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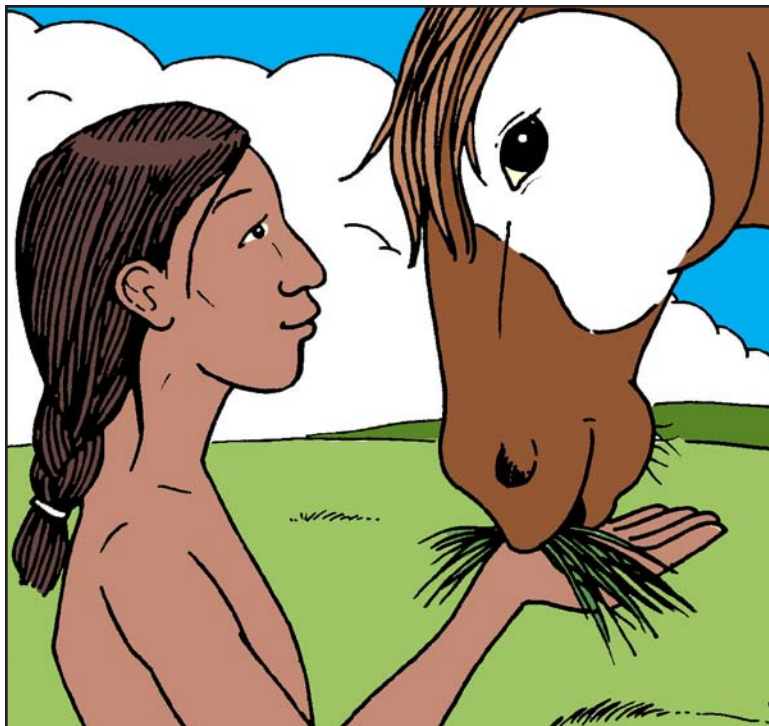
The Buffalo Hunt



Written by Bertha E. Bush
Illustrated by Maria Voris

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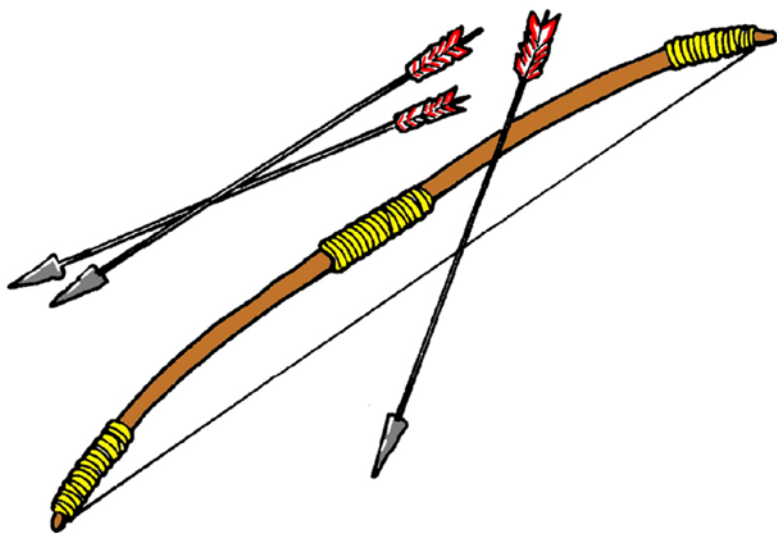


