

Whose Buffalo?



Subject and Grade Texas History, English Language Arts and Reading, 7th. Can be adapted to other grade levels.

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Time duration Two 45-minute class periods or one 90-minute block

Objective This two-part lesson deals with events on the Great Plains of Texas leading up to the Red River War of 1874. Students will examine how the Plains Indians vied with white commercial buffalo hunters for the millions of Great Plains buffalo and will create an illustrated broadside supporting the interests of either the Indians or the commercial hunters.

TEKS *Social Studies, 7th Grade*

(1A), identify major eras in Texas history

(2A), compare the cultures of American Indians in Texas prior to European colonization such as Plains

(6A), identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the factors leading to the expansion of the Texas frontier, the effects of westward expansion on American Indians, the buffalo soldiers, and Quanah Parker

(6D), explain the political, economic, and social impact of the agricultural industry and the development of West Texas resulting from the close of the frontier

(8B), locate and compare places of importance in Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics

(9A), identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications

(20A), differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas

(20D), identify bias and points of view from the historical context surrounding an event that influenced the participants

(20E), support a point of view on a social studies issue or event

(21A), create and interpret thematic maps, graphs, and charts representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th century

(22C), create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information

English Language Arts and Reading, 7th Grade

(2B), use context such as contrast or cause and effect to clarify the meaning of words

(5B), generate questions about text before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding and gain information

(5G), evaluate details read to determine key ideas

(6C), use text evidence to support an appropriate response

(6G), discuss and write about the explicit or implicit meanings of text

(6I), reflect on and adjust responses as new evidence is presented

(8E), analyze characteristics and structures of argumentative text

(9A), explain the author's purpose and message within a text

(12E), differentiate between primary and secondary sources

(12H), examine sources for: (i) reliability, credibility, and bias

Materials

1. Photograph of Great Plains buffalo (included)
2. Great Plains Map (included)
3. "Whose Buffalo?" fact sheet (included)
4. "Whose Buffalo?" graphic organizer and teachers' answer key (included)
5. "Whose Buffalo?" grading criteria (included)
6. Internet access for:
<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/>
7. Pens, markers, paper, etc. for creation of broadsides

**Activities
and
procedures**

Day 1: Whose buffalo? Gathering information and using prewriting strategies

Step 1: Show the Great Plains map. Explain that in the early 1800s there were 50-60 million buffalo roaming the Great Plains, but by 1890 the number had fallen to 750 and the animals were in danger of becoming extinct.

Step 2: Show the Great Plains buffalo photograph and ask students if they've ever seen a real buffalo. Explain that in the 1870s two groups vied for the right to kill as many of these animals as they wished: the Plains Indians and white commercial buffalo hunters. In the 1870s, each side had supporters who hotly debated the "Whose buffalo?" issue. Advise students that they will gather information about both sides, then choose one side or the other to support.

Step 3: Distribute the "Whose Buffalo?" graphic organizer to students. Explain to students that before deciding which side (the Indians or commercial hunters) they choose to support, they will gather at least 5 facts supporting each side, using a fact sheet and online exhibits at the Texas Beyond History website.

Step 4: Distribute the "Whose Buffalo?" fact sheet. Let students work with a partner to read the fact sheet and list arguments on each side of the graphic organizer.

Step 5: Advise students that after they have read and gathered facts from the fact sheet, they may search for further arguments on the following websites:

- *How many ways can you use a buffalo?:*
<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/buffalo.html>
- *Interview with a buffalo hunter:*
<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/forts/13.html>
- *Red River War:*
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/redriver/index.html>

Day 2: Creating a Broadside

Step 1: Remind students that in Part I of this lesson, they identified arguments for the rights of both the Plains Indians and the commercial buffalo hunters. In Part II of the lesson, students will take a stand supporting the rights of either the Indians or the commercial hunters.

