattles!

The **HAIR** was used to make headdresses, pillows, rope, and more.

Even the brains of the bison were used to tan the bison's hide.

History: Lewis and Clark Expedition

Note: Since we chose early 1800s as our time-period to study for this book, we included the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was from 1804 to 1806. It was the first American expedition to the Pacific Ocean by land. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803, sparked a desire explore the land and to possibly expand to the Pacific Ocean. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were selected by President Thomas Jefferson to lead the expedition and then 31 more men were hand-picked men. They became known as *The Corps of Discovery*. Lewis' dog Seaman journeyed with them! Later they were joined by a young Shoshone woman named Sacajawea.

The first bloodshed between Americans and the Blackfeet Indians was during the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Meriwether Lewis and other men camped with 8 Blackfeet Warriors. Indians learned of the United States' goal to bring peace to all Plains Indians. Blackfeet enemies, Shoshones and Nez Perces had agreed and were awarded guns and ammunition from United States. The Blackfeet saw this as a threat to weaken their tribe. During the night they tried stealing the horses and guns of the United States representatives. The violence broke out and Lewis and Reuben Field each killed a Blackfeet warrior. The remaining six warriors returned to their tribes and warned of the United States attempts. This resulted in a hatred toward Americans.

John Colter was a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and a fur trapper. He was the first American who saw what now is Yellowstone National Park. He survived a humiliating kidnapping by the Blackfeet Indians while trapping beavers near the Jefferson River in Missouri in 1806 the Indians captured him and another trapper. The Indians released him in an open prairie field to run for his life. He outran all but one Indian with a spear in hand. He ran so hard and fast he had blood coming gushing from his nose down his naked body, shredded feet from

running barefoot. The incidence ended with John Colter taking the Indians spear and pinning him to the ground. The rest of the Indians came looking for him. Colter hid in a large piece of driftwood in the River. He survived and swam down the river isolated from any Trading Posts. He succeeded in outrunning the Indians!

Social Studies -- Blackfeet Indians Today: This lesson is important to show that the Native Americans live like us and have adapted to the land and ways of modern life. Prior to the mid-1800s, there were many Blackfoot Indians living from Northern Saskatchewan, Canada down to the southernmost waters of Missouri. After that, the Blackfoot Tribe started to die out. Several factors were involved. They were very susceptible to small pox and measles. The settlers purposely traded infected blankets to increase the spread of the diseases. Another major factor was that the settlers killed off most of the bison and the Indians starved to death. Remember, the bison were the Blackfeet's main food and they used the bison for everything in their life. The settlers killed the bison just for sport, often leaving the meat and sometimes even the hide to rot! And of course, the Blackfeet and the Americans were at war with one another, so many lost their lives that way. Then the United States government began to force the Indians to live on reservations, land set aside just for the Native Americans to live on.

Today there are four separate bands or tribes of Blackfeet Indians living on land called Reservations. There are three reservations in Canada and one in Montana. Most speak American and some their native tongue. Each reservation has its own government and laws. In the past, each clan chose a chief which made up the Council of Chiefs that were involved in the consensus. (consensus = council members all have to come to an agreement before there is a decision.)

The Blackfeet Nation has its own flag. It has a blue background, 32 white and black eagle feathers that make a large circle in the center of the flag, which surround an outline map of the reservation. Inside the outline map is a war bonnet and the name of the tribe. Down the left side of the flag is a coup stick or ceremonial lance with 29 eagle feathers.

Bible/Character Study

The Tipi (teepee) was covered with buffalo hides sewn together and was practical

for buffalo hunters who moved a lot. It was easy to dismantle. Each of the 15 poles in the tipi were symbols to reinforce the values that the Indians wanted to practice.

Discuss the following character traits (of the 15 poles in the tipi) with your student. (source)

Take some time with your student this week to discuss some of the following character qualities. (Bible verses have been added to the fifteen poles for your convenience.)