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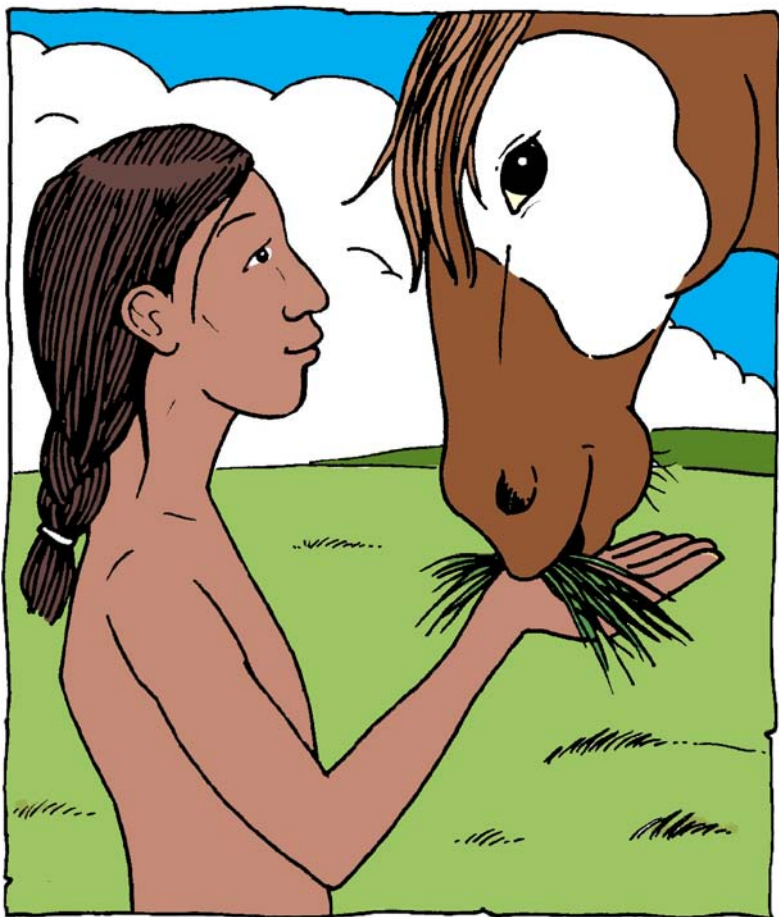
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Preparing for the Hunt

Wind-in-the-Treetops was going out on the yearly buffalo hunt. Last year, he had followed the hunters with the women and other children. As a baby, he had been tucked on top of the packs that his mother's pony carried. As an older boy, he had had to share space on the pack ponies with several other children.



But now he had a pony of his own. Wind-in-the-Treetops was going to ride with the men this year. He was so proud! His younger brothers, who still had to stay behind, envied him.

“I won’t tire out my pony by riding him before the hunt,” he said.

“I will walk and lead him. Then he will be fresh for the chase.”

Wind-in-the-Treetops wanted his pony to run fast after the buffaloes.

He did not ride his pony for

four days. During

those four days,

the medicine men

and the hunters

prayed for

the success

of the hunt.

In the

medicine

lodge, they

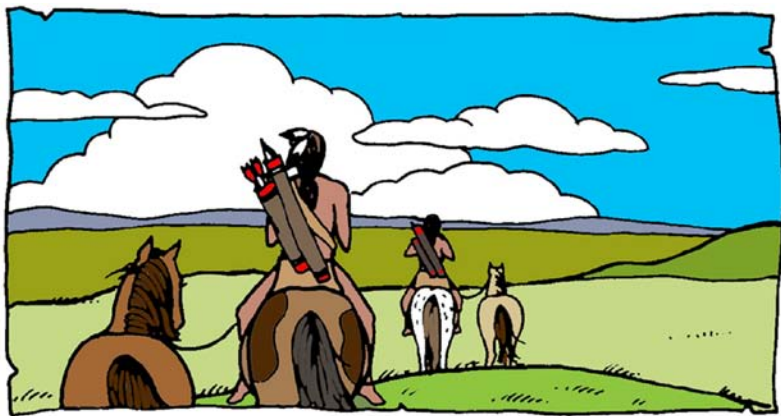
held the

sacred buffalo dance.





The young men dressed in buffalo skins. They put on buffalo masks with horns. Then they danced until they were so tired that they fell down. When one man fell, the others would pretend he was a buffalo they had killed. They would pretend to skin and cut up the buffalo. Meanwhile, another man picked up the mask and started dancing. The tribe believed that this dance brought the buffaloes near. They danced night and day until news of the herds came.