Step 2: Introduce broadsides by asking students to discuss what forms of media they use to get their news. List their responses. Point out that in the 1870s there were no televisions, radios, or Internet reports, and while newspapers were available in some towns and cities, it was the posting of broadsides that allowed people to express their political or social ideas in public. Explain that the broadside was an inexpensively produced early form of mass media that was usually printed on one sheet of paper, and often contained illustrations and short songs or poems that could help get the author's message across to the public. They were generally posted in stores windows or other public places.

Step 3: Advise students that in this part of the lesson they will work in a group to produce a broadside defending their chosen side of the "Whose buffalo?" debate. Distribute copies of the "Whose buffalo?" grading criteria to students and place a transparency of the grading criteria on the overhead. Go over it with students.

Step 4: Have students get into groups of 3 or 4, letting them choose group mates who share the argument they want to put forth in their broadside. Advise students they will need to consult the "Whose Buffalo?" grading criteria and divide up the work of creating their broadside among their group members.

Step 5: Distribute supplies necessary for creation of the broadsides and allow enough time at teacher discretion for students to produce their broadsides.

Step 6: Gallery Walk. Post each broadside on the walls of the classroom. Have the groups rotate to each broadside, spending 3-4 minutes discussing the other group's product. They might discuss what they found interesting and what was similar/different to their own. What did they learn from this broadside that they didn't know before? Did this broadside change their opinion about the buffalo situation? Then rotate to the next broadside and repeat.

**Assessment
Options/
Extension
Activities**

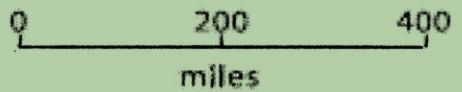
- Have students list ways they might express their opinions today that didn't exist in the 1870s.
- Remind students that in the 1870s, killing of the Great Plains buffalo was a hotly debated issue. Ask students to identify issues dealing with animals that are controversial today.
- Have students view and discuss the actual text of the 1867 Medicine Lodge Treaty:
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/kicoap67.asp
- Have students create bumper stickers for a controversial issue they want to support or protest.
- Pair this lesson with "Writing Contemporary Protest Music", also found on this website:
<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/teach/images/ransom-protest-song-teks.html>





The Great Plains

MEXICO



Whose Buffalo? - Fact Sheet

Before the late 1800s, between 50-60 million buffalo roamed North America's Great Plains. Whose buffalo were they? They were not "owned" by anyone. Yet two major groups of hunters, the Plains Indians and commercial buffalo hunters claimed the right to kill as many buffalo as they chose for a variety of reasons. As the buffalo began to disappear from the plains in huge numbers, the Indians and the commercial hunters clashed over the question, "Whose buffalo?"



Plains buffalo.

The buffalo played an important role in the lives of nomadic Texas Plains Indians, especially the Comanche and Kiowa. More than a hundred year before commercial buffalo hunters began killing the Plains buffalo for profit, Plains Indians had hunted buffalo for their main source of food, clothing and housing. These tribes used every part of the buffalo, from the horns to the tail, and even gathered buffalo chips to use for fuel. In 1849, American historian Francis Parkman (1823-1893) wrote, "The buffalo supplies the Indians with the necessities of life; with habitations, food, clothing, beds and fuel, string for their bows, glue, thread, cordage, trail ropes for their horses, covering for their saddles, vessels to hold water, boats to cross streams." The Plains Indians also traded buffalo hides to other Indian tribes and to Mexicans for items they needed.



Stack of buffalo hides at a Dodge City hide yard. Photo courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

After the Civil War (1860-1864) the buffalo also became an important resource for thousands of commercial hunters who needed employment in a time when cash and jobs were scarce. Industrial growth in the United States and Europe during the 1870s was driving demand for machinery belts made of leather, and the extension of railroads after the Civil War made it easier to transport buffalo hides to the industrial eastern markets. Selling of buffalo hides opened up foreign markets in England and Germany, where buffalo leather machine belts were helping factories produce much wanted and needed consumer goods.

Commercial buffalo hunters, armed with their powerful, long-range rifles, could kill hundreds of buffalo in a single day, and by 1872, a million buffalo had been killed for profit. Commercial hunters generally took only the hides (which sold for between \$2-3 apiece), and the buffalo tongues, (which sold for around 25 cents apiece), and left the edible buffalo meat to rot on the Plains.

To the Plains Indians, the buffalo was sacred, an important part of their religion. Before and after successful hunts, Comanche and Kiowa Indians performed rituals devoted to the buffalo, including special songs and dances. The killing of millions of buffalo by commercial hunters was threatening the Indians' nomadic way of life, which centered on the buffalo. Plains Indians hated seeing buffalo carcasses left by the commercial hunters to rot on the plains and would often attack the commercial hunters, killing and scalping them.



Plains Indian encampment with buffalo hide tipis.

Commercial buffalo hunters felt the Plains buffalo were a great resource that could earn them a great deal of money. Buffalo hunter, Frank H. Mayer once stated, "The buffalo didn't belong to anybody. If you could kill them, what they brought was yours." Commercial hunters didn't think it was fair that the Plains Indians attacked them for killing animals that roamed wild on the plains.

In the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1876, the United States government had promised to let the Plains Indians hunt buffalo south of the Arkansas River as long as the buffalo ranged there. In turn, the Plains Indians agreed to live on government reservations. Neither side kept the treaty. The Indians hunted buffalo and attacked commercial hunters outside their reservations, and the U.S. army protected commercial hunters who shot buffalo on Indian lands.

Chief Ten Bears, who signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty, later said, "Two years ago, I came upon this road following the buffalo, that my wives and children might have their cheeks plump and their bodies warm. But the soldiers fired on us, and since that time there has been a noise like that of a thunderstorm, and we have not known which way to go."

"Whose buffalo?" remained a controversial question throughout the 1870s and was debated far and wide. By 1884 nothing remained of the massive buffalo herds but piles of bones by the railroad tracks that farmers had collected and sold to fertilizer factories.

Whose Buffalo?
Grading Criteria

Broadside title that will catch the reader's attention
and make clear your broadside's argument.....10 points

Paragraph containing at least 5 facts to support
your argument for the rights of either the Plains
Indians **OR** the commercial buffalo hunters. You
may not argue both sides.....40 points

Illustration (drawing, photo, map).....15 points

The following websites offer valuable images;

- "Red River War"
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/redriver/index.html>
- "Fort Griffin and the Prairie-Plains Frontier: The Most Dangerous
Prarie in Texas"
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/griffin/prairie.html>

Poem or song containing at least 4 lines).....20 points

Total.....100 points

Whose Buffalo? Graphic Organizer

Directions: As you read through the “Whose Buffalo?” fact sheet and search the *Texas Beyond History* webpages, fill in each of the columns below with facts that will support arguments for both the Texas Indians and the commercial buffalo hunters.

Native Americans	Commercial Hunters
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

**Whose Buffalo?
Graphic Organizer Answer Key**

**Below are possible arguments for each side of the
“Whose Buffalo?” debate.**

Plains Indians

Commercial Hunters

1. They claimed prior possession of the buffalo, as they were on the Great Plains before the commercial buffalo hunters.

1. They felt that the buffalo were not legally owned by anyone, and could be hunted freely.

2. The buffalo was sacred to them.

2. They felt the Indians should stay on their reservations, and not attack them as they hunted.

3. They used the entire buffalo and did not waste any part of it. They also traded buffalo hides in Mexico for items they needed.

3. After the Civil War, the hunters needed to make money and could sell buffalo hides and tongues.

4. The Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867 had promised to let them hunt buffalo south of the Arkansas River as long as the buffalo ranged there.

4. Buffalo hides made into machinery belts were helping produce useable goods during the Industrial Revolution

5. Destruction of the buffalo would destroy their entire nomadic way of life.

5. The selling of buffalo hides to foreign markets (especially England and Germany) promoted international trade.