



# Lewis and Clark

## Suggested Pre-visit Activities

These activities are tied into the Missouri, Illinois, and national standards for Social Studies and Language Arts.



## Lesson Overview

Students will begin to understand the amount of planning and preparation needed to make the Lewis and Clark Expedition successful.

## Objectives

Students who participate in these activities will be able to

- list at least five items and/or supplies taken by Lewis and Clark on the expedition
- discuss the size of the keelboat used by the expedition
- discuss the skills and qualities required by those on the expedition
- discuss the geography of the route followed by the expedition

---

## Historical Background

The year was 1804. The United States of America, entering its 28<sup>th</sup> year, was feeling constricted. Since gaining their independence from Great Britain, the western boundary of the country rested along the Mississippi River. The Spanish controlled Florida, the Gulf Coast, and the Louisiana Territory, which stretched from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The British claimed the northern country of Canada, and Native Americans were struggling against waves of settlers to protect their homelands.

Thomas Jefferson, elected as the third president in 1800, had long dreamed of the westward expansion of the United States. He envisioned a country stretching from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific Ocean. The Mississippi River and its many tributaries provided transportation and commercial routes to the inner part of the continent. President Jefferson believed those upper tributaries fell near sources of rivers which flowed westward to the Pacific, and that travel from the headwaters of an eastern flowing river to the headwaters of a western flowing river might constitute a Northwest Passage, a water route across the interior of the country. Mapping the area would prove the centuries old rumor true or false.

The truth was that the eastern people of the United States had inadequate knowledge of the vast middle of the continent. Although the Native Americans of the Great Plains knew the resources and geography of the land, they had little or no contact with the Europeans. Thomas Jefferson realized that knowledge of the continent's midsection was crucial to the development and expansion of the United States. He planned an expedition across the vast western territory to be led by Meriwether Lewis, a former U.S. Army Lieutenant and Jefferson's personal secretary.

In the midst of planning the expedition, Spain and France, through European diplomatic ties, exchanged ownership of the Louisiana territory in 1762. Diplomats from the United States quickly offered to buy New Orleans from France. Napoleon, the leader of the French nation, needed money and counteroffered to sell the 828,000 square mile Louisiana Territory to the United States for approximately \$15 million dollars—less than five cents an acre! The diplomats thought this a bargain and quickly agreed to the deal.

Jefferson's expedition would now be traveling for the most part through territory owned by the United States. Meriwether Lewis chose his former commanding officer, William Clark, as his co-leader, and the two men selected a crew to journey up the Missouri River, beginning at its confluence with the Mississippi. The "Corps of Discovery for North Western Exploration" was now officially formed.

Jefferson wrote detailed instructions for the Corps of Discovery. The expedition was instructed to map the area, compute latitude and longitude, look for commercial trade routes, identify flora and fauna unfamiliar to Western science, note possible resources which would support future settlement, and interact positively with American Indian tribes. The most important task these men had was the recording of all their findings in daily journals.

With these instructions, Thomas Jefferson's calculating mind, and Lewis and Clark's military backgrounds, it is no wonder the preparations were extensive. About five months before their departure, the expedition established Camp River DuBois, Illinois as a training site and winter

---

quarters. Located 18 miles upstream from St. Louis, near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, this site served as the starting point for the journey. The group set out for the relatively unexplored West on May 14, 1804 at four o'clock in the afternoon, beginning their two and a half year odyssey.

Throughout the trek, the Expedition encountered new places, new people, new plants, and new animals. The first winter was spent near the Mandan and Hidatsa tribes in what is now North Dakota. The Corps built Fort Mandan and endured cold like they had never known before. In April, a small group returned to St. Louis with the keelboat and several specimens. Sacagawea, a Shoshone Indian woman, her husband Charbonneau, and her young son joined the expedition as interpreters. The next spring, summer and fall, they made their way over the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, with great assistance from the various tribes along the way. The party reached the Pacific Ocean in November 1805. Lewis and Clark built a shelter for the winter named Fort Clatsop, after the local American Indian tribe. During the dreary winter, they spent their time hunting and making clothes of animal skins for their return journey. In the spring of 1806, they started their journey home, exploring more of the Upper Missouri and the Bitterroot Range. Although the return trip was difficult, the Corps of Discovery arrived in St. Louis on September 23, 1806. Success! Word of their return and their discoveries spread quickly, first among the citizens of St. Louis and then across the country.