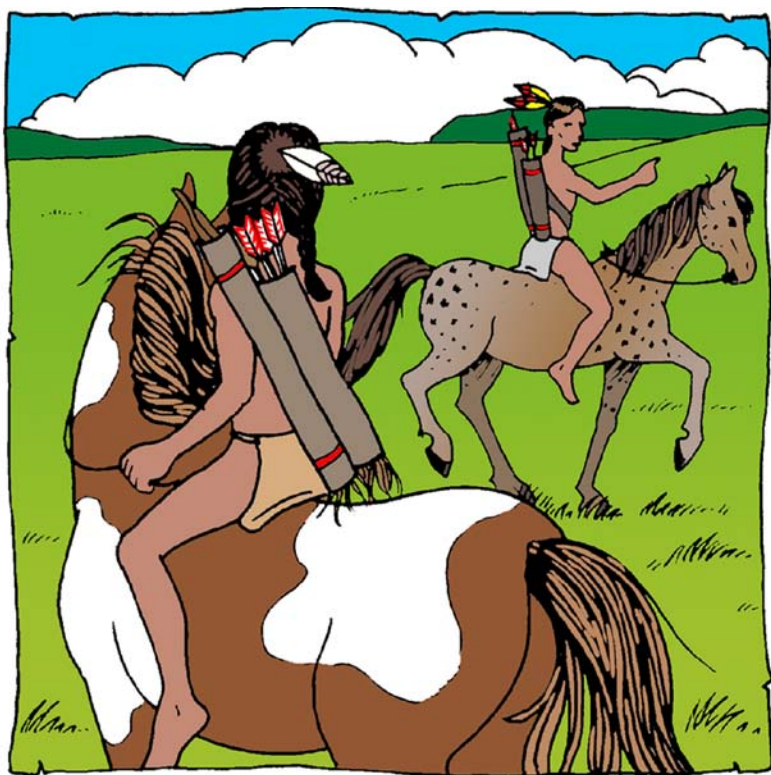
The Hunt Begins

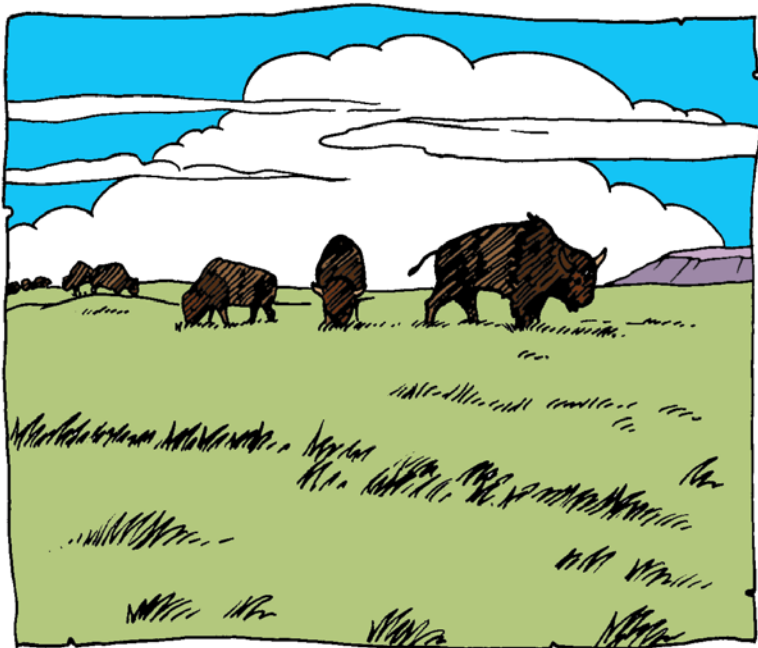
The men started out on the hunt before dawn. The women and children followed a short distance behind. The hunters rode in a line across the prairie. A few men led the hunt. No one was allowed to go ahead of these leaders. Men who had two ponies rode the slower one and led the faster one. Men who had only one pony, like Wind-in-the-Treetops, walked, to keep their ponies fresh.

The boy became very tired on the long walk. But he would not tire his pony. So a kind old man named Eagle Chief said to Wind-in-the-Treetops, "Young friend, come and ride with me on my pony. You can lead your pony with my spare pony." Wind-in-the-Treetops was very glad and grateful.

