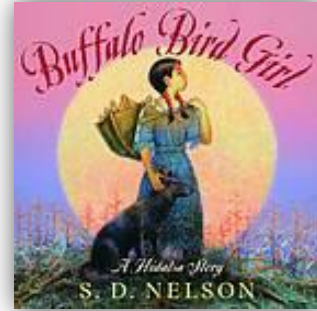


**Title:** Buffalo Bird Girl  
**Author:** S.D. Nelson  
**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade



**SUMMARY:**

Buffalo Bird Girl narrates this first-person account of her Native American childhood in the Hidatsa tribe of the American Plains. Her quotes and archival photos support and enhance the narrative explanations so beautifully described in S.D. Nelson's book entitled Buffalo Bird Girl. These descriptions of life from a bygone era and a culture that disappeared will enchant families. Most 4<sup>th</sup> grade students will have studied the lives of Native Americans and will benefit from furthering their cultural understanding of the plains tribes. This biography beautifully weaves a nonfiction story into a narrative format.

**QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING**

**VOCABULARY**

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- after (pg. 3)
- immunity (pg. 3)
- earth-mound lodges (pg. 5)
- aggressive (pg. 5)
- diameter (pg. 6)
- tanned (pg. 14)
- saplings (pg. 14)
- bartering (pg. 16)
- rigged (pg. 20)
- repulse (pg. 22)
- transformed (pg. 33)
- merciless (pg. 35)
- reservation (pg. 39)
- signaling (pg. 40)

You might use a question like:

*In the book, what does the word "tanned" mean? How does the information on page 14 help you understand what it means?*

**KEY IDEAS and THEMES**

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:



1. The actual quotes from Buffalo Bird Girl, the person, are in a red italicized font throughout the book. Talk about why the author would include them in this way. Flip through the book and talk about the format and organization of the story.
2. Ask your child what life was like for a Hidatsa woman. How do you know? Where do you see that in the text? (Note: This question provides a context for you to help your child move beyond a one-sentence reply. Focus on creating a language-rich, well-formatted response that includes references to the story. This will positively impact your child's literacy development.)
3. The story constantly refers to the seasons. Revisit these places. Talk with your child about why this would be important to the Hidatsa tribe and the Native American way of life.
4. S.D. Nelson included actual photos of Native Americans and one of Buffalo Bird Girl, along with the painted illustrations. Compare these images with the story, and talk about the relationship between them. Why do you think the author includes the pictures and paintings?
5. Missouri River, Buffalo Bird Girl's grandfather, is quoted at the front of the book. "This earth is alive and has a soul or spirit, just as you have a spirit. Other things also have spirits, the sun, clouds, trees, beasts, birds." Talk about why the author would include this at the beginning of the book. How does it relate to the rest of the story? Help your child to practice using parts of the story while you talk about it.

### EXTRA ACTIVITY:

1. Using books and Internet resources, research the interaction between the Hidatsa tribe and the journey of Lewis and Clark. National Geographic has a number of great resources. This would be a place to begin your research.
2. The Smithsonian American Art Museum has a number of images in their collection related to the Plains Indians. These images can be accessed online. Enjoy looking at the collection with your child. Afterward, compare these images with those found in Buffalo Bird Girl. What similarities do you find? (Note: When looking at images, spend time just looking at the whole and in more focus on details and regions of the image. Ask your child, "What do you see?" Spend time just naming the components seen. Then, ask, "What do you think about what you see?" Finally, ask "What do you wonder about this image?" It is possible that these wonderings will provide fodder for further study).