

Lesson 4: The Buffalo and Daily Life (grade 7)

Overview:

This lesson is designed as a three day lesson but can be adapted so that each day stands alone.

- Day One: Students conduct primary source research related to the buffalo's place in the daily life of the Plains Indians using artifacts.
- Day Two: Students conduct primary source research related to the buffalo's place in the daily life of the Plains Indians using an ethnographic source.
- Day Three: Students research the relationship between the buffalo and American settlers on the Great Plains using a primary source document and then predict how the buffalo's disappearance would affect both the Plains Indians and the settlers.

Note:

This lesson explores the daily lives of American Indians who lived on the Great Plains in the mid-nineteenth century. The time period is an important point to make clear when teaching this lesson. Many American Indians live on the Great Plains today and live typical of 21st century lives.

Compelling Questions:

1. What place did the buffalo have in the daily life of the Plains Indians?
2. What was the relationship of the buffalo to the European-American settlers?

Objectives:

Content

- Students will identify the buffalo as important in the daily life of American Indians living on the Great Plains before European/American settlement.
- Students will identify how cultural views of the buffalo differed between American Indians and United States settlers.

Skills

- Students will conduct primary source research using an artifact and an ethnographic source.
- Students will record and organize their research using a graphic organizer.
- Students will make a prediction based on their research.

Items used from the trunk:

Day One

- Parfleche
- Bladder

- Horn spoon
- Scapula
- Sinew
- Moccasin
- Mittens
- Awl
- Flesher
- USB Flash Drive “Uses of the Buffalo”
 - Worksheet #1: Artifact Analysis
 - Worksheet #4: Artifacts of the Plains Indians

Day Two:

- USB Flash Drive “Uses of the Buffalo”
 - Ethnographic Evidence #1-7
 - Worksheet #5: Understanding the Past through Ethnographies
 - Worksheet #6: The Buffalo and the Daily Life of the Pawnee

Day Three:

- *Read Kansas! M-19: Depletion of the Buffalo* (located in manual)

Advance Preparation:

1. Decide how the class will be divided into groups.
 - Day One – There are nine objects used on Day One. Objects will be rotated among groups so that each group examines three objects.
 - Day Two – There are seven ethnographic examples. Each group should examine at least one.
2. Make copies of worksheets
 - Worksheet #1 – three copies for each object used
 - Worksheet #4 – one copy per student
 - Worksheet #5 – one copy per student
 - Worksheet #6 – one copy per student

Lesson:

Day One

1. Introduce lesson – Students will:
 - study the Plains Indians who lived in Kansas in the early to mid-1800s. At that time a combination of natural resources and trade items formed the basis of their lives.
 - conduct research to answer the question, “What place did the buffalo have in the daily life of the Plains Indians at the time of statehood?” (Write question on the board where it is visible.)

2. Discuss with students the way a historian looks for evidence in primary sources when seeking an answer to a research question.
 - The people being studied did not have a written language and so left no written records such as letters, diaries, maps, or other documents.
 - Information can be obtained from other types of sources including artifacts and ethnographic studies. Artifacts are items made or used by people.

3. Reading artifacts
 - Outline the activity: groups of students will “read” an object, record their information on a graphic organizer, and report to the class. Activate observation vs. inference prior knowledge if necessary.
 - Pass out objects and one copy of Worksheet #1: Artifact Analysis for each object the group will examine. Allow a set amount of time for students to complete the worksheet. Note that without additional research students may not be able to correctly determine what the objects are. This is okay. Students should use observations and inferences to guess and be prepared to explain the reasoning behind their guess to the class.
 - Rotate objects between groups until each has examined at least three objects.
 - Return all objects to the front of the class.
 - Review the objects and research for each.
 - Have groups report their observations, inferences, what they think their object is, how they determined this, and what it tells them about the daily life of the Plains Indians at the time the object was in daily use. As a class, record this information on Worksheet #4: Artifacts of the Plains Indians. It is okay at this point if groups do not agree on what the object is or its place in daily life.
 - Reinforce the differences between observation and inference as needed, indicate which one the decisions about the artifact were based on, and consider how this impacts those decisions.

4. Review activity
 - Point out differences between how various groups read the same object.
 - As a class, compile information about the daily life of the Plains Indians based upon the research. Keep this to refer to on Day Two.
 - Initiate class discussion about what students don’t know after examining the objects, what they inferred, and what they would like to learn. (e.g., Who made these objects? How were they made? Have students identified them correctly?)
 - Remind the class that historians study the past by examining the evidence left behind. Even when looking at multiple sources there are not always enough clues to tell the researcher everything they want to know.

Day Two

1. Introduce lesson

- Explain that the Plains Indians had a rich oral tradition and no written language in the mid-nineteenth century.
- Introduce ethnography as the systematic recording of human cultures. It combines extensive field work with an unbiased approach to document human culture. This makes ethnography a valuable research tool. Archeologists use ethnographies to help determine the function or purpose of their archeological finds. Ethnographies provide archeologists with clues about the function and use of prehistoric objects.
- Students will read excerpts from an ethnographic source to gain additional information about the objects the class examined and the place the buffalo had in the daily life of the Plains Indians.

2. Ethnographic research

- Introduce Gene Weltfish, an anthropologist who did extensive ethnographic work with the Pawnee living in Kansas and Nebraska. Her work, *The Lost Universe*, documents one year in the life of this Plains Indian nation.
- Activate prior knowledge about the Pawnee by asking students to share what they know about the Pawnee.
- Explain to students that they are going to read excerpts from *The Lost Universe* to gather additional clues about the objects and the role the buffalo had in the daily life of the Pawnee.
- Divide the class into seven groups. Distribute one ethnographic excerpt and one copy of Worksheet #5: Understanding the Past through Ethnographies, to each group.
- Using the worksheet, have each group identify the source, the activity being described, the artifact(s) used in this activity, the person(s) doing the activity, and the buffalo's connection to this activity.

3. Present research

- Give each student a copy of Worksheet #6: The Buffalo and the Daily Life of the Pawnee and instructions to use it when taking notes.
- Have groups give an oral summary of the ethnographic excerpt they read focusing on the connection between the buffalo and the daily life of the Pawnee and any relationship the activity they read about has with any of the objects studied the previous day. Make additions and changes as needed on Worksheet #4: Artifacts of the Plains Indians.
- As a class discuss what students learned about the role of the buffalo in the daily life of the Pawnee. Did reading the ethnographic material provide a better understanding of objects examined on Day One? Did it identify objects the students

were unable to identify the day before? Did it expand upon the knowledge learned by examining the artifacts?

- If desired, use the object cards included in the trunk for additional research. These provide secondary source information about the objects. Compare this information with that recorded on Worksheet #4: Artifacts of the Plains Indians. Make additions and changes to the worksheet as needed.

4. Summarize Research

- Have students write an online encyclopedia entry answering the question, “What place did the buffalo have in the daily life of the Plains Indians?” Their work should include an introduction, supporting material that includes information about at least one artifact and one activity highlighted in the ethnography, and a conclusion.

Day Three

1. Do Read Kansas! M-19 “The Depletion of the Buffalo.”
2. Use a math problem to help students visualize the depletion of the buffalo. Use the number of buffalo in North America presented in the reading for this.
 - Present a story problem: If 60 million buffalo in 1800 is the length of a football field what would be the equivalent of the 750 buffalo left in 1899 on the same football field? (Note: The answer is small enough that it will be easier to visualize if the unit of measure for the football field is changed from yards to inches.)
 - Conclusion: A bar graph showing 60 million buffalo as the length of one football field would show 750 buffalo as roughly the width of a blade of grass.
 - Below is one equation for solving this problem. Solve for y.
 - Convert yards to inches: 100 yards x 36 inches per yard = 3600 inches
 - 60 million buffalo/one football field = 750 buffalo/y
 - $60,000,000/3600 = 750/y$
 - $60,000,000y = 750 \times 3600$ (cross multiply)
 - $60,000,000y = 2,700,000$
 - $y = 2,700,000/60,000,000$
 - $y = .045$ inch
3. Relate depletion of the buffalo to research done on Day One and Day Two of this lesson.
 - Ask class to predict the impact the depletion of the buffalo had on the daily life of the Plains Indians and on the settlers.

