

## Buffalo Trace Education Box Lesson 2

### Touching the Bison

**Purpose:** Students will make observations about bison items (molar, hide, fur, horn cap, buffalo chip). After reading information about the bison, students will learn how Native Americans used every part of the bison.

**Subject Area:** Life Science (animal adaptations), Social Studies (how Native Americans used the bison)

**Materials Needed:** Student's Observation Sheet (provided), bison items (molar, hide, fur, horn cap, sinew, hoofs, buffalo chip), magnifying glasses, rulers, tape measures and balance scale for each group, pencils, reference materials about the benefits of the bison (see Resources below), nonfiction books about the bison such as Bison (Our Wild World Series) by Cherie Winner, bison photos

#### Steps:

1. Provide reference materials about how Native Americans benefited from every part of the bison. Read a nonfiction book about the bison.
2. Divide students into groups according to the number of bison items available. Provide each group with magnifying glasses, rulers, tape measures and balance scale. Each student needs the Observation Sheet and pencil.
3. Discuss how to make good and better scientific observations (by measuring, using the senses and not using opinion words).
4. Each group will receive a bison item. Using their skills, students will list 10 observations and make a sketch of the item. Groups may share observations about the items.
5. Discuss the Native American uses for each item:
  - molar (teeth) -- ornaments/decoration
  - hide -- shirts, belts, dresses, moccasins
  - fur (hair) -- headdresses, padding, pillows
  - horn cap -- cups, powder horn, spoons, toys
  - sinew (tendons) -- sewing, bowstrings
  - hoofs -- boiled to make glue
  - buffalo chip (dung) -- fuel

#### Resources:

- National Wildlife Federation ([nwf.org](http://nwf.org)) If you have more time, consider making a bison mystery box with objects that represent items made from bison parts. The list is found in the NWF Educators lesson plan under Mammals "Bison Mystery Box." Teacher's reference page in that lesson has all the bison parts and uses in a diagram.
- "A Lemon of a Lesson," by James Minogue (Science and Children, February 2008). The author explains how to make good and better science observations by using lemons.
- United States Mint ([usmint.gov](http://usmint.gov)) Another lesson about how Native Americans used the bison can be found at "Bison Benefits" ([usmint.gov/kids/teachers/lessonPlans/pdf/174/.pdf](http://usmint.gov/kids/teachers/lessonPlans/pdf/174/.pdf)). The lesson has a graphic organizer for students to complete.

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Scientist (Your Name) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation Sheet**  
Name of your Bison Item \_\_\_\_\_

Study your bison item. Make as many **OBSERVATIONS** of your item as you can. You can measure it, examine the shape or any other observation. Make a sketch of your item.

Make a list of your observations below. Be as detailed and descriptive as possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Make your sketch here:**