

Little Bear Goes Hunting from Duval Reads

Little Bear woke up before the sun did. Today was a very important day. Now that little bear was ten years old, he would be allowed to hunt the buffalo. Little Bear was not frightened. He was excited, even though a buffalo can weigh as much as ten men.

Little Bear was a Lakota Sioux Indian. He lived on the Great Plains with his family. This area, called a plain, was fairly flat and was filled with grass and buffalo. His home was wherever his family and their group of relatives placed their tipis, and that depended on the buffalo.

The buffalo lived on the Great Plains, too. However, large herds of buffalo moved from place to place. They moved as they grazed on the wild grasses that grow across this wide stretch of land. Because the buffalo was their main food supply, the Lakota Sioux moved with the herds. The buffalo provided Little Bear's people with fresh meat. The meat could also be dried and turned into pemmican. Pemmican could be stored for later use, especially in the cold winter months.

In fact, almost every part of the buffalo had a special use for Little Bear's people. The buffalo provided them with warm fur. Its hair was used to make rope. Buffalo bones were used to make knives, axes, and hammers. Even toys were made from the bones of a buffalo.

Buffalo skin was also used to make tipis, clothes, bedding and moccasins. Making these things was a job for women and girls. When he was younger, Little Bear had watched his grandmother, mother, and sisters while they worked.

In using the hide of the buffalo to make clothing, it first had to be stretched and scraped. Then it was soaked and dried several times. After that, it was pulled and stretched to make it soft. Finally, it was ready to be cut and sewn into the things Little Bear's people needed. Little Bear's sister had made him his first pair of moccasins, which were made more beautiful with the addition of attractive beading art.

Little Bear dressed quickly and then stepped outside of his family tipi. The rising sun was just now a faint glimmer on the horizon. Even without the sun, it was already warm. Little Bear looked around. No one else had woken up yet. He was the only one, and this made the day seem even more important. Little Bear sniffed the air the way his grandfather did. He could not smell rain. He could smell the remains of the fire that had burned the night before. Buffalo meat had been cooked on those fires. Little Bear could still taste the succulent meat.

Little Bear made his way to wear the horses that chased the buffalo grazed. Today he would ride his brother's horse when he went hunting. He would also carry a bow and arrow. His father had crafted his bow and arrow for him, though Little Bear had helped to shape the arrow tip.

Hunting the buffalo was not easy. These animals could run like the wind. It often took several men to take down one buffalo. Little Bear hoped he would be brave. He wanted his father to be proud of him, the way he was proud of Little Bear's older brother.

Little Bear stroked his brother's horse and whispered to him. He asked the horse to help him catch the buffalo. The horse nuzzled Little Bear as he spoke to him. Little Bear laughed as the horse's mane tickled his nose.

Before long, the sun began to rise. Little Bear noticed that the other people had woken up and were emerging from the tipis. He saw his mother begin to breathe life back into their fire. She, along with his sisters, would prepare food for the hunting party. Then it would be time to go.

Little Bear made his way back to his tipi. He sat on the ground beside his mother. His mother smiled at him and tousled his hair.

"You will be a brave buffalo hunter just like your brother," Little Bear's mother said to him.

Little Bear smiled at his mother. He knew she was wise and kind. He loved her very much.

Before long, Little Bear was joined by his grandfather, father, and brother. When all the men were gathered around the fire, Little Bear's mother and sisters served them buffalo stew. It tasted good.

Then it was time to go. The men and boys, including Little Bear, mounted their horses. As they rode out of their village, Little Bear looked back at his mother. She was still standing by the fire. She smiled at him, and then she put her hand to her heart.

"She is telling me I will be a brave hunter," said Little Bear to himself. With that thought in mind, Little Bear smiled at his mother and then galloped off to hunt the buffalo for the very first time.