

What happened to the buffalo?

Look at the 8 sources below with your team. Find and write down the evidence from each source. Then write a paragraph about why the buffalo almost became extinct. Be prepared to discuss your findings with the class.

Source 1

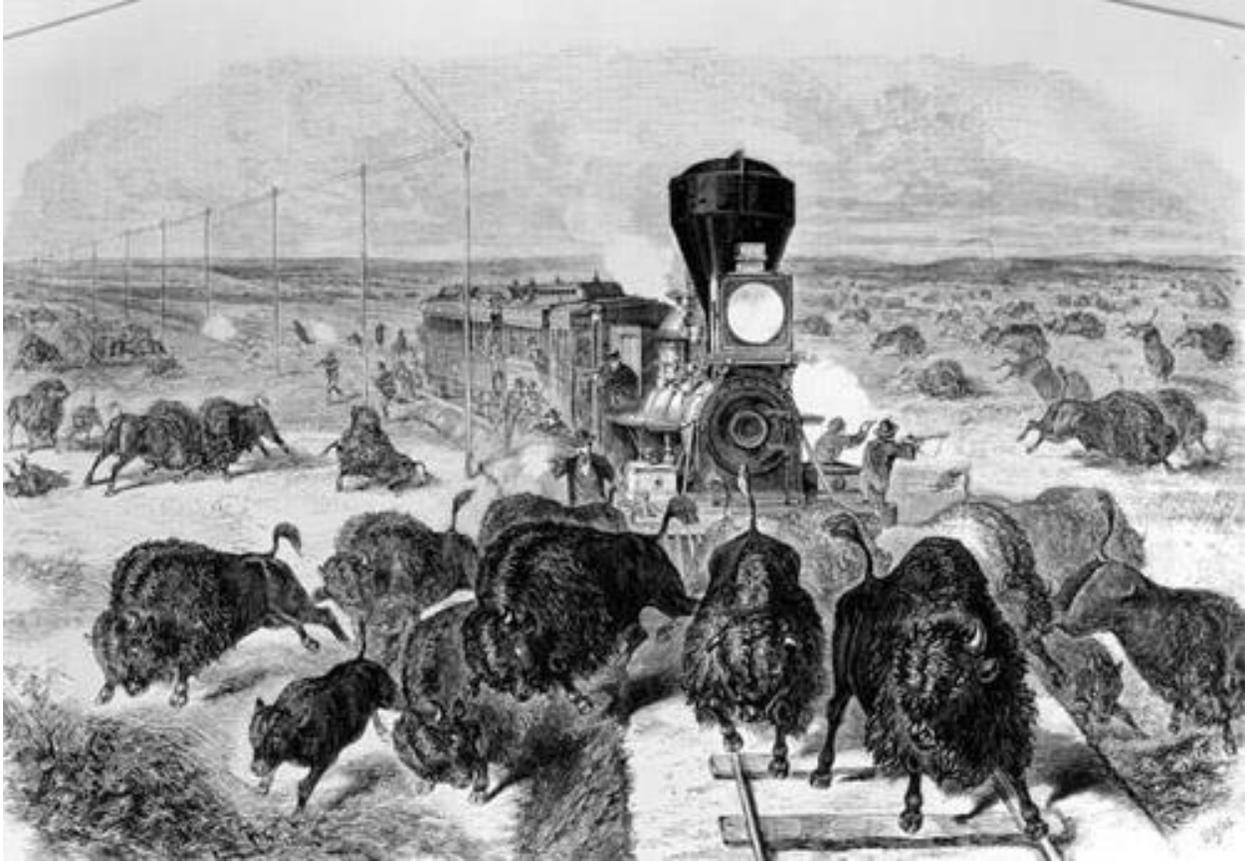
Indians Hunting Buffalo



“Buffalo,” the History Learning Site, 2013, Oct. 9,
<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/buffalo.htm>

Source 2

Railroad Sharpshooters Killing Buffalo



Source: "Where the Buffalo Roamed", Science Blogs, Denver Public Library, 2013, Oct.9, <http://scienceblogs.com/chaoticutopia/2008/10/08/where-the-buffalo-roamed/>