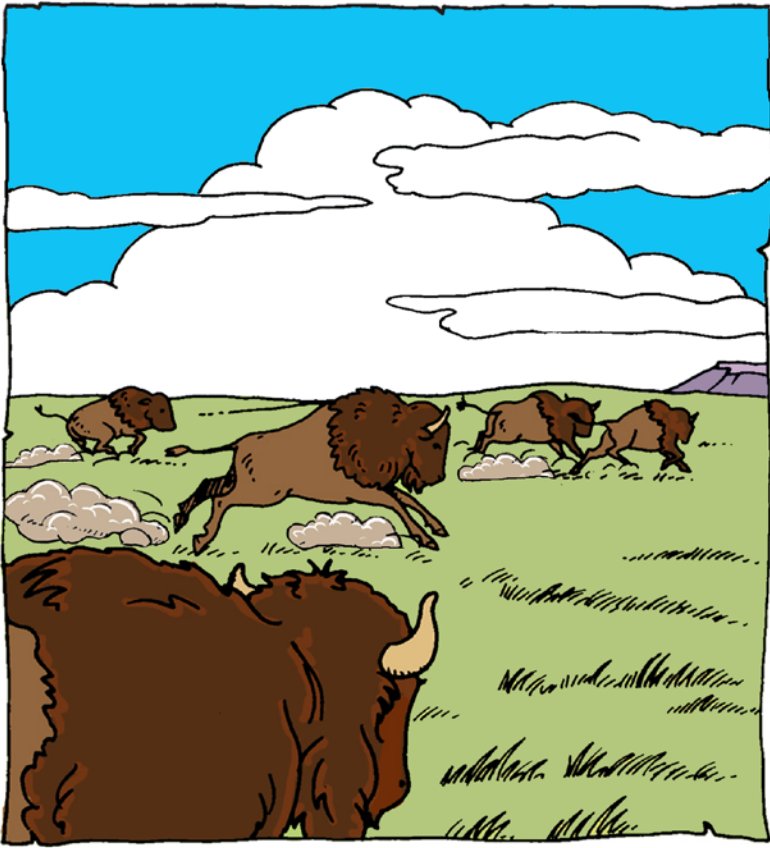


After a long, long march, the scouts returned. They said, "We see the buffaloes." Then every man got on his swiftest pony. The leaders of the hunt directed them to circle around the buffaloes. The hunters went very quietly so the buffaloes would not hear them.





Wind-in-the-Treetops saw the dark shapes of the buffaloes against the edge of the sky. He was so excited that he could hardly sit still. He wanted to dash on ahead, but that was forbidden. Going ahead might stampede the herd and spoil the hunt for the whole tribe. So the hunters went on very softly and cautiously.

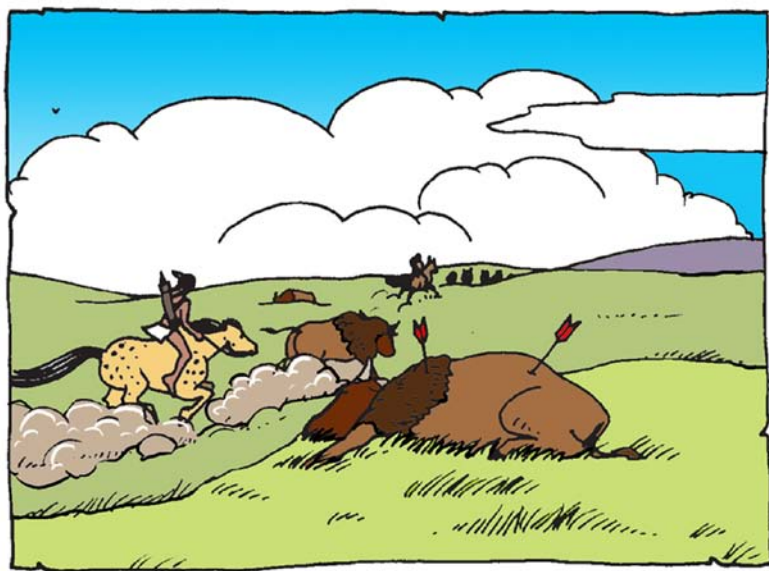


Suddenly the buffaloes caught sight of them. Their shaggy heads lifted, and they ran as fast as deer. Their slim legs seemed so small, and their great heads and chests seemed so big. Now the leaders let every man ride as fast as he could.