Not much information exists on the lives of the Corps of Discovery members after the journey. Once they received payment for their services in money and land, they went their own ways. William Clark was appointed brigadier general of militia in the Louisiana Territory which included the title, agent of Indian affairs for the West. Later he served as governor of the Missouri Territory. St. Louis continued to be his home until his death in 1838. Meriwether Lewis was appointed governor of the Louisiana Territory. In 1809, on a trip to Washington, he died at an inn in Tennessee under suspicious circumstances. John Colter left the group on the return trip and ended up as a well-known fur trapper. George Shannon became active in Kentucky and Missouri politics. Sacagawea, her husband and son returned to live with the Indians of the middle Missouri. Her son was later educated under the guidance of William Clark in St. Louis. York, Clark's slave and the only African American to make the trip, eventually was granted his freedom.

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the nation, and Lewis and Clark's Expedition chronicled the new lands. The journals contained detailed information gathered on the trek to the Pacific Ocean and back. People learned about the various American Indian tribes and the differences among their cultures. The flora and fauna that were described enriched science and sparked further interest in beaver trapping and buffalo hunting. Mapping encouraged exploration and destroyed any hope of finding a Northwest Passage. The United States had only begun to understand the incredible resource they now claimed.

---

## Vocabulary

*barter* - to trade by exchanging one commodity for another

*buckskin* – the skin or hide from the male deer

*Columbia River* - flows out of British Columbia, Canada southerly through the State of Washington and turns west at the Washington and Oregon border, at which point it travels to the Pacific

*communique'* - an official communication

*continental divide* - a ridge that separates streams which flow to opposite sides of the continent

*cordelling* – a way of moving a boat upriver by pulling it with a rope

*expedition* - a journey undertaken for a specific purpose or a group of people making such a journey

*fauna* - the animals of a particular region

*flintlock* – a firing mechanism on a musket or a rifle that uses flint and steel to make a spark which in turn makes it fire the round lead bullet

*fort* – a place where soldiers live and work

*flora* - the plants of a particular region

*keelboat* - a shallow riverboat with a keel that is rowed, poled or towed. A keel is a longitudinal timber extending along the center of a hull to keep it from overturning.

*moccasins* – shoes made out of animal skin, usually from a buffalo, elk, or deer

*native* – that which is or has to do with the place where one was born; characteristic of people living in a particular place.

*negotiations* - to confer with another so as to arrive at the settlement of some matter

*Northwest Passage* - The name given to a northern water route believed to exist on the North American continent. This route was thought to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and would serve as a “shortcut” between Europe and the islands of the Far East. Such a route does not exist.

*pirogue* – a dugout canoe

*trade* - the business of buying and selling commodities

---

## Suggested Activity

Lewis and Clark had much planning to do prior to their departure. Men had to be recruited, the boats had to be built, food and supplies purchased, and some of the basic parts of the trip had to be planned ahead of time, so the journey would run smoothly as they made their way west.

Divide your students into five groups. Each group will be responsible for planning a certain aspect of the expedition. The five topics are:

transportation  
food  
clothing  
shelter  
tribal relations

Assign each group one of the five topics above. Have the student groups discuss how they would handle their specific task while on the expedition, including making a list of necessary supplies. Then have them divide their list into items they would need to carry with them and items they would be able to obtain along the way. Bring everyone back together and discuss their findings. A list of the most common supplies can be found on the following page.

\*\*\*

## Extension Activities

The keelboat that the expedition used from Wood River, Illinois (Camp DuBois) to Fort Mandan in North Dakota was 55 feet long and 8 feet wide. Have students use tape to outline the dimensions of the boat.

\*\*\*

Lewis and Clark, and several other expedition members, kept detailed journals throughout the expedition. They made sketches and notes of the new plants, animals and people they discovered. Have students keep a journal for one week, including sketches and notes of new things they see and new people they meet.

