

## Painted Stories

### *Exploring Storytelling through the Charles Washakie Hide Painting*

#### Overview

Stories have infused our lives and our communities throughout history. They can be expressed through oral, written, and visual forms. Using culturally different forms of expression allows children to broaden their understanding of their own worldview and those around them. In this program, children use the Charles Washakie Hide Painting to explore concepts of storytelling and art while learning about the purposes and creation of American Indian hide paintings.

#### Age Group

Early Childhood – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

#### Duration

30 min. – 1 hour

#### Subject

Early Childhood Development

Language Arts

Social Studies

Fine Arts

#### Standards of Learning Met

Early Childhood Development

- Listening & Understanding: Demonstrates understanding of language through responses.
- Listening & Understanding: Listens to and engages in conversation with others.
- Speaking & Communicating: Demonstrates age-appropriate speech articulation.
- Initiative & Curiosity: Demonstrates flexibility, imagination and inventiveness.
- Creative Arts – Art: Progresses in ability to create representations that are more detailed, creative or realistic.

Language Arts

- SL.4.1: Paraphrases information read aloud or presented in diverse media and formats.
- SL.4.2: Identifies reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points
- SL.4.3: Reports on a topic or text, or retells an event in an organized manner
- SL.4.5: Differentiates between contexts which call for formal or informal discourse.

Social Studies

- SS2.2.2: Recognize ways in which expressions of culture influence people (e.g., language, stories, music, and art)
- SS2.3.1: Give examples of and/or identify needs, wants, goods, and services
- SS2.5.4: Identify how people may adjust to and/or change their environment in order to survive (e.g., clothing, houses, foods, and natural resources)



### Fine Arts

- FPA 4.1.A.1: Students create and revise original art to express ideas, experiences and stories
- FPA 4.1.A.3: Students apply the elements and principles of design to their artwork
- FPA 4.1.A.4: Students collaborate with others in creative artistic processes

### Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Identify stylized animals and actions on the hide painting
- Identify colors and quantities of characters found on the hide painting
- Gain a better understanding of the purpose and creation of hide paintings
- Contribute at least one sentence to a group-structured story
- Create a hide painting expressing a story of their own

### Materials

Included

- Reproduction of Charles Washakie's Hide Painting
- Sample Lesson Plan
- *About the Object* Information Sheet
- Master copy of hide color sheets
- Brown paper hide cutouts (if desired)

Need

- Paint (& paintbrushes), markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Newspaper to cover work space if using paint or markers
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or newsprint pad and easel

### Key Terms

**Hide Painting** – a mineral-based painting on an animal hide which tells the stories of individuals or bands, and can be found on teepees, buffalo or elk robes, or on garments. *See a more detailed description on the Object Fact Sheet.*

### Sample Lesson Plan

1. Display the reproduction of Charles Washakie's hide painting. Explain to the students that because most American Indian tribes didn't have a written language, they recorded events through paintings on hides. Refer to the *About the Object* information sheet for more information.
2. Ask the students to visually examine the hide painting. What types of animals do they see? What colors are they? How many animals and people can be counted?
3. Allow each student to share what they think is happening in the painting. What are the figures doing (i.e. dancing, hunting, running, etc.). When using their imagination, there is no wrong answer.



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4. As a group, create a story about what the characters are doing and thinking in the painting. Have each student add a sentence to the story using a prompt like the one provided below. Record the story on the board. Encourage the students to tie their story to the images and actions in the painting. When complete, read the story back to the students.
5. Provide each student with a brown paper “hide” (or color sheet) and paint (or markers, crayons, or colored pencils) to create their own hide painting based either on their class story or on one they create. If students create their own stories for their hide paintings, allow time for them to share with the class

*Sample Story Prompt*

“A long time ago, the Shoshoni tribe needed food...”



**About the Object**  
**Charles Washakie Hide Painting**  
*Carbon County Museum*

Hide Painting, Charles Washakie, Shoshoni, ca. 1916

*General Information*

A hide painting is a mineral-based painting on an animal hide which tells the stories of individuals or bands, and it can be found on teepees, buffalo or elk robes, or on garments.

The American Indians of the Northern Plains wore hides for both practical and ceremonial purposes. They wore hides in winter, with the fur on the inside for warmth. When people were sick, they often wore a hide painted with symbols to hasten healing. Women sometimes wore painted hides to promote childbearing. Political and spiritual leaders wore special hides that might depict a warrior's heroism or record important events in the history of the tribe.

Women often wore hides that they painted with geometric patterns and shapes. Men usually wore hides that told a story in pictures.

Some tribes used hide paintings to record their history. Tribal leaders chose the single most important event of each year, and added one picture representing that event to the hide painting. Members of the tribe often identified the year they were born by referring to the event depicted on these "winter count" hides" (text adapted from the Smithsonian Institution's *Tracking the Buffalo: Stories from a Buffalo Hide Painting*).

*Who made it?*

This hide painting was done by Charles Washakie (waa-shu-kee) around 1916 and is a copy of a hide painting done by his father, Chief Washakie, an important Shoshoni figure from the Wind River Reservation. Charles was known to often help his father with his hide paintings later in Chief Washakie's life, and this hide painting was made using traditional methods. However, Chief Washakie's original hide painting only has one chief depicted in a headdress, where for an unknown reason, Charles' copy depicts two.



*What inspired it?*

This hide depicts a scene before the Sun Dance. We know this because only the center pole is visible (no brace arches or any of the other twelve poles). A buffalo head is hanging from the pole, but none of the other sacred elements are seen. The hide also depicts a buffalo hunt before the Sun Dance as well as dancers for the ceremony.

The Sun Dance is a religious event originating among the Plains tribes where numerous bands come together in mid-summer, usually in July. Legend places its beginnings with a warrior wandering alone looking for food for his starving tribe. While out in the wilderness, he met a deity, fasted, and was taught a ritual that, when performed, brought the buffalo. As time passed, the Sun Dance grew in importance for calling rain and food, uniting bands together, and renewing chieftain ranks.

The Sun Dance involves a medicine pole (representing the Thunderbird or the Christian God) anchored upright in the ground surrounded by twelve smaller poles (representing the Thunderbird's tail feathers or the twelve disciples) standing in a circle. Rafters meet at the top of the pole, but no roof is erected. Brush or canvas is gathered around the sides for shade. Objects are hung from the center pole to represent specific things: red willow (peace and tranquility), a buffalo head (appreciation for blessings received), a beaver pelt (industry), a long braid of hair (sacrifice), and an eagle's tail feathers. Men fast for three days while women tempt them with food. Each day, the dancers face East as drums and whistles play. Dancers keep their eyes on the sun during the day of dancing. On the fourth morning, all participants give thanks before washing off the ceremonial paint and eating.

*Things to look for...*



**Deerhide** – the medium for the hide painting, it was smoked prior to the painting to make it waterproof and to add color.



**Horses** – eighteen red, green, blue, and brown horses can be found on the hide; some with riders and some without. Artists often painted horses more decoratively using colors not normally ascribed to the animal.



**Buffalo** – seventeen adult buffalo (or American Bison) can be seen covering the hide in various stages of the hunt: both being pursued and embattling the hunters.



**Dancers** – three dancers can be seen toward the center of the painting. These dancers are drawn with arched backs, a stylized component of Shoshoni paintings.



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**Drummers** – five drummers can be seen toward the center of the hide surrounding the outline of a drum. These drummers would be located outside the Sun Dance shelter for the majority of the ceremony.