1. Learn (Philippians 4:13)
2. Respect (Ephesians 6:1)
3. Humility (Proverbs 3:34)
4. Happiness (Joy- Philippians 4:4)
5. Love (John 17:13)
6. Faith (Ephesians 2:8)
7. Kinship
8. Cleanliness (I Corinthians 14:40)
9. Thankfulness (I Thes. 5:18) Can your student remember what Little Wolfe is thankful for in the beginning of the story?
10. Sharing (Ephesians 4:32)
11. Strength (Philippians 4:13)
12. Good Child Rearing (Proverbs 22:13)
13. Hope (Psalm 71:5)
14. Ultimate Protection (protecting each other?)
15. Control Flaps (self-control?)

This is the chant the Indians repeated for each character trait. We learn by listening to traditional stories; by listening to our parents or guardians, our fellow students and our teachers. How does this apply in your own student's life? How does he learn good character?

Language Arts

Genre: Legend

A legend can simply be defined as a story (sometimes of a national or folk hero) which has a basis in fact but also includes imaginative elements.

Or, you can discuss each of the following with your student as characteristics of legends.

1. Contains elements of reality as well as elements of the supernatural (impossible happenings like miracles)
2. Time frame is sometime within human history (not about aliens or other worlds, etc.
3. Uses a literary device known as Verisimilitude in which the fictionalized account has the quality of seeming to be true or real

Discuss the different ways in which this book qualifies as a legend.

What elements of reality are included?

Elements of supernatural?

Verisimilitude (what makes this story seem so real)? What things (people, places, happenings) may or may not be true but are still realistic?

Style: Visceral Writing

Visceral Writing is a literary style that involves your entire being including the emotions and senses. Example from the text:

Little Wolf felt the blood run along his body. He clutched at the prairie grass, crushing it in his hot hands. With staring eyes, he drank in the great vision. And not only with his eyes but also his ears and his nose: for his ears were filled with the trampling and snorting of the herd and the flash of the water as it moved under their hooves; and his nose inhaled the sharp moist smell of the great beasts.

Can your student find other examples in the text of this style of writing? (senses-- think about what is "seen, touched, tasted, heard, and smelled" by the reader as one listens to this story)

Vocabulary Lesson:

During the first reading of the story, jot down vocabulary words as your student encounters words he does not know the meaning to. After you have your list, look up the words together in the dictionary and define them on a piece of paper. You could have fun with this little project and make a small dictionary: "My Where the

Buffalo Begin Dictionary"

Listmaking

There are plenty of list making opportunities in this selection. You could make a list for any of the following: Indian artifacts, Siksika words, uses for Buffalo, supplies needed to make a tepee.

Foreign Language: Blackfeet Indiana Language

Blackfoot Language is a musical language including complicated verbs and words that are difficult for English speakers to try and say. One word your student may want to learn is the word *Oki* ("oh-kee") meaning *hello*! Some other words include-

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omita-- Dog

iin-- Buffalo

sipistoo-- Owl

Copywork: Native American Wise Sayings or Proverbs

Discuss the meanings of some of the following quotes with your student. Let him choose one (or some) to use as copywork; when he is finished, he may wish to illustrate it.

Those that lie down with dogs get up with fleas. -Blackfoot

Life is not separate from death it only looks that way. -Blackfoot

Not every sweet root give birth to sweet grass. -Tribe Unknown

The soul would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears. -Tribe Unknown

Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it. -Arapaho

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. -Cherokee

What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset -- Crowfoot Blackfoot Chief

Personification

Personification is giving human attributes to non-human objects (such as an animal, plant, or even a chair or shoe!)

Here are some examples of personification from the text--

*But of all the **thoughts** that ran this way and that in his quick brain, the one that **galloped** the hardest."*

*“wind **moaned**”*

Can your student think of any other examples?

Repetition

The author uses the same phrase at beginning and end of story.

Over the blazing camp fires, when the wind moaned eerily through the thickets of juniper and fir

Discuss with your student why the author may have chosen to do this.