- Share a quote by Col. Richard Dodge, commander at Fort Dodge in the early 1870s. In 1882 Col. Dodge said, “*Ten years ago the Plains Indians had an ample supply of food. . . . Now everything is gone, and they are reduced to the condition of paupers, without food, shelter, clothing, or any of those necessities of life which came from the buffalo. . . .*”
- Initiate a discussion about how this topic relates to contemporary issues. (e.g., What natural resources are being depleted today, and what might their disappearance mean in the future? Do actions in the past affect the relationship between groups today, for example American Indian nations and the United States government?)

Assessment:

- Reading artifact (worksheet)
- Ethnographic research (worksheet)
- Presentations of research
- Writing assignment – evidence to support predication
- Class discussions

Background for Teacher:

Ethnography is the systematic recording of human culture. Often the ethnographer lives among the people being studied for a year or more, learning the local language and participating in everyday life while striving to maintain a degree of objective detachment. This extensive field work, combined with an unbiased approach to documenting the culture, make ethnography a valuable primary source and research tool when studying human cultures.

Gene Weltfish’s work with the Pawnee is one example of an ethnographic source about the Pawnee of Kansas and Nebraska. She lived with the Pawnee for several summers and one entire year in the course of her research. Her book, *The Lost Universe*, is an account of one year in the life of this American Indian nation that continued its existence within the United States through the Civil War period, retaining its integrity as a nation until it was uprooted and dissolved in 1876. In her prologue Weltfish writes, “This is the story as told directly by the citizens who were part of it in those last years and who, in the course of their lives, saw it become a lost universe.”

Archeologists deal with evidence left by peoples at places where they carried out various activities. They use ethnographies to help explain the function or purpose of their archeological finds. These ethnographies provide archeologists clues about the function and use of prehistoric objects and site features. Archeologists look for patterns in the artifacts they find that correlate with the ethnographic sources.

Answer key suggestions:

Worksheet #5: Understanding the Past through Ethnographies

Name of source? *The Lost Universe*

Who conducted the research? Gene Weltfish

What Plains Indian nation was researched? Pawnee

Activity	When?	What supplies?	Who?	Connection
Cutting meat and defleshing buffalo hide (source #1)	probably summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pegs to hold down hide • flesher made from buffalo tibia bone • rack for drying meat • rawhide wrist strap 	men and women butchered; women scraped the hide	Meat from the buffalo is cooked or dried for eating.
Making moccasins (source #2)	year round (“keeping the family in moccasins is a constant problem”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sinew • awl • moccasin pattern • rawhide and tanned hide (sometimes with fur turned to the inside) 	mainly women, but men would make their own when away from home	Buffalo hide with fur turned in was used in making winter moccasins. A hard sole of buffalo rawhide was used in a moccasin.
Storing food (source #3)	end of summer hunt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food storage cache pit with grass lining and sand and sticks on bottom • hide sacks & parfleches • dried corn 	women cleaned and maintained the dried food	Buffalo hide bags, or old tipi covers made from buffalo hides, were used as containers for storing dried corn, beans and other gathered food items.
Hunting (source #4)	summer morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sinew bowstring (indicates bow and arrow) • horses 	men/hunters	Hunting buffalo supplied meat to eat. Only two are killed in a day because that is all the meat they can haul.
Harvesting wild potatoes (source #5)	winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buffalo shoulder blade hoe • file 	older women	Hoes made from buffalo bones are needed to harvest wild potatoes, the Pawnee’s most important wild crop.
Making a tipi cover (source #6)	After two years of advance planning. Time of year is unknown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eight buffalo hides • sinew from eight buffalo • awls • two good sharp knives 	five women (Lady Lucky Leader, White Woman, and three others)	The hide and sinew of eight buffalo were needed to make one tipi cover. The tipi provides shelter to the Pawnee.
Making horn spoons (source #7)	year round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buffalo horns • fire • a tool to notch and scrape the horn • buckskin string 	practically everyone	Spoons for serving food and for individual eating were made from the horn of buffalo.