\*\*\*

Co-captains, Meriweather Lewis and William Clark were responsible for assembling their own group of men to accompany them on the expedition. In the end, the captains recruited over forty men. Some of the men would travel only through the first winter (1804-1805) and return to St. Louis in the spring (1805) with the specimens that had been collected up until that point.

As a class or in small groups brainstorm the kinds of skills and qualities you think Lewis and Clark were looking for in the men they recruited. Taking the activity a step further and have students create a job posting for a member of the expedition.

---

Using the map on the following page, have students answer the following questions.

- List the states formed out of the Louisiana Purchase.
- List the states formed out of what was once Spanish Territory.
- The dark lines indicate the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Find the names of the rivers they followed and label them on your map.
- What states did the expedition travel through?
- Along which ocean did they spend the winter of 1805-1806?
- If the expedition left Camp DuBois on May 14, 1804 and arrived back in St. Louis on September 23, 1806, how many days did the expedition last?

\*\*\*

### Supply List

Below is an example of the wide variety of items Lewis and Clark packed for the journey. The majority of supplies would be used by the members of the expedition, but room was allowed for items that would be used as gifts and trade with the Native Americans. In all, 12 tons of supplies were loaded into the keelboat as they began their journey.

Compare the lists below with the lists compiled by the students in the first activity.

#### Expedition Supplies

4+ barrels of biscuits  
candlemolds  
chronometer (*very accurate time keeping device*)  
150 lbs of coffee  
pocket compass  
30+ half barrels of flour  
420 lbs of sheet lead  
176 lbs gunpowder  
8 pieces of mosquito netting  
14 bags of parch meal (*dried and ground grains*)  
50 kegs of salt pork (*pork preserved with salt*)  
193 lbs of portable soup (*canned soup*)  
15 new model 1803 rifles  
15 rifle slings  
15 powder horns (*gun powder containers*)  
7 barrels of salt  
2 sextants (*a navigational instrument*)  
5 kegs of spirits (*whiskey*)  
2 bags of sugar  
3 thermometers  
4 oz cinnamon  
6 brass inkstands  
6 papers of ink powder (*mixed with water to make ink*)

