**Age suitability 8 Plus.**

**Bear and the bullberries.**

**From Blackfeet Indian Stories by George Bird Grinnell**

[Start of Story](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CGMIT%5CMy%20Documents%5Cstorybud%20files%20dec%2012%5Cbear_and_bullberries.htm#start)

**Scattered over the prairie in northern Montana, close to the mountains, are many great rocks--boulders which thousands of years ago, when the great ice-sheet covered northern North America, were carried from the mountains out over the prairie by the ice and left there when it melted. Around most of these great boulders the buffalo used to walk from time to time, rubbing against the rough surface of the rock to scratch themselves, as a cow rubs itself against a post or as a horse rolls on the ground--for the pleasant feeling that the rubbing of the skin gives it. As the buffalo walked around these boulders their hoofs loosened the soil, and this loosened soil--the dust--was blown away by the constant winds of summer. So, around most of these boulders, much of the soil is gone, leaving a deep trench, at the bottom of which are stones and gravel, too large to be moved by the wind. This story explains how these rocks came to be like that: Once Old Man was crossing a river and the stream was deep, so that he was carried away by the current, and lost his bow and arrows and other weapons. When he got to the shore he began to look about for something to use in making a bow and arrows, for he was hungry and wanted to kill some food.**

**He took the first wood he could find and made a bow and arrows and a handle for his knife. When he had finished these things he started on his way. Presently, as he looked over a hill he saw down below him a bear digging roots. Old Man thought he would have some fun with the bear, and he called out aloud, "He has no tail." Then he dodged back out of sight. The bear looked all about, but saw no one, and again began to dig roots. Then Old Man again peeped over the hill and saw the bear at work, and again called out, "He has no tail." This time the bear looked up more quickly, but Old Man dodged down, and the bear did not see him, and pretty soon went on with his digging. Four times Old Man did this, calling the bear names, but the fourth time the bear was on the watch and saw Old Man, and started after him. Old Man ran away as hard as he could, but the bear followed fast. Presently, Old Man tried to shoot the bear with his arrows, but they were made of bad wood and would not fly well, and if they hit the bear, they just broke off. All his weapons failed him, and now the bear was close to him. Just in front was a great rock, and when Old Man came to that, he dodged behind it and ran around to the other side, and the bear followed him.**

**They kept running around the rock for a long time and wore a deep trail about it, and because Old Man could turn more quickly, he kept just ahead of the bear. Old Man kept calling to the animals to help him, but no one came. He was almost out of breath, and the bear was close to him, when Old Man saw lying on the ground a bull's horn. He picked it up and held it on his head and turned around and bellowed loudly, and the bear was frightened and turned around and ran away as hard as he could. Then Old Man leaned up against the rock, and breathed hard for a long time, but at last he got his wind back. He said to the rock, "This is the way you rocks shall always be after this, with a big hole all around you." By this time he was pretty tired and thirsty, and he thought he would go down to the river and drink. When he got to the edge of the water he got down on his knees to drink, and there before him in the water he saw bullberries, great bunches of them. He said to himself, "I will dive in and get those bull-berries"; and he took off his moccasins and clothing and dived in, but he could not find the bullberries, and presently he came up. He looked into the water again, and again saw the bullberries. He said to himself, "Those bullberries must be very deep down."**

**He went along the shore looking for a heavy stone that would take him down into the deep water where the bullberries were, and when he found one he tied the stone to his neck and again dived in. This time he sank to the bottom, for the stone carried him down. He felt about with his hands trying to reach the bullberries, but could feel nothing and began to drown. He tried to get free from the stone, but that was hard to do; yet at last he broke the string and came to the top of the water. He was almost dead, and it took him a long time to get to the shore, and when he got there he crawled up on to the bank and lay down to rest and get his breath. As he lay there on his back, he saw above him the thick growing bullberries whose reflections he had seen in the water. He said to himself, "And I was almost drowned for these." Then he took a stick and with it began to beat the bullberry bushes. He said to the bushes, "After this, the people shall beat you in this way when they want to gather berries." The Blackfeet women, when gathering bullberries, spread robes under the bushes and beat the branches with sticks, knocking off the berries, which fall on the robes.**

**The end.**