Source 3

Buffalo Jump

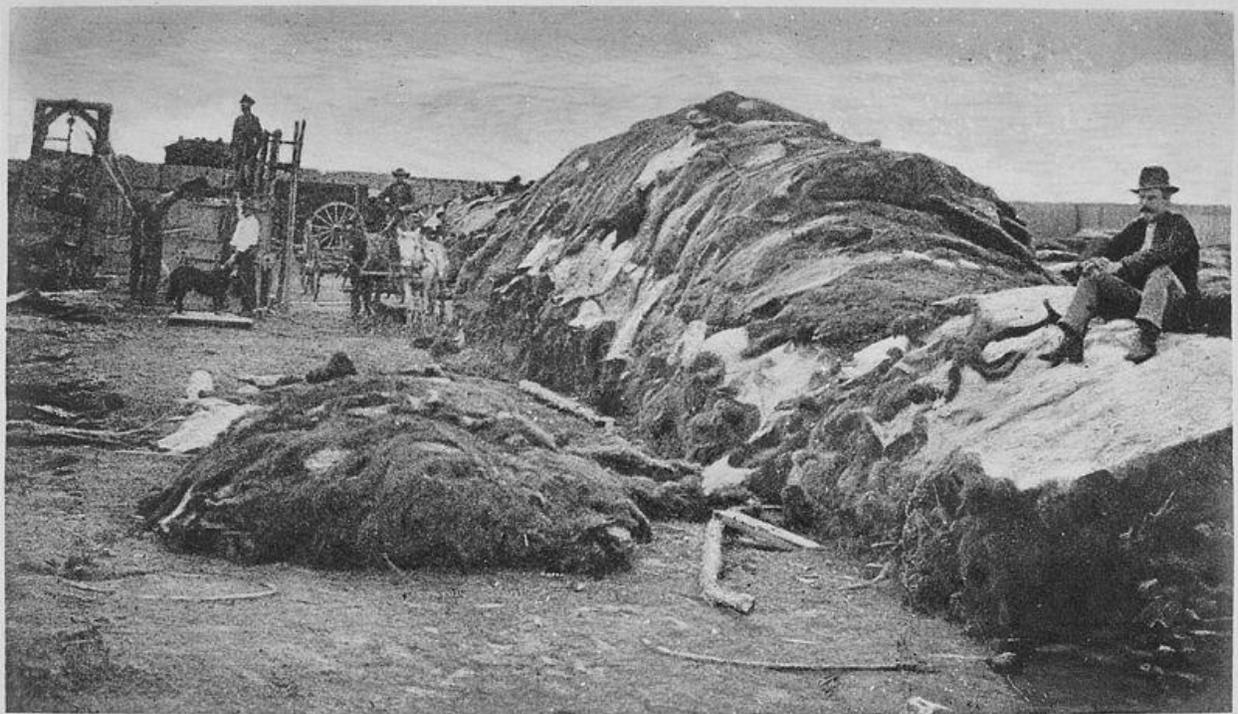


“American Indians used to chase buffalo over a cliff. The cliff was called a buffalo jump. The most famous of Wyoming’s buffalo jumps is the Vore Buffalo Jump located near Beulah. From the layers of bones, scientists have estimated that some 20,000 bison were killed at the site and that it was in use as late as 1800 AD”

Santosa, Alex, “Buffalo Jump: Native American's Way to Kill Herds of Buffalos” February 21, 2007. <http://www.neatorama.com/2007/02/21/buffalo-jump-native-americans-way-to-kill-herds-of-buffalos/#!bbKR>

Source 4

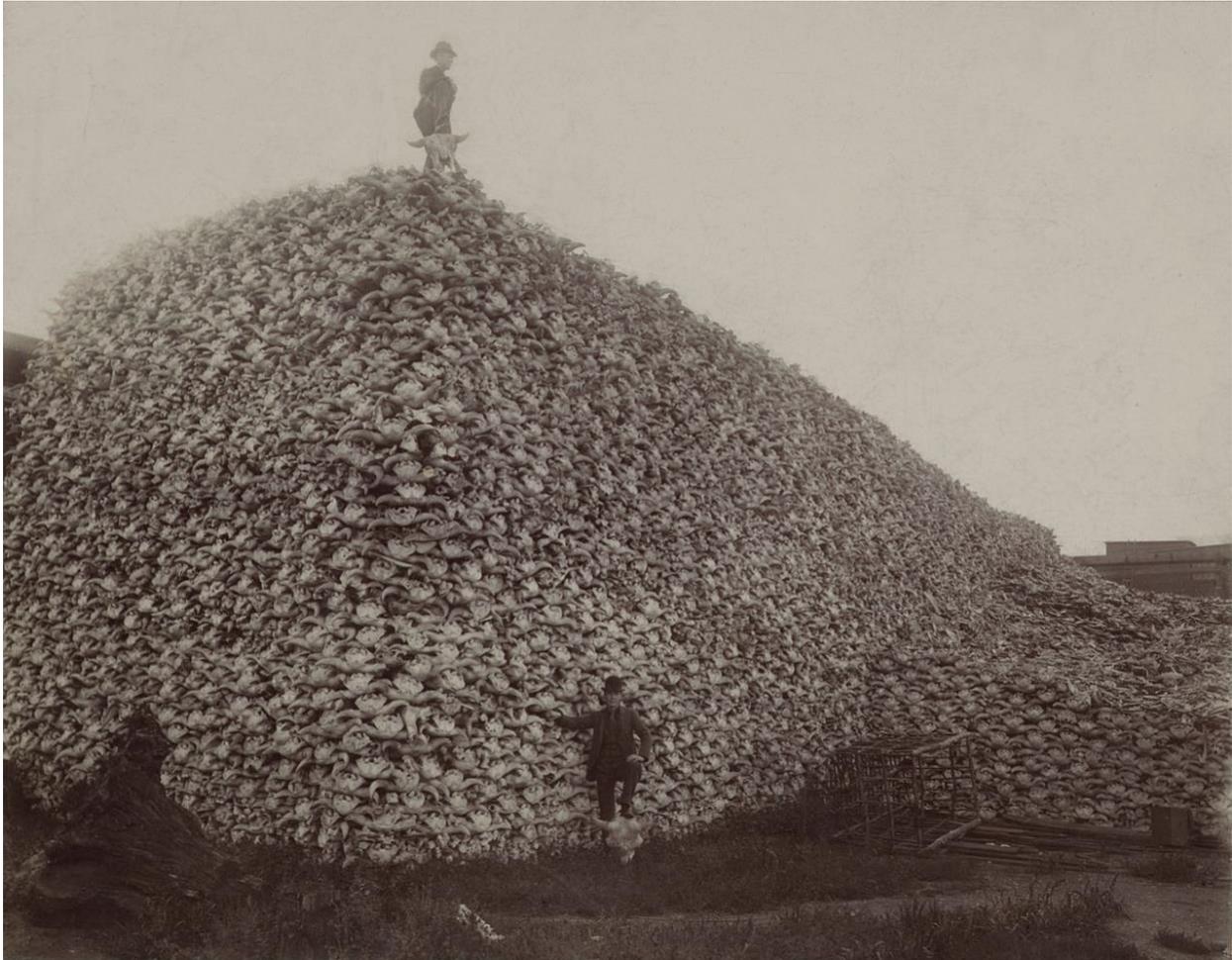
Wright' buffalo hide yard in 1878, showing 40,000 buffalo hides, Dodge City, Kansas



