

# ● Legendary Animals

## How essential are animals to Native Americans?

### 1 Buffalos

- A. Read the text. Why was the buffalo important to the Sioux (/su:/)?
- B. "The buffalo gave us everything" (l. 4). Guess how the Sioux used this animal.
- C. Look at the illustration below. Match each letter with the right body part (number). Explain orally what Native Americans used the buffalo for.
- D. Go further. Why does Lame Deer say "When you killed off the buffalo, you also killed the Indian" (l. 7-8)?

We Sioux have a close relationship to the buffalo. He is our brother. We have many legends of buffalo changing themselves into men. [...] The buffalo gave us everything, without it, we were nothing. [...] The name of the greatest of all Sioux was Tatanka Iyokate – Sitting Bull. When you killed off the buffalo, you also killed the Indian – the real, natural "wild" Indian.

*Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions,*  
John (Fire) Lame Deer and  
Richard Erdoes, 1972



| A Buffalo Bull grazing, by American artist George Catlin, 1845



- a Skin: tipis, water bags
- b Skull: sacred altar
- c Flesh: food
- d Bones: knives, awls, needles
- e Horns: spoons, bowls
- f Ribs: sleds
- g Hoofs: glue
- h Fur: blanket, winter coat

## 2 The oral tradition of storytelling



**A. Pairwork.** Listen to **MP3 n°129** and focus on the following elements:

- Pupil A: the origin of and reasons for storytelling.
- Pupil B: the storyteller's mission and types of stories.

**B.** Share your findings with your partner.

Get ready to report back to the class.



## 3 The turtle story



- A. Before watching,** look at the title and imagine what it may be about.
- B. Watch the video.** Focus on characters and actions.
- C. Listen again and take notes.** Get as many details as you can. Use **Worksheet n°60** for help.
- D. Use your notes to sum up the story in your own words.** ↗
- E. Go further.** Why is the woman a good storyteller?



VIDEO N°46

## 4 How the coyote got his cunning



- A. Before watching,** imagine how the coyote got his cunning. Make one guess!
- B. Now watch the video.** Focus on:
  - the different characters;
  - the man's mission;
  - the coyote's strategy;
  - the consequences.



VIDEO N°47

## YOUR TURN! 5 Become a storyteller!



Choose the story of the tortoise or that of the coyote.

Tell it to the class in your own words! Use the preterite.

### HELP!

#### Expressions

- Once upon a time...
- A long time ago...
- First / second / then / finally

#### Nouns & adjectives

- coyote /kɔ:təti/
- cunning /kʌnɪŋ/: rusé(e), ruse
- deer /dɪə/
- lame /leɪm/: boiteux(euse)
- tortoise (earth) /tɔ:təs/ = turtle (sea) /tɜ:təl/

#### Tips to be a good storyteller

- Practise before telling the story.
- While telling the story in front of the class, do not forget to:
  - pause for effects;
  - speak slowly and loud enough;
  - repeat key sentences.
- Use gestures and different intonations to captivate your audience.

# 4 Symbols are Everywhere

**Why are symbols so important to Native Americans?**

## 1 Symbols

- A. Read the text. What kind of document is it?  
Who is the narrator?  
B. Who does "you" (second paragraph) refer to?

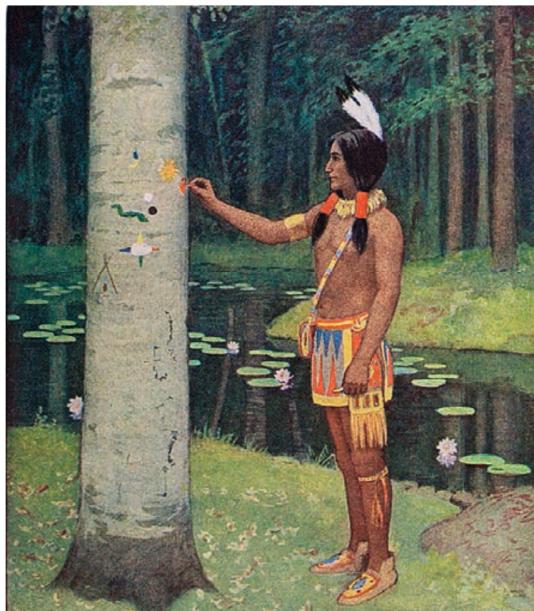
We Sioux [...] see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life. We have a saying that the white man sees so little, he must see with only one eye. We see a lot that you no longer notice.  
You could notice if you wanted to, but you are usually too busy. We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace<sup>1</sup> are one. To you symbols are just words, spoken or written in a book.  
To us they are part of nature, part of ourselves, even little insects like ants and grasshoppers<sup>2</sup>. We try to understand them not with the head but with the heart, and we need no more than a hint to give us the meaning.

