**Buffalo Bird Girl**

**AUTHOR:** S.D. Nelson  
**PUBLISHER:** Abrams  
**COPYRIGHT DATE:** 2012  
**GENRE:** Non-Fiction/Biography  
**LEXILE:** 890L

**SUMMARY:** Born in 1839 or 1840, Buffalo Bird Girl was a member of the Hidatsa tribe in what is now North Dakota. Nelson has detailed her life and the life of her tribe and includes paintings, drawings, and photos of her. An afterword includes her story, the story of the Hidatsa, a timeline, bibliography, notes, and index!

**BOOKTALK:** Have you ever wondered what it would be like to grow up in a Native American tribe? If so, *Buffalo Bird Girl* is the perfect book for you. You'll read about her life, including her chores, her friends, and the dangers she faced. This incredible book feature paintings, drawing, and actually photographs from the time period. Read this book to answer all the questions you have about what it was like to be Native American.

**AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:**

S.D. Nelson

Nelson is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Lakota tribe. His great-great grandfather was Flying Cloud a Lakota Warrior. His mother, Christine-Elk Tooth Woman told him stories about his ancestors which made him wonder what it was like. He not only writes and illustrates books but he also is a fine artist. His books are all about Native Americans past and present including Crazy Horse Vision, Gift Horse, Jim Thorpe’s Bright Path, Star People, and Greet the Dawn.

**Author's Website -** [www.sdnelson.net](http://www.sdnelson.net)

**Other books by S.D. Nelson:**

*The Star People: A Lakota Story* by S. D. Nelson  
*Black Elk's Vision: A Lakota Story* by S.D. Nelson

**CHALLENGING WORDS**

immunity - p. 3: body's resistance to illness  
alliance - p. 5: making an agreement or pact with another person or group  
tanned - p. 14: preparing animals hides so they will dry and not rot  
prairie turnips - p. 20: a prairie plant native to North America with an edible root
harness - p. 20: leather straps used to fasten loads on animals
travois - p. 20: primitive sled for hauling food, clothing, tents, etc
bottomlands - p. 35: land along the river
 caches - p. 35: storage spaces dug into the ground

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
1. What would be the advantages of living in an earth-mound lodge? What might be some of the disadvantages?
2. Why did the girls sing to the plants?
3. Girls and boys had very different responsibilities in the tribe. Why do you think it was this way?
4. How did the arrival of the “white men” affect the Hidatsa?
5. How are the games the children played similar or different from games today?
6. “I was born in an earth lodge by the mouth of the Knife River: in what is now North Dakota, three years after the smallpox winter.” (p. 2) Who do you think might be saying this? What clues do you have about the person’s identity?

**ACTIVITIES**

**Language Arts:** Write a letter to Buffalo Bird Girl telling her how your childhood is different and/or the same as hers.

4.L.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

**Science:** Dried food was very important to the Hidatsa. Try slicing vegetables and hanging them on sticks to dry in the sun near a window. What happens as the vegetables dry? How do they change in appearance? taste? Do some vegetables work better than others?

Indiana Science Standard - Process Standards - The Nature of Science

**Social Studies:**
Find the Fort Berthold Indian reservation on the map. Where might the Like-a-Fishhook Village have been located? Learn more about the Native Americans that live there today.

[www.mhanation.com](http://www.mhanation.com/)

Indiana Social Studies Standard - 5.3.4 - Locate Native American Indian and colonial settlements on maps and suggest reasons for the locations of these places. (Individuals, Society and Culture)

**Art:** Nelson has drawn some of the pictures with a black colored pencil. Looking
at P. 39, can you draw a “birdseye” view of your school, home, or neighborhood?

LIFE SKILLS:
Adapting to life changes/Accepting change
Cooperation
Resourcefulness

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

Facts for Kids: Hidatsa Indians (Hidatsas) - Orrin's Website
www.bigorrin.org/hidatsa_kids.htm

Prepared by the Native Languages of the Americas organization, this is a simple site but has many questions and answers and also guides one to further information.

Hidatsa Facts, information, pictures | Encyclopedia.com articles ...
www.encyclopedia.com › ... › North American indigenous peoples

Comprehensive encyclopedia entry with photos

Lewis and Clark . Native Americans . Hidatsas | PBS
www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/native/hid.html
Details Lewis and Clark”s interaction with the Hidatsas tribe.

ACTIVITY SHEET CREATED BY:
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