ART

Art: Realism

First, discuss with your student the feelings that simple pencil drawings can create. Do the pictures seem realistic? What if the artist would have chosen bold cartoon drawings? (then the pictures may have seemed unrealistic and informal). What if the artist would have chosen bright paints? (again, the illustrations may have seemed unrealistic-- too fun and not "earthy" enough). What other elements were included in the illustrations to make this story realistic? (Blackfeet Indians and real artifacts)

Imitating Illustrations

Choose a picture in the story to imitate and use your art pencils, charcoal, or ink (cover page) to sketch a replica.

Artist Study: Frederic Remington

How did he portray the native peoples in his art? He lived most of his life in the East, talents created the West the way Americans wanted to see it.

Summary - He was born in New York 1861 Died 1904., attended Yale Art School, inherited 9,000 from his father, moved to Kansas, started a Saloon with his partners who cheated him out of money, so he painted for a profit. He could not make a living off painting so he moved back East. He was at the Battle of Wounded Knee, he illustrated and journaled about the American West.

Art: Caldecott Medal

If your student is an experienced 'rower' than he has probably encountered various Caldecott Award winners in his school experience (FIAR titles--*Make Way for Ducklings*, *Owl Moon*, *The Glorious Flight*, *They Were Strong and Good*, *Prayer for a Child*, *The Snowy Day*, *Mirette on the High Wire*, etc. HSS titles-- *Time of Wonder*, *Once a Mouse*, *Ox-Cart Man*, *The Little House*, *Song of the Swallows*, etc.)

The Caldecott Award is only given to one picture book each year for distinguished illustrations. *Where the Buffaloes Begin* did not win the Caldecott Award, it was an *honor* book which is a very prestigious title to hold, but, for some reason, it wasn't chosen as **the** best book for 1982. Gather the books that won honors that year as well as the book that won the award (see list below). Bring them home and don't tell your student which is which (although the colors of the medals on the front covers may give it away-- try to hide the covers as you look through the illustrations together). Let your student (or students) be the judge(s) for the 1982 Caldecott Award! Which book would they choose to be the award winner? If they are mature enough in their art studies, you may wish to have them decide on some criterion before they start judging. How will they determine which book is **the** best? This is an exercise in evaluation and critical thinking-- two skills that will be very important for your student to acquire before he leaves the confines of your home.

1982 Medal Winner: *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton)

Honor Books:

Where the Buffaloes Begin, illustrated by Stephen Gammell; text: Olaf Baker (Warne)

On Market Street, illustrated by Anita Lobel; text: Arnold Lobel (Greenwillow)

Outside Over There by Maurice Sendak (Harper)

A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers, illustrated by Alice & Martin Provensen; text: Nancy Willard (Harcourt)

Applied Math

Native American Calendar: Days and Months

Nawa, the wise man, who had lived such countless moons.....

Native Americans counted the days by counting the suns. Therefore, one day was one sun. Ten days is ten suns. They also used the position of the sun to determine the time of the day. They also counted the full moons to count the months. Different tribes of Native Americans gave different names to each full moon in the year. Here is one list of the moons and their names matched to our traditional month names:

January: Snow Moon
February: Hunger Moon
March: Crow or Awakening
April: Wild Goose or Green Grass
May: Planting
June: Rose
July: Thunder
August: Green Corn or Red
September: Hunting Moon
October: Falling Leaf
November: Mad Moon
December: Long Night

You may wish to [click on the graphics here](#) to print out and show your student (drawings of the moons). You could possibly print two copies and make a matching game.

Activity: Have your child think about each month and create his own name for that month's moon. For example, perhaps the month of his birthday would become Birthday Moon! Have him illustrate each moon.

For more information about Native American Moons, see the HSS unit study [Long Night Moon](#). Also, Joseph Bruchac's book *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back* might be a good read (Each moon focuses on a different Native American tribe and their name for that moon.)

Activity for a younger student: Take a paper plate and paint yellow and/or orange like the sun. Use yellow and orange construction paper to make clock hands. Write *hour* and *minute* on each. Add brass fastener in the center and write

numbers around the sun like a clock. This will help him remember that the Native Americans used the sun to tell time.

Blackfoot Calendar System: Winter Count (Years)

The Blackfoot would record one outstanding event or person that highlighted their year. This allowed them to keep track of years. They might record epidemics, an important treaties or other important events.

Activity: Help your student create his own Winter Count mini book by using a photo of an important event and a short description for each year of your child's life, starting at birth.

Counting: If you have a younger student along for the row, let him count the buffalo or the Native American artifacts shown in the story.

Story Problems: Make up story problems to go along with the book. Here are some you can use if appropriate for the age of your child.

How many feathers are on their Flag? ($32 + 29$) See *Flag Description* and read it to your student as a story problem.

Little Wolf rode his pony for three hours then he stopped for one hour to rest beside a creek. He then rode another four hours until he first saw sight of the sacred lake. How many hours did it take Little Bear to get to the Sacred Lake? (8 hours) Re-read the story problem, but this time ask how many hours did Little Wolf ride on his pony? (7 hours)

Little Wolf saw 10 buffalo surrounding the Sacred Lake, another 10 buffalo were under the Fir Tree, and another 10 buffalo were grazing in the distant prairie. How many buffalo did Little Wolf see altogether? ($10+10+10= 30$ or $10 \times 3=30$)

Today Little Wolf's mother was sewing hides together from last week's bison hunt. She needed 3 feet of buckskin to use as thread. How many inches of buckskin did she need? ($12+12+12= 36$) or ($12 \times 3=36$)

Shapes - Triangles: For your younger students, ask what shape a tepee is? Yes, a triangle! We're going to make triangles for you to decorate like a tepee. Help your student fold a piece of paper in half and then help him draw a diagonal line from the folded corner to the opposite end. Open the fold and you have a triangle to decorate.

HALF: With your younger students, look at the cover illustration (or any of the bison in a circle pictures in the story book). It looks as though the line of ground cuts the circle in two parts. Two parts of something that are the same size are called halves. Cut a large circle, a large triangle, and a large square from cardstock and cut each in half for the child to better understand this concept.

Science

Science --The Great Plains (Prairie) Flora & Fauna

The Great Plains area of the United States is mostly vast prairie. During the summer, the temperature could soar over 100 degrees. The winter included heavy snows and was bitter, sometimes reaching 40 degrees below zero. Our story gives us a partial picture of the prairie life. The story mentions the following:

Flora

Prairie Grass

Junipers

Firs

Alder

Wild Rose Bush

Fauna

Prairie Grouse

Sparrows

Larks

Bison

Coyote

Wolves

Antelope

Badgers

Science: Sound

It was a wonderful sound, that roar of the buffaloes on the edge of a stampede. It rolled far out on the prairie...

It was the hours when, on the lonely prairie, sound carries an immense distance....

Sound is a form of energy produced when an object vibrates (moves back and forth quickly), causing the air around it to also move back and forth.

Vibrations are all around us but we cannot see them. These vibrations are called **sound waves**. Sound waves travel through the air, into our ear canal, and then strike the eardrum making it vibrate. If you look at the skin of a drum, that is something like what your eardrum looks like. Three tiny bones in our ear (the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup) pick up the vibrations of the eardrum and sends the vibrations even deeper into our ears--to the inner ear. The inner ear is filled with fluid that moves with the vibrations. The movement of the fluid makes the tiny hairs in the inner ear called cilia to move. When the cilia moves, a signal is sent to the brain and the brain then tells us what we hear. It is amazing how God designed sound waves and our ears to do this -- and so quickly!

Out on the open prairie, there is little for the sound waves to run into and so sound travels a greater distance. In town or even the country where there are trees and hills, there are many things for the sound waves to hit, so sound does not travel as far.

Activity -- Imitate a Sound Wave: Have your student stand in front of you, facing you, and give him one end of a Slinky (preferably the larger metal kind). Ask him to hold on it tightly and then have him walk away from you several feet (as far as possible without making the Slinky taut). Keep your end straight in front of you, push your end toward the student and bring it back to the starting position. You should be able to see the "sound wave" move toward the student. Though we cannot see sound waves, they are pushing the air around us.