- C. Pairwork. Pupil A focuses on the role of symbols and where symbols can be found.  
Pupil B focuses on the differences between "white men" and Sioux.

What to you seems commonplace to us appears wondrous<sup>3</sup> through symbolism. [...] Look at this belt. My grandmother made it. You say it is beautiful and this makes me glad, because I want to give it to you. But it is more than just beautiful; it tells a story. All you see is a geometric pattern of beads – lines, triangles and diamond shapes – but these are a tale of my grandfather's deeds<sup>4</sup>.

1 ordinary, normal • 2 sauterelles • 3 wonderful, amazing • 4 actions

*Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions,*  
John (Fire) Lame Deer and  
Richard Erdoes, 1972



### Cultural fact

Before European settlers arrived, some Native Americans communicated and told stories using pictographs. Back then, they did not have an alphabet to write words, so they represented ideas in different ways.

## 2 The Song of Hiawatha /haɪə'wɑθə/ ⓘ

- A. Look at the picture and read the Cultural fact.  
What can you guess about the man, the place and the action?  
B. Listen to an extract from the poem *The Song of Hiawatha* on [MP3 n°130](#). Pick out keywords about nature.  
C. Draw the pictographs you hear.



## YOUR TURN! 3 Write a story! ⌚

- A. Use [Worksheet n°61](#) to discover examples of pictographs. Choose eight of them to imagine a short story.  
B. Try to guess what your classmates' stories are about, just by looking at the pictographs they chose!  
C. Write your story.

## 4 Words and names

- A.** Read the text. Explain why Native American names are so powerful.
- B.** Imagine the stories behind the names "Red Cloud" "Two Moons" and "Lame Deer".

Words, too, are symbols and convey<sup>1</sup> great powers, especially names. Not Charles, Dick and George. There's not much power in those. But Red Cloud, Black Elk, Whirlwind, Two Moons, Lame Deer – these names have a relationship to the Great Spirit. Each Indian name has a story behind it, a vision, a quest for dreams. We receive great gifts from the source of a name; it links us to nature, to the animal nations. It gives power. You can lean<sup>2</sup> on a name, get strength from it. It is a special name for you and you alone [...].

**C. Pairwork.** Tell your story to your partner.

**D. Using Worksheet n°62**, choose a Sioux name for your partner! Justify your choice.

Each Indian name tells a story that remains hidden to outsiders unless it is explained to them. Take our famous chief Man-Afraid-of-His-Horse. [...] He is so brave, so feared, that his enemies run away when merely<sup>3</sup> seeing his horse, even if he is not on it. That is a powerful name.

<sup>1</sup> transmit, give • <sup>2</sup> rely on, find support in • <sup>3</sup> simply

**Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions,**  
John (Fire) Lame Deer and  
Richard Erdoes, 1972



## 5 What is there behind a name?

- A.** Look at the picture of Tatanka lyokate, also known as Sitting Bull, a famous Sioux chief. Search the web to find out more about him and the origin of his name.
- B.** Take a few notes (keywords) and get ready to report back to the class.
- C.** Imagine the story behind picture 2.



1. Sitting Bull, David F. Barry, circa 1883

### HELP!

#### Nouns

- bead /bi:d/: perles
- braid (US) /breɪd/ = plait (UK) /plæt/: tresses
- earrings /ɪərɪŋz/
- feather /'feðə/
- fur /fɜ:/: fourrure
- necklace /nekla:s/

#### Adjectives

- authoritarian /ɔ:θɔ:r'i:təriən/ = bossy
- benevolent /ba'ne-vələnt/: bienveillant
- charismatic
- concentrated / focused
- posing
- solemn: solennel
- straight /streit/: droit
- worried



2. Pretty Nose, Laton Alton Huffman, 1879

# Becoming an Adult

## What is the "Vision Quest" about?

### 1 Coming of age in the wilderness

Watch the video. Focus on how this traditional ceremony is performed today: goal, conditions, place, people.