“Buffalo Hides,” National Archives and Records Administration, 2013, October 9.
<http://www.archives.gov/>,

Source 5

Photograph from the mid-1870s of a pile of American buffalo skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer.



Source: "Great Plains Indians" Textbook for America Surveys, 2013, Oct.9,
<http://www.austincc.edu/caddis/greatplains>

Source 6

“When the buffalo roamed the plains in multitudes, the Indian slaughtered only what he could eat and these he used to the hair and bones.” Indeed, for thousands of years the huge bison herds were able to accommodate the loss of the relatively few animals taken by Native Americans. In the 1500s, however, things began to change. First, Spanish explorers introduced horses to the region. By the 1800s, Native Americans had learned to use the speedy steeds to chase bison, dramatically expanding their hunting range and effectiveness. Next, guns made their way into the hands of buffalo hunters, making them increasingly deadly hunters. But it was that arrival of vast waves of white settlers in the 1800s — and their conflict with the Native American residents of the prairies — that spelled the end for the buffalo. Among the earliest waves of settlers were trappers and traders, people who made their living selling meat and hides. By the 1870s, they were shipping hundreds of thousands of buffalo hides eastward each year: more than 1.5 million were packed aboard trains and wagons in the winter of 1872-73 alone.”

Source: The American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation, Nature Series, PBS, 2008, 9 Oct, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/introduction/>

Source 7

“The commercial killers, however, weren’t the only ones shooting bison. Train companies offered tourists the chance to shoot buffalo from the windows of their coaches, pausing only when they ran out of ammunition or the gun’s barrel became too hot. There were even buffalo killing contests. In one, a Kansan set a record by killing 120 bison in just 40 minutes. “Buffalo” Bill Cody, hired to slaughter the animals, killed more than 4,000 buffalo in just two years.”

Source: The American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation, Nature Series, PBS, 2008, 9 Oct, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/introduction/>

Source 8

“Some U.S. government officials even promoted the destruction of the bison herds as a way to defeat their Native American enemies, who were resisting the takeover of their lands by white settlers. One Congressman, James Throckmorton of Texas, believed that “it would be a great step forward in the civilization of the Indians and the preservation of peace on the border if there was not a buffalo in existence.” Soon, military commanders were ordering their troops to kill buffalo — not for food, but to deny Native Americans their own source of food. One general believed that buffalo hunters “did more to defeat the Indian nations in a few years than soldiers did in 50.” By 1880, the slaughter was almost over. Where millions of buffalo once roamed, only a few thousand animals remained. Soon, their numbers dwindled, with the largest wild herd — just a few hundred animals — sheltered in the isolated valleys of the newly created Yellowstone National Park. As *American Buffalo* shows, it is from this tattered remnant that people are today trying to rebuild the once mighty buffalo nation.”

Source: *The American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation*, Nature Series, PBS, 2008, 9 Oct, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/introduction/>