Activity -- Watch Sound Travel: I mentioned before that we cannot see sound waves as they move through the air. We're going to do an experiment that will show how sound waves move through the air. Cut off the base of a one or two-liter bottle. Stretch a piece of plastic (a balloon or Saran Wrap) tightly over the end you

cut off and secure with a rubber band. Now light a candle (a tea light works fine). Place the smaller end of the bottle near the flame of the candle (about an inch away). Give the piece of plastic a quick tap. The flame of the candle should go out. By tapping the plastic, you are making tiny particles in the air vibrate. The vibrations travel through the bottle it pushes the air toward the flame, which then goes out.

Activity -- Open up and say Ahhhh: Have your student hold two or three fingers to his throat and then say "ahhh" loudly and then softly. Ask him if he felt anything in his throat as he said it. He should have felt movement (though he may not have on the softer time). Inform him that this was his vocal cords vibrating together to make sound! They vibrated more when he made the louder sound and less when he made the softer sound.

Science: Animal Tracks

The book says, "Antelope and coyote, wolf and buffalo-- all had left traces behind them..."

Little Wolfe also found tracks at the lake.

What kinds of evidence do we look for when we are looking for traces of animals? (half-eaten nuts, nests, holes in the ground, possible homes in trees, skat, and tracks). Go on a Nature Walk and look for traces of animal. What do you find? Record evidences of animals in your nature journal.

Science: Five Senses (Indians and Attentiveness)

Review the five senses-- Touch, Hear, Smell, See, Taste. As you read the story discuss or list times when Little Wolfe used one of his senses.

Science: Constellations-- The Dog Star, Sirius

"...these painted warriors were stealthily approaching the camp of Little Wolf's people, determined to wipe them out before the Dog Star faded in the dawn."

In this passage, the Dog Star is mentioned. Next to our sun, the Dog Star is the brightest star in our sky. The official name for the Dog Star is Sirius (pronounced "serious"). Sirius is in the constellation (group of stars) called Canis Major, which means "great dog" in Latin. According to mythology, Canis Major was one of

Orion's hunting dogs and in the night sky Canis Major can be found at the heels of Orion.

(If you have already looked at the HSS unit study [Long Night Moon](#) for the Native American names of months lesson, you might notice there is also a lesson about the constellation Orion for that unit. If you follow the angle of the three stars in Orion's belt to the left, you'll run into Sirius.)

Have you ever heard the expression "Dog Days of Summer?" Dog Days refer to the hottest and most humid time of the year...the time that Sirius rises just before the sun.

The name "Dog Star" is not exclusive to the Native Americans. It was the ancient Romans who first coined Dog Days. They believed that because Sirius rose/set with the sun during the hottest times of the year, that the heat of Sirius must have contributed to the extra heat of the earth.

Endangered Animals: Bison (Buffalo)

The name buffalo, when referring to those great beasts of the American prairies like in our story, is a misnomer. Those animals, though they no longer roam in massive herds, are really American Bison. The only true buffaloes are in Asia (Water Buffalo) and Africa (African Buffalo). Buffalo and Bison are, however, both part of the bovine family, as are cows. There are two species of bison left: the European Bison and the American Bison. They are the largest land mammals on their respective continents.

Prior to the year 1600 (before masses of Europeans came to America), there was an estimated 70 million bison in America. In the 1870's, 2 million bison were killed yearly. The buffalo were hunted for their hides and their carcasses were left on the prairie to rot. By 1900 there were only about 300 bison left. They had been hunted to near extinction. They were now an endangered species on the verge of extinction.

Endangered animals are animals in which there are either very few left or they are being over-hunted. *Extinct* means there are no more animals left, the last one has died or was killed. Extinct means forever, as the saying goes. God meant for us to

care for our planet, and I think He must be very, very sad when an animal becomes extinct because we aren't being good stewards of what He has given us.

