



Summary

Caddo Native Peoples, known for their advanced archery skills, used the Osage orange wood from the Bois d'Arc tree to make bows. The Bois d'Arc tree is incredibly hard and dense which made for a superior choice for bow design. The Caddo used the bows for hunting and traded with other nations such as the French who traveled the Mississippi River. The name Bois d'Arc is French meaning "bow wood".

Dr. John Sibley spent time in Texas and Louisiana as an Indian agent for the United States government. He discovered that the Bois d'Arc tree had other possible uses that would be

of interest to the current President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was well-known for his interest in western flora and fauna (plants and animals) and so was Dr. Sibley. Dr. Sibley wrote a letter to the president describing how this unique wood could be used as a dye.

The letter, which is from the National Archives, is transcribed but the 19th century spelling remains.

The photograph is part of the collection at Legacy Dallas.

Student Activity

Teacher Notes: This could be challenging since the letter is written in 19th century language and spelling. Have students read the letter from John Sibley to President Jefferson. Complete the written document analysis of the letter using the Primary Source analysis. When complete, use the following for class discussion.

RESOURCES

- Letter from John Sibley to Thomas Jefferson
- Primary Source analysis sheet
- Bois d'Arc tree photo

CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some spelling differences?
- Why did Sibley write the President of the US?
- What important details did Sibley describe?
- How did the native peoples use the Bois d'Arc tree?
- What uses did Sibley suggest for the Bois d'Arc tree?

EXTRA RESEARCH QUESTION

- What other jobs/positions/ tasks did John Sibley have? Why was his opinion regarded by the President of the United States?

Analyzing a Primary Source

What is a primary source? A primary source is a first-person document, letter, photograph, drawing, newspaper article, speech, patent, or any other document that is one of a kind. Use the following questions to decipher your primary source!

What is the source type? (check all that apply)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chart | <input type="checkbox"/> Patent | <input type="checkbox"/> Presidential document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Painting | <input type="checkbox"/> Brochure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph | <input type="checkbox"/> Court document |

Write 2-3 sentences describing the document. Pretend the person you are explaining it to cannot see the document. Describe markings, handwriting, anything that makes the document unique.

Rewrite a sentence in your own words that has a similar meaning.

Basic Source Parts

What is the title of the document? _____

What is the date of the document? _____

Who was the author/creator of the document? _____

Where was it from? _____

What is the document's purpose? _____

Are there any vocabulary words you should look up? _____

Who is the intended audience of the source? _____

Historical Evidence

Why was this document created?

What specific events and/or people are mentioned in this source?

TEKS

SOCIAL STUDIES

Sixth Grade – 113.18 (c)

- (1) (A,B) History events
- (2) (A,B) History
- (6) (A) Economics, natural resource
- (13) (A,B) Culture-traits
- (14) (A-C) Culture-Analyze
- (15) (A-D) Culture-trade, communication
- (18) (A) Science, Technology and society
- (19) (A) Social Studies skills-primary source

Seventh Grade – 113.19 (c)

- (1) (A) History-Native Peoples
- (2) (A) History-Compare Cultures
- (19) (A,C) Science, Technology and society
- (20) (A,E,F) Social Studies skills-Primary document, critical thinking, various sources

Eighth Grade – 113.20 (c)

- (2) (A) History
- (6) (B) History
- (23) (A,D) Culture
- (29) (A,B,E) Social Studies skills

ELAR

Sixth Grade – 110.22 (b)

- (1) (A,D) Developing Oral language skills
- (5) (A-I) Comprehension skills
- (6) (A-I) Response Skills
- (12) (A,E) Inquiry and Research-primary document

Seventh Grade – 110.23 (b)

- (1) (A,D) Developing Oral language skills
- (5) (A,B,D-I) Comprehension skills
- (6) (A,B,D-H) Response skills
- (12) (A,E) Inquiry and Research

Eighth Grade – 110.24 (b)

- (5) (A-H) Comprehension skills
- (6) (A-J) Response skills
- (12) (A,E) Inquiry and Research

Letter from John Sibley to Thomas Jefferson

Natchitoches March 20th. 1804.

Sir,

I reside at present at Natchitoches on Red River in Louissiana am a Native of Massachusetts, have liv'd some years in Fayetteville North Carolina; was bred a Physician, the Practise as such I now Pursue. Since I have been on Red River which is about ten Months, amongst a Variety of Botanical observations have found here in almost exhaustless quantities a yellow wood the French call it *Boi d'Arc*; or Bow wood, I have heard it Call'd Saphira, it has a beautiful fine grain, takes a polish like a Varnish, when it is Nearly the Patent yellow Colour.—it is more elastic than any other wood; the Indians use it for Bows, and the Inhabitants sometimes for Ax helves and handles for other Tools, I think it would be highly esteem'd by Cabinet makers for Innlaying & Fineering, and by Turners.—But probably would be more Valuable as a dye wood; a few days ago I had some experiments made in colouring with it, and have taken the Liberty of Inclosing to you some samples of colours it produc'd Nos. 1, 2 & 3 are what a decoction of the wood made without any thing else being added, the difference in the Shades are from the article remaining a little longer or shorter time in the dye. No. 2 is sheeps wool. all the other colours from 3 to 12 were made by the addition of Salt of Tarter, Blue Vitriol or Logwood in small quantities and a Variation of proportions—I have no doubt by a person Skill'd in dyeing a very numerous Variety of Colours might be produc'd from this Wood as the Basis; from an experiment I beleive the Colours will Neither Wash out; nor fade by Washing. I have not seen the Tree in foliage therefore can give no account of it in that respect; some of them grow to the size of two or three feet in diameter, not tall, but somewhat resembling an Appletree

Many other woods, shrubs & herbs grow here that I have Never seen in any of the United States, their particular uses will no doubt be found out.—did I not with almost every body else look up to you as the Patron of arts and usefull discoveries I should not have address'd you on this Subject, I hope you will have the goodness to pardon any presumption. and while I intreat you to accept of my best wishes in your private as well as public capacity, beg Leave to make you a tender of my services in whatever manner you may think proper to command them

In the mean time I am Sir with the Greatest respect & Esteem Your Most Hble Servt.

John Sibley.

Bois d'Arc tree

