

Buffalo Hides

(art + history; art + social studies)

The tribes of the plains relied on the bison (more commonly known as the buffalo) for their everyday existence. Food, clothing, shelter, tools and weapons were all fashioned from some part of the buffalo, and nothing went to waste.

The hides were especially valued for the many products that could be made from it. Through a long, tedious process, it was tanned and prepared, then painted with symbols of great significance. These pictures often told stories of historic events and people of the tribe and honored nature with images of animals, plants, stars, etc.



Grade Levels K-4

Preparation

1. View examples of petroglyphs and Native American art on buffalo hides. Also, look at symbolism drawn on pottery, clothing, weapons and other everyday objects. Discuss the meaning of the symbols and pictures.

Process

1. First, the “hide” must be prepared. Each student takes a piece of 24" x 36" kraft paper and crumples it. Next, unfold the paper and turn it over. Crumple it again. Repeat on both sides once again and the stressed look of the paper will resemble an aged animal hide.
2. Because a buffalo hide would have an irregular shape and not be square, students should tear away some of the edges of the paper to form an interesting shape. NOTE: be careful not to tear TOO much off.
3. On a piece of newsprint, practice drawing a few Native American symbols and plan a story line.
4. Draw the symbols on the “hide” in white charcoal pencil. Remember to draw a border around the edges.

Materials

Natural Kraft Paper (11503-1024)
24" x 1000-ft roll, cut to 24" x 36"
pieces, need one piece per student

Prismacolor® Smooth Charcoal Pencils,
White (20466-1001), need one per
student

Blick Premium Tempera Paint, quarts,
recommend: Brown (00011-8007),
Burnt Sienna (00011-8047), Peach
(00011-4107), Red (00011-3007),
Turquoise (00011-5117) and White
(00011-1007)

**Blick Economy Pony Hair Round
Brushes**, size 4 (01505-1004), need
one per student

Blick Broadline Water-based Markers,
black (21224-2001), need one per
student

Rectangular 6-Well Tray (03068-
1006), share one palette between two
students

Water buckets

Paper towels

Process, continued

5. Distribute the paint in small palettes. Students paint the symbols only on the “hide” with tempera colors.
6. Once the paint is dry, outline the painted designs and draw the border with black marker. If there is extra time, fill in any empty areas with marker drawings.
6. Have each student describe the story that is told by the symbols they drew.

Options

- For a complete experience, play tapes or CDs of Native American drums and flutes for students as they work

**Lesson Plan and Artwork submitted by
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National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

K-4 Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures