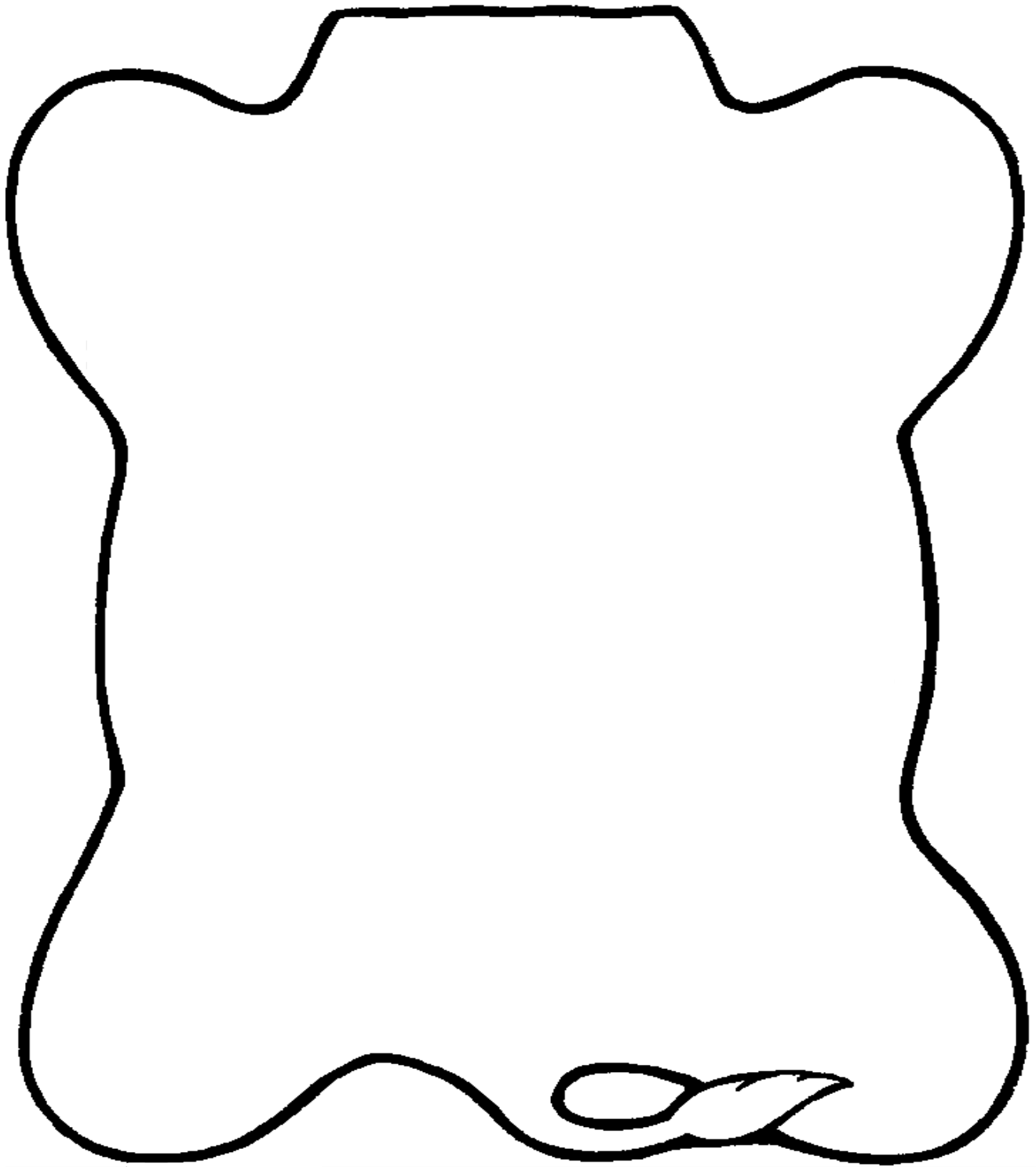
**Chiefs** – notice the two figures wearing feathered headdresses and porcupine quill breastplates. The original hide painting done by Chief Washakie only depicted one chief. For an unknown reason, Charles Washakie's version shows two.



**Sun Dance Pole** – the Sun Dance pole can be seen at the center of the painting. It has a bison head hanging from the top. Notice the bison head still has its hide. Bison skulls were a sign of famine for the Shoshoni. For the Sun Dance and its representative blessings, the bison head is depicted with its hide, horns, and eyes.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

## My Hide Painting



Draw pictures of things that tell about you - pictures of important events in your history or your family's history