

FOCUS QUESTION

How did Native Americans of the Plains use their resources to survive?

VOCABULARY

prairie  
teepee  
lodge  
drought  
travois  
coup stick  
jerky

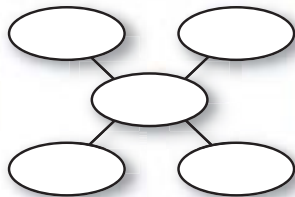
VOCABULARY STRATEGY

**WORD ORIGINS** The words **coup** and **travois** were originally French. Look in a dictionary to find other words that came into English from French.

READING STRATEGY

**Identify Main Idea and Details**

Use the chart below to write facts about Native American life on the Great Plains.



# Native Americans of the Plains

Start with Your **CALIFORNIA STANDARDS**

**5.1** Students describe the major Pre-Columbian settlements, including the cliff dwellers and pueblo people of the desert Southwest, the American Indians of the Pacific Northwest, the nomadic nations of the Great Plains, and the woodland peoples east of the Mississippi River.

**5.1.1** Describe how geography and climate influenced the way various nations lived and adjusted to the natural environment, including locations of villages, the distinct structures that they built, and how they obtained food, clothing, tools, and utensils.

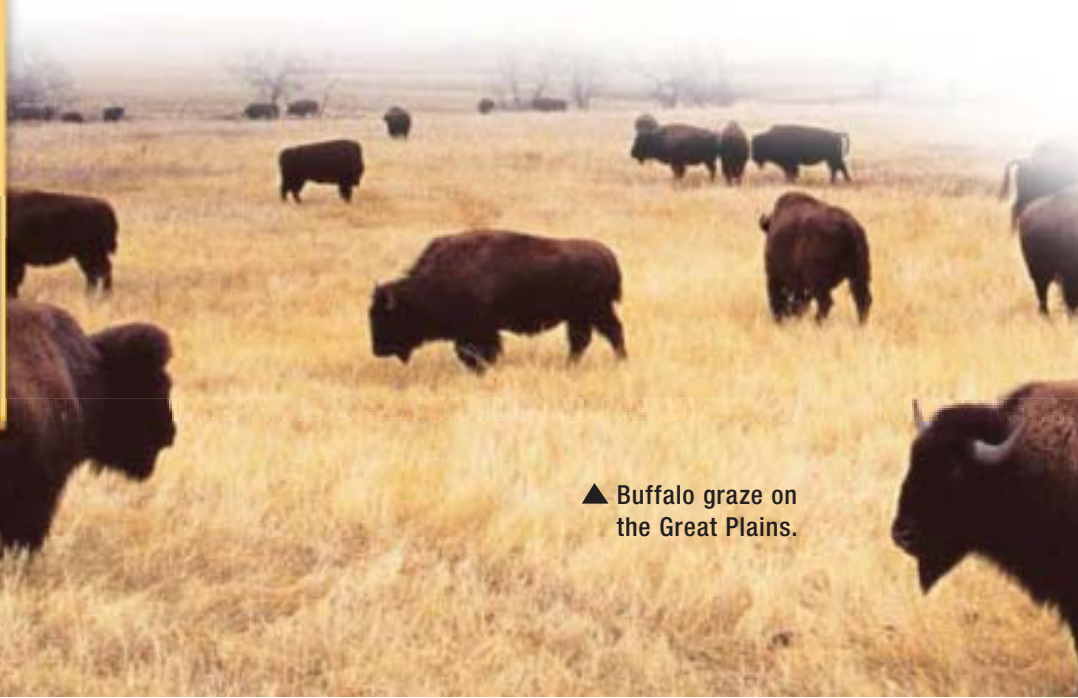
Discover how people learned to live on the dry Great Plains, hunting buffalo and using the parts of the buffalo to make houses, clothing, and tools. (Begins on page 95)

**5.1.2** Describe their varied customs and folklore traditions.

Read how the people of the Plains developed traditions which helped them adapt to life on the Great Plains. (Begins on page 96)

**5.1.3** Explain their varied economies and systems of government.

Tell how the Plains people depended on the buffalo for their economy. (page 98)



▲ Buffalo graze on the Great Plains.

1300

**1300**  
Native Americans  
settle the Plains

1400

1500

**1500**  
Horses first come to  
North America

1600

1700

1800

**1750**  
The horse  
changes life  
on the Plains

*An old Blackfoot storyteller tells the children about their god and the buffalo: “He made men and women. They asked him, ‘What are we to eat?’ He made many images of clay, in the form of the buffalo. Then he blew his breath on these, and they started to run. Then he said to the people, ‘Those are your food.’”*



## Life on the Great Plains 5.1.1

The Great Plains is a vast, nearly flat area that stretches west from the central part of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas to the Rocky Mountains, and south from Alberta, Canada, to Texas. Much of this area is made up of dry **prairies** and hills. A prairie is a flat or gently rolling land covered mainly with tall grasses.

On the Plains summers are very hot and winters are very cold. Since there is little rain, it is difficult to grow crops except near rivers. Plains people depended on the great herds of buffalo for their food.

### People of the Plains

Native Americans began to settle on the Plains around 1300. By the 1700s, many groups, including the Lakota Sioux (also known as the Dakota), Pawnee, Cheyenne, Crow, and Kiowa lived on the Great Plains. Members of these groups still live on the Plains. Many are politically active. Cheyenne

activist W. Richard West, Jr., is a director of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. West said that Native Americans must “remain a part of the cultural future of the Americas, just as we were part of its past, and fought so hard to be part of its present.”

### Where the Buffalo Roam

Until the late 1800s, huge buffalo (bison) herds roamed across the Plains. These large animals provided food, clothing, and shelter for the Plains people. Some Plains people used buffalo skins to make **teepees**. Teepees are cone-shaped homes made by leaning long poles together, tying them at the top, and covering them with animal skins. Women made the teepees and took them down when it was time to move to a new campsite.

Some Plains groups lived in large earth **lodges**—homes made of logs covered with grasses, sticks, and soil. Lodges had a central fireplace for warmth and light.

**REVIEW** How was the buffalo important to Plains people? *Main Idea and Details*