

# Buffalo and Eagle Wing

The following is a Blackfoot Legend. It is about Eagle Wing. He was a person granted special powers by Buffalo.

A long time ago, there was a special spring that gave transformative powers to anyone who drank from it. Buffalo drank from the spring and gained special powers allowing him to transform anyone into anything.

At that time, the Earth was flat, and the mountains were low. Man and animals could run swiftly because no obstacles stood in their way. Buffalo was traveling the land when he came across a mountain.

Buffalo asked the mountain, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

The mountain replied, "I would like to be transformed into something no one can climb."

Buffalo agreed to change the mountain into something no one would want to walk over or climb. He also gave the mountain transformative powers. It could then change as it wanted.

Later, he came to a village. Buffalo usually stayed away from people because he heard rumors that men would kill buffalo. Buffalo was curious though and met a grandmother and her grandson. They were kind to Buffalo, and Buffalo liked them.

He asked them, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

The grandmother replied, "I would like to always be with my grandson, wherever he goes."

Buffalo granted the grandmother's wish. Buffalo and the boy made a deal with one another. "I will teach you to be a swift runner like the buffalo. In exchange, you will keep men from hunting and killing buffalo."



Buffalo taught the boy to be a swift runner. He transformed the grandmother into the wind so she could be with the boy wherever he ran.

The boy returned to his people, fast, strong, and a powerful hunter.

The chief called the boy to him and said, "Teach us how to kill the buffalo. If you kill a buffalo and bring us the hide, I will adopt you so one day you can become chief."

The boy wanted to be chief so badly that he ignored his promise to Buffalo. He took hunters to the land of the buffalo and killed many buffalo for the men.

At the same time, Buffalo became thirsty and drank from a spring that did not have transformative powers. When Buffalo drank from the regular spring, he lost his powers. He returned to his home, only to see that the boy had killed the buffalo. Buffalo was angry that the boy did not keep his promise. He could not retaliate because he had lost his powers.

Buffalo asked the mountain if it could help him.

The mountain said, "I will scramble the trees so the men cannot easily chase the animals. I will scramble my surface and make it sharp so that when men try to scale my sides, they will cut their hands and feet. That will slow them down so they cannot catch the buffalo."

From that point forward, any time the swift runner, Eagle Wing, tried to run through the land of the buffalo, he would bruise his body with bushes and trees and cut his feet on the stones. This is how Buffalo punished Eagle Wing for breaking his promise.



# Questions

1. From what tribe did this myth originate?
  - Sioux
  - Blackfoot
  - Chumash
  - Iroquois
2. How did Buffalo come to have special powers?
  - He was born that way.
  - He drank from a special spring.
  - He ate special food.
  - The mountain gave him the powers.
3. What was the land like at the beginning of the myth?
  - Mountains were high.
  - Earth was bumpy.
  - Mountains were low.
  - There were no rivers.
4. How did Buffalo lose his powers?
  - He broke his promise to the mountain.
  - He broke his promise to the boy.
  - He drank from a regular spring.
  - He ate regular food.

5. Why did the boy ignore his promise to Buffalo?

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6. What lesson might the Blackfoot people have been trying to teach with this myth?

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# Answers

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- He broke his promise to the boy.
- He drank from a regular spring.**
- He ate regular food.

5. Why did the boy ignore his promise to Buffalo?

**Answers will vary. A possible answer is: The boy ignored his promise to Buffalo because he wanted to be adopted by the chief so he could be a chief someday.**

6. What lesson might the Blackfoot people have been trying to teach with this myth?

**Answers will vary. A possible answer is: The lesson might be that we should not try to become powerful if we have to break our promises to do so.**