

NEW WORDS:

prayed
Kootenai

SEEKING A SPIRIT

Kootenai Stories

Developed by the Kootenai Cultural Committee of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA: Plateau Region

STORY TYPE(S): Ideas of Spiritual Beliefs

Summary:

A young Kootenai boy named Lassaw went to the mountain to seek a spirit helper. To do this he was not to eat, drink or sleep and must continue to pray. Lassaw cut the tip of his finger off before a buffalo spirit spoke to him giving him long-life and good luck in the buffalo hunt.

This is a simplified explanation of what happens when one seeks a vision or guardian spirit which will provide one direction in life. Much more is done to prepare an individual for such a quest and it is a serious business even to consider such a venture. Many Plains tribes believe in fasting and the vision quest.

Teacher Guided Activities:



1. Discuss with students the idea of fasting and seeking vision. Reread *Catches Up To Antelope* or recall what guardian spirit was seen in the vision. Consider what other religions believe in not eating at certain times of the year. Speculate on why this might be done.



2. Encourage students to try and imagine what the actual experience of seeking a vision might be like. Give them a choice of one of the following creative writing exercises.

Imagine yourself on the mountain as Lassaw was. Could you write about what you are thinking, what you might see, what you do and what might happen?

Retell the story but change the ending. What if Lassaw saw something other than the buffalo spirit? What is the new spirit? What does the spirit tell Lassaw? How does this spirit aid Lassaw?

Student Activity Card(s):

See *Seeking a Spirit Card (17A-17B)*.