All the men dashed ahead, trying to catch the buffaloes. Wind-in-the-Treetops's pony was fast. It carried him along with the lead hunters. He was dangerously close to the terrified buffaloes.



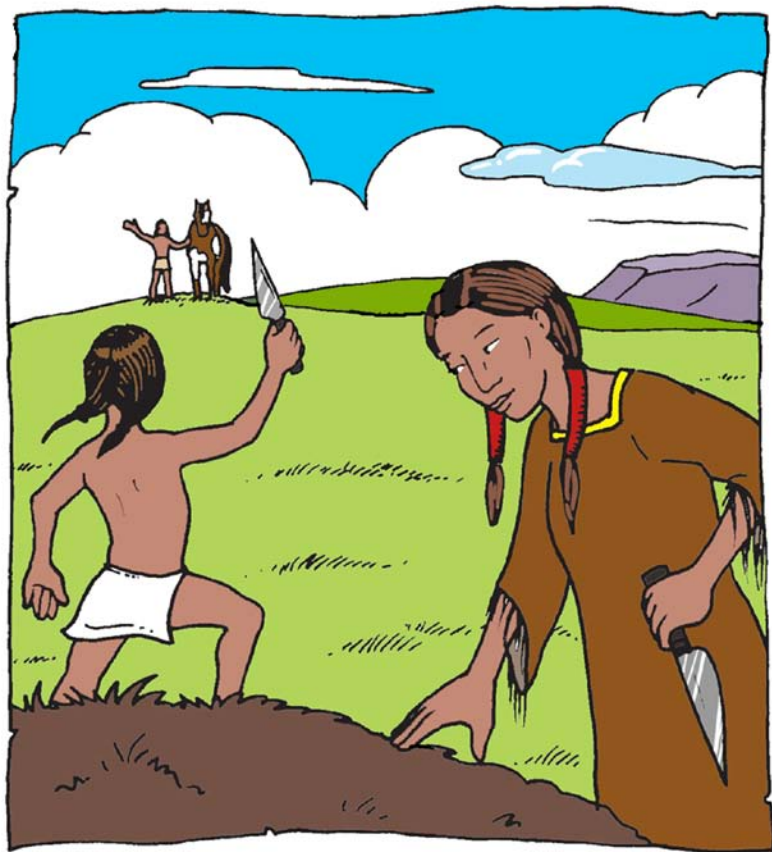
Surrounded on all sides, the buffaloes tried to fight their way out of the circle. But the men shot with wonderful strength and swiftness. One great beast after another fell wounded or dead. The men let them lie and continued their chase. They knew that the rest of the tribe was close behind. Each woman would claim the buffalo shot by her husband or son.





After the Hunt

Wind-in-the-Treetops rode on until he had shot the very last arrow from his quiver. The last of the buffaloes had disappeared from view. He turned back very slowly. His pony was tired. He was tired, too. He was so tired that he could hardly hold up his head. All the way back, he saw women skinning buffaloes and cutting up the meat.



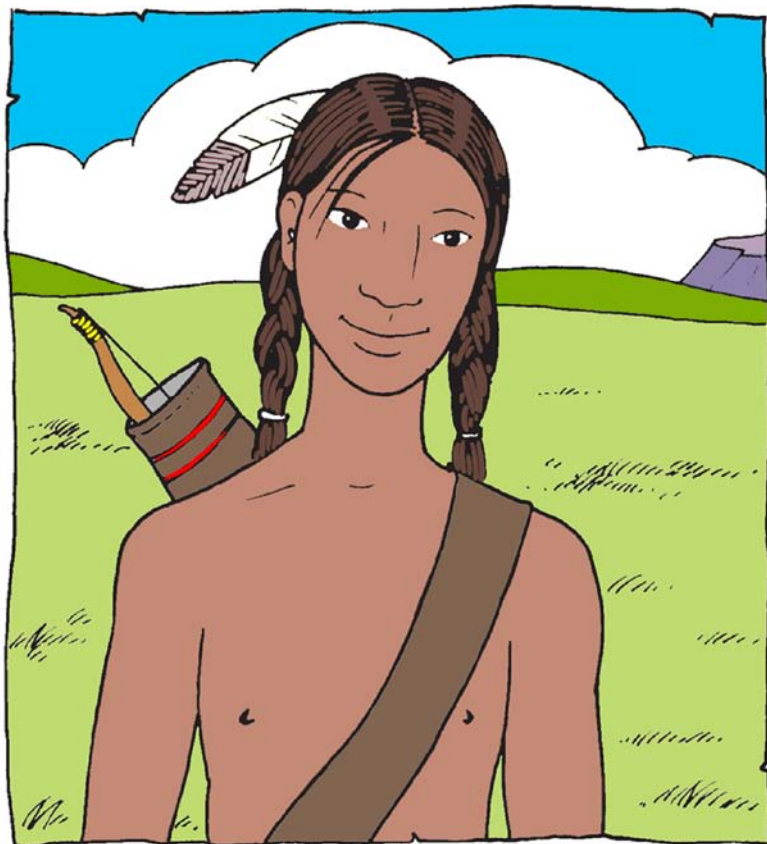
Pretty soon he saw his younger brother shouting, leaping, and waving his skinning knife. His mother was bending over a huge buffalo with her knife. Wind-in-the-Treetops sprang from his pony. He forgot all about being tired.

