Traces at Cooper

Use archaeological evidence to explain early Native presence in Oklahoma

OKH.C.1.2 "Explain the significance of the Cooper Bison Kill Site as credible evidence of the early presence of prehistoric Native cultures."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle mentions of two physical finds, the Folsom points and the skull marked with red ocher. Underline two sentences that explain how those finds support a claim about human activity at Cooper.

What the Cooper Site Can Tell Us

1. In northwestern Oklahoma, the Cooper Bison Kill Site holds traces of hunts from more than 10,000 years ago. Archaeologists excavated three separate deposits of bison bones at the site. Among the bones were carefully shaped stone spear points called Folsom points. These objects matter because a bison can die without people nearby, but a crafted point is evidence of human activity. When a point is found in a bison kill deposit, its position helps connect hunters to that animal at that place. The site therefore documents early Native presence in what is now Oklahoma, rather than merely showing that bison once crossed the region.

2. Folsom points have a distinctive groove, or flute, removed from the base of the stone. Archaeologists recognize this tool style at other ancient sites, which helps them place Cooper within the Folsom tradition. The excavators recorded where the points and bones lay, not just what they collected. That record matters: an isolated point could have been moved long after it was used, while a point found with bison remains provides a stronger link between a tool and a hunt. The separate bone deposits also show evidence of more than one killing event, not just a single moment preserved underground.

3. One bison skull at Cooper bears red ocher, a mineral pigment. Its coloring suggests that people did more than make tools at the site, although the purpose of the paint is unknown. The skull adds to the picture of human activity, but the stone points found with the bones provide the clearest link between hunters and bison. Together, these finds make Cooper valuable evidence for the early presence of a prehistoric Native culture in Oklahoma. They do not prove that the hunters built homes there or stayed year-round. A strong historical explanation separates what the finds support from what remains uncertain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why are Folsom points found with bison bones stronger evidence of early Native presence than bison bones alone?

2. How does the shape of a Folsom point help identify the early Native culture represented at Cooper?

3. What do the three separate bone deposits add to an explanation of early Native activity at Cooper?

4. How does the skull marked with red ocher add to the evidence, and what can it not tell us?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word museum label explaining why Cooper is credible evidence of early Native presence in Oklahoma. Connect two different physical finds to your claim, explain why their excavation context matters, and identify one claim the site cannot prove.

Traces at Cooper

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle mentions of two physical finds, the Folsom points and the skull marked with red ocher. Underline two sentences that explain how those finds support a claim about human activity at Cooper. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why are Folsom points found with bison bones stronger evidence of early Native presence than bison bones alone?	**Bison could have died without people nearby. Crafted points found with their bones connect human hunters to the animals at Cooper.**
2	How does the shape of a Folsom point help identify the early Native culture represented at Cooper?	**Its distinctive flute matches a tool style known from other ancient sites, placing Cooper within the Folsom tradition.**
3	What do the three separate bone deposits add to an explanation of early Native activity at Cooper?	**They provide evidence of more than one bison killing event, rather than a single event.**
4	How does the skull marked with red ocher add to the evidence, and what can it not tell us?	**The pigment suggests human activity beyond making tools, but the skull does not reveal why people colored it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At Cooper, stone Folsom points found among bison bones connect human hunters to animals killed in northwestern Oklahoma more than 10,000 years ago. Their recorded location matters because a point lying alone would be weaker evidence of a hunt. A bison skull marked with red ocher adds evidence that people handled materials there, though its meaning is unknown. Three separate bone deposits point to repeated killing events. These finds show early Native presence at the site, but they cannot prove the hunters lived there year-round.

Accept explanations that link crafted points and the marked skull to human activity while distinguishing evidence of presence from evidence of residence. Students should explain why a find's recorded position among the remains strengthens the claim.