But there's good news, about a hundred years ago, when the U.S. government realized just how few bison there were left, it took steps (passed laws) to preserve and restore the species. Today the American Bison has made a comeback, and they are no longer on the endangered species list. However, the European Bison is still endangered. And in very recent news, according to Wikipedia,

In 2006 plains bison from Elk Island National Park in Alberta were released into Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. This marks the first time plains bison have wandered the short-grass prairies of Canada since their near-extinction at the turn of the 20th century.

Let's talk a bit about the reasons the American Bison became endangered.

The main reason that so many American Bison were killed in the 1800s was because the U.S. Government wanted killed off the Indians' food supply in order to gain power over Indians. Later the government was responsible for making laws against shooting them and helped the bison by putting some into captivity to reproduce.

Discuss the differences in the Indians' compared to the Americans' motives for killing bison. The Americans wanted to force the Indians to surrender and were only killing bison for their hides. Indians used every part of the bison they killed. They were resourceful. Review the earlier lesson on how the bison was used by the Native Americans (they wasted no part of the animal.)

Older Student Research Opportunities:

There were once six subspecies of Bison, now there are only two, the American Bison and the European Bison. What were the other four and what happened to them?

Research the two subspecies of the American Bison: Plains Bison and Wood Bison.

Why was the white bison sacred to the Native Americans?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

For a feel of an Indian **legend being told around a campfire**, choose a night to read the story in a candle-lit room cuddled up together on the floor or couch! Of course, you could always sit around a real campfire and read it too!

Go on a **Nature Walk** and look for items to construct a tepee, look for animal tracks, and listen for birds. Try to walk silently like the Native Americans did. Find a spot to sit quietly for a while. Perhaps you'll see something really special! (Remember... *Little Wolf was not impatient. He could afford to wait and listen for hours, if need be.*)

Create a Fake Bison Hide: Create paper to look and feel like buckskin. (This idea came from *Hands On Rocky Mountains* by Yvonne Young Merrill)

Instructions (this project is intensive, so go with an 8x11 size paper)

1. Using a brown paper grocery bag (or any other kind of paper except newspaper), cover the paper with scribbles, using crayons in shades of browns and reds. The more crayoning the better the leather effect. Accent with oil crayons for realistic leather.
2. Use a paper towel or rag to rub hard and blend in the waxy crayons.
3. Using brown, ocher, and burnt sienna acrylic paints and a damp sponge, apply paint with the sponge to create whatever kind of leather you desire.
4. If desired, stipple brush to spatter brown paint to create an aged leather look.

Create a Miniature Realistic Tepee

Option 1 - Make a tepee using natural materials collected while on a nature walk. Add the painted fabric around the outside. If you choose to skip the fake bison hide, have child create his pictograph coup count on his tepee!

Option 2 - Make a tepee from poster board. Paint pictographs on the outside. Have him illustrate an act of bravery or kindness on his tepee.

Option 3 - If the child is loved making the fake bison hide, have him make a few more and sew them together with jute string for his tepee's covering.

Option 4 - Make a tepee model using a shoe box, dirt (for the ground), small toy Indians, etc.

Make any of the following:

Moccasins: have your student string seed beads and let him attach to his moccasins – don't forget the bottom of your moccasins so others can see your bead work while sitting! There are also instructions for a puckered toe moccasin in the book: *Hands on Rocky Mountains* (see below). You will need tan felt, dental floss and large needles, and leather boot laces.

String beads for a **necklace**.

Buffalo Hat - cover a helmet with fake fur and add horns (See picture in the story. This can be used in games.)

Headdress/War Bonnet - The Blackfeet Indians headdress - feathers were upright.

Buffalo Horn - use hardening clay to wrap around a cone shaped paper. Use toothpick or knife to decorate before it hardens. Paint and decorate.

Make an **Indian Hoop Game** commonly played by children. You will need a large hoop and brown yarn, simply weave the yarn vertically and horizontally to create openings to throw a spear through.

Use a dehydrator and **dry cherries** to show how Indians would use the sun/and or fire to dry out their beef and berries.

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