“Did I kill it, Mother?” he cried.

“Did I kill it?”

“Yes,” said his mother. “Here is your arrow, which I pulled from it. We will have meat for the winter and fine, warm fur. I am very proud that my son has become a great hunter.”





No one was happier than Wind-in-the-Treetops. He wanted to shout out loud. He saw the racks full of drying red meat, and he thought joyfully, "I killed a buffalo! Our camp will have plenty of food this winter."

This story was adapted by Reading A–Z from the original story written by Bertha E. Bush in 1909.

The Buffalo Hunt
Level N Leveled Book
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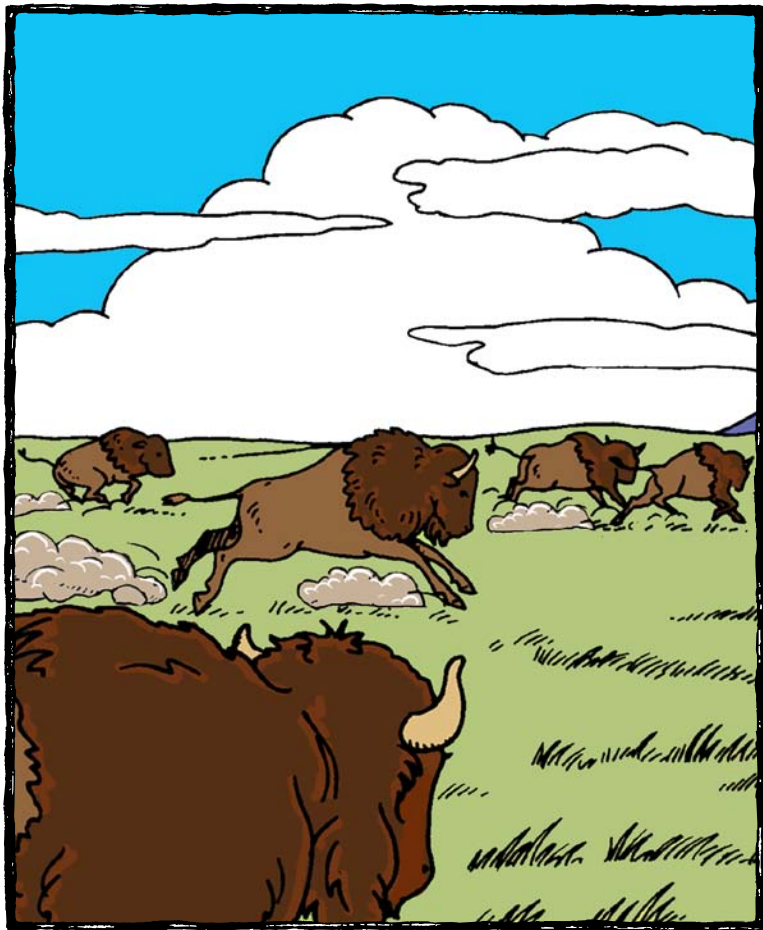
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A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

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