HELP!

#### Words & expressions

- adulthood /ædʌlθʊd/
- come of age: devenir adulte
- fasting = not eating
- wilderness /wɪldnəs/: paysage sauvage, désertique



### 2 Lame Deer's Vision Quest

A. Before reading. Describe the painting on p. 247 and guess what a "Vision Quest" is.

B. Groupwork. Each member works on one part of the text. Focus on:

- Part 1: information about the people present / place / conditions / goal.

- Part 2: people / physical and psychological changes / visions and predictions / name;

- Part 3: time / people / activities following the vision / consequences of this experience.

C. Share your findings with the class.

#### Part 1: The Vision Pit<sup>1</sup>

I was all alone on the hilltop. I sat there in the vision pit, a hole dug into the hill [...] I watched Old man Chest, the medicine man who had brought me there, disappear. [...] I was all by myself, left on the hilltop four days and nights without food or water. [...] I was sixteen then, still had my boy's name and let me tell you, I was scared. I was shivering<sup>2</sup> and not only from the cold. The nearest human being was many miles away, and four days and nights is a long time. Of course, when it was all over, I would no longer be a boy, but a man. I would have had my vision. I would be given a man's name.

[...] I was only 96 hours away from being a man. The thought was comforting. Comforting too was the warmth of the star blanket which old man Chest had wrapped<sup>3</sup> around me to cover my nakedness. My grandmother had made it especially for this, my first *hanblechia*, my first vision seeking. [...] If Wakan Tanka the Great Spirit would give me the vision and the power, I would become a medicine man and perform many ceremonies wrapped in that quilt. I am an old man now [...] but I still have that star blanket my grandmother made for me.

<sup>1</sup> hole in the ground • <sup>2</sup> tremble with cold •

<sup>3</sup> enveloped, covered

**Part 2: The Vision**

I don't know what got into me, but I was no longer myself. I started to cry. [...] I sounded like an older man, I couldn't even recognize this strange voice. I used long-ago words in my prayer, words no longer used nowadays.

5 I tried to wipe away<sup>1</sup> my tears, but they wouldn't stop. In the end I just pulled that quilt<sup>2</sup> over me, rolled myself up in it. [...]

A voice said 'You are sacrificing yourself here to be a medicine man. In time you will be one. You will teach other

10 medicine men. We are the fowl<sup>3</sup> people, the winged<sup>4</sup> ones, the eagles and the owls. We are a nation and you shall be our brother. You will never kill or harm any one of us. You are going to understand us whenever you come to see<sup>5</sup> a vision

here on this hill. You will learn about herbs and roots<sup>6</sup> and 15 you will heal people. You will ask them for nothing in return. A man's life is short. Make yours a worthy<sup>7</sup> one.'

I felt these voices were good, and slowly my fear left me. [...] Then I saw a shape before me. [...] I saw this was my great grandfather, Tahca Ushte, Lame Deer, old man chief of the

20 Minneconjou. [...] I understood that my great grandfather wished me to take his name. This made me glad beyond words.

<sup>1</sup> remove • <sup>2</sup> blanket • <sup>3</sup> wild bird • <sup>4</sup> that has wings •  
<sup>5</sup> look for • <sup>6</sup> part of the plant that is underground •  
<sup>7</sup> valuable

**Part 3: How it ended**

I didn't know how long I had been up there on that hill – one minute or a lifetime. I felt a hand on my shoulder gently shaking me. It was old man Chest, who had come for me. He told me I had been in the vision pit four

5 days and four nights and that it was time to come down. He would give me something to eat and water to drink and then I was to tell him everything that had happened to me [...]. He would interpret my visions for me. [...] He also told me that I was no longer a boy, that I was a man now. I was Lame Deer.

**Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions,**  
John (Fire) Lame Deer and  
Richard Erdoes, 1972



### YOUR TURN! 3 Discuss with the class!

A. In your culture, what makes you become an adult?

B. Would you be ready to take part in a Vision Quest?

Why (not)?

#### HELP!

##### Tips to express your opinion

- I would / wouldn't be ready to take part in a Vision Quest because...
- I'm not sure whether I'd be ready or not because...
- I would be curious to do it because... **However**, ...
- **On the one hand** I would like to do it because... but **on the other hand**, I wouldn't like to do it because...



**Vision Quest**, by American artist Charles Frizzell