

Make a Plains Indian Parfleche

Materials:

- Parfleche template (included on next page)
- String
- Crayons, colored pencils, or paint
- Paper
- Scissors
- Hole Puncher
- Pencil
- Stories and Culture of Plains Indians and Buffalo Supplemental Presentation

Time: 20-30 minutes

Grade Level: K-5

Background:

A parfleche is a suitcase that Plains Indians used to protect clothing, small tools, and food when traveling. Parfleches were made of buffalo rawhide. Small parfleches held paint kits, mirrors, and other items. Plains Indians placed items in the middle of the parfleche. Then they folded the four sides over, and tied them in place.

Engage:

Explain to students that a Plains Indian parfleche was like today's suitcase. Engage students in a discussion comparing a parfleche to a suitcase. Refer to Stories and Culture of Plains Indians and Buffalo Supplemental Presentation included in lesson resources.

Help students make a t-chart listing the items they carry in their suitcase and the items Plains Indians might have carried in their parfleche. Then ask students to write or draw three objects that they would pack in their parfleche. Explain that women made and decorated the parfleches. They could not paint or etch figures, so they usually decorated with geometric shapes.

Assembly directions:

1. Decorate parfleche with colored pencils, crayons, or paint. Allow time to dry if using paint.
2. Cut out parfleche.
3. Punch two holes at the short end of each parfleche.
4. Fold parfleche along dotted and dashed lines to create shape of parfleche.
5. Thread string through holes and tie together to close the parfleche.

