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Then Paragraph

Early in the 19th century an estimated fifty to seventy million buffalo roamed America's Great Plains. The Plains Native Americans hunted bison for centuries. Buffalo meat not only provided their main source of food, but Indians used hides for clothing and tepees. No part of the animal was wasted. The blood was made into paint, the bones used for tools, and the droppings burned as fuel. After the Civil War white farmers and ranchers wanted tribal lands to grow crops and graze cattle. They killed buffalo, as did railroad companies who used the meat to feed their workers. Thirteen million animals were killed after the Civil War. Millions more were slaughtered by hunters, who sold each hide for between one and three dollars. By 1872 only seven million animals remained. However, the US military killed millions more in an effort to force Native Americans off their hunting grounds onto reservations. In the 1890's the buffalo neared extinction, with less than one thousand bison remaining in the entire United States. Fortunately twenty to fifty buffalo found refuge in Yellowstone National Park, where it was illegal to hunt bison. This small herd was protected in our first national park, and for this reason, the buffalo survived into the 20th century.

Now Paragraph

The bison protected in Yellowstone National Park are no longer endangered. In 1902 they numbered only twenty-three buffalo, but today the National Park Service estimates that the two herds fluctuate between a total of 2300 and 4500 animals. In addition, over 400,000 buffalo are raised as livestock on ranches outside of Yellowstone. In April of 2012 seventy-one Yellowstone bison were allowed to leave the park to roam freely in nearby grassland. The Sioux Indians welcomed the animals back to the wild, as did conservationists and buffalo hunters. However, farmers and ranchers in the region fear the bison will damage their fences, eat their crops, and compete with cattle for grassland, as they did a century ago. Native tribes say the buffalo should be free to roam beyond Yellowstone's park boundaries, as they once did. Farmers and ranchers say no, the animals threaten their livelihood. It is not clear who will win the argument, but the buffalo are here to stay, thanks to the protection they receive in Yellowstone National Park.

Works Cited

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