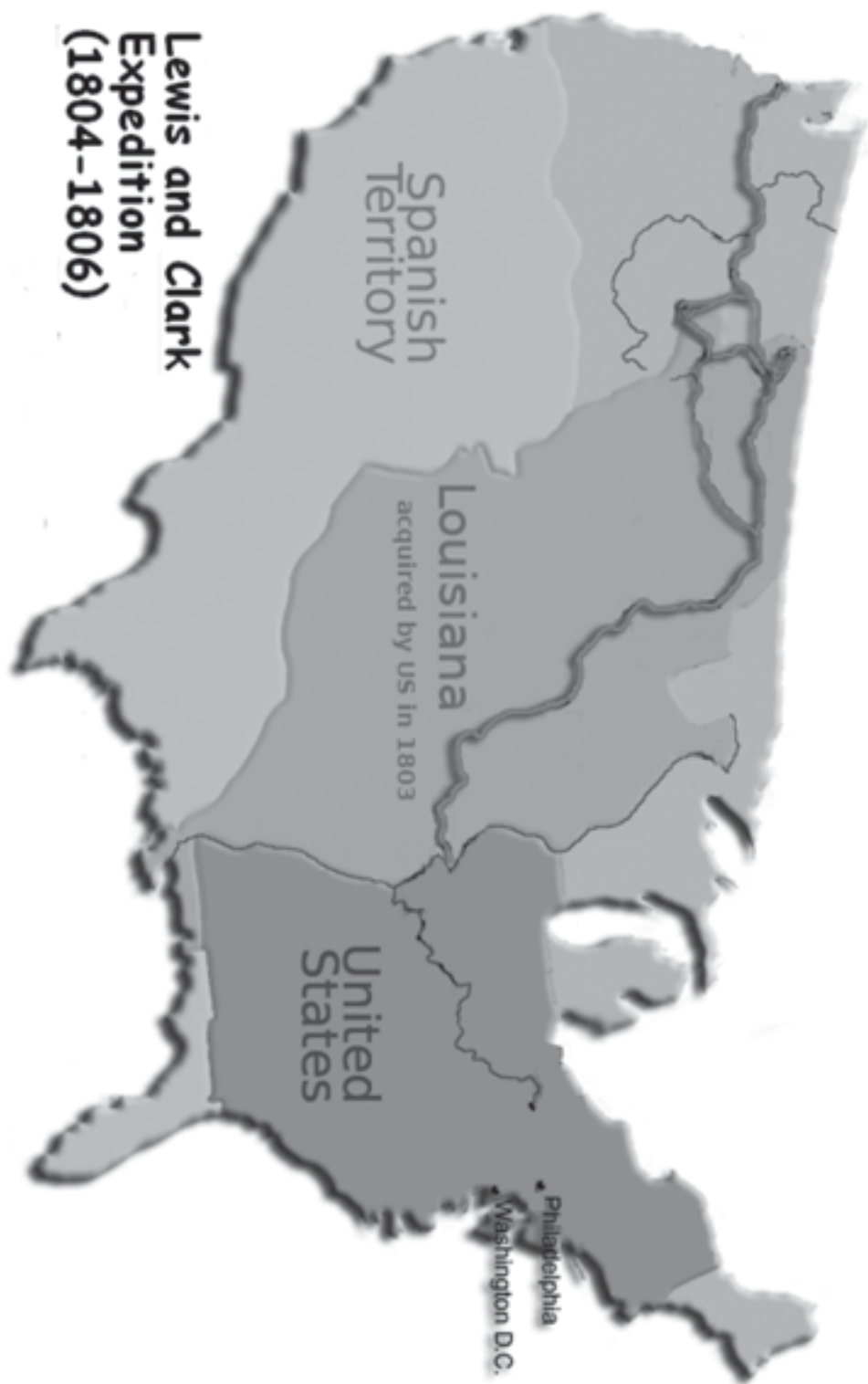
#### Native American Trade Items

73 bunches of beads  
500 broaches (*decorative pins*)  
small brass bells  
ivory combs (*decoration for hair*)  
48 calico ruffled shirts  
red and blue silk ribbons  
144 small scissors

#### Supplies and Trade Items

1,152 awls (*a pointed tool for piercing holes*)  
2800 assorted fish hooks  
47 1/2 yards of flannel  
288 steel strikers (*used with flint to make sparks for fire*)  
4,600 sewing needles  
24 pipe hawks (*combination pipe and tomahawk*)  
100 burning glasses (*mirrors*)  
288 brass thimbles (*metal finger cap to protect while sewing*)

\*\*\*





---

## Reading List

### Students

- Bohner, Charles. *Bold Journey: West with Lewis and Clark*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- Bowen, Andy Russell. *The Back of Beyond: A Story about Lewis and Clark*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1997.
- Brown, Marion Marsh. *Sacagawea: Indian Interpreter to Lewis and Clark*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1988.
- Cavan, Seamus. *Lewis and Clark and the Route to the Pacific*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1991.
- Fifer, Barbara. *Going along with Lewis and Clark*. Helena: American and World Geographic Publishing/Montana Magazine, 2000.
- Lourie, Peter. *In the Path of Lewis and Clark*. Parsippany, NJ: Silver Burdett Press, 1997.
- O'Dell, Scott. *Streams to the Rivers, Rivers to the Sea*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.
- Roop, Peter and Connie, Editors. *Off the Map: Journals of Lewis and Clark*. New York: Walker and Company, 1993.
- Smith, Roland. *The Captain's Dog*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
- St. George, Judith. *Sacagawea*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1997.

### Older Students and Adults

- Ambrose, Stephen E. *Undaunted Courage*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- Andrist, Ralph K. *To the Pacific with Lewis and Clark*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Blumberg, Rhoda. *The Incredible Journey of Lewis and Clark*. New York: Beech Tree, 1995.
- Duncan, Dayton and Ken Burns. *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*. New York: Knopf, 1997.
- Edwards, Judith. *Lewis and Clark's Journey of Discovery in American History*. Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 1999.
- Moeller, Bill. *Lewis and Clark: A Photographic Journey*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishers, 1999.
- Schmidt, Thomas and Jeremy Schmidt. *The Saga of Lewis and Clark into the Uncharted West*. New York: DK Publishing, 1999.



