



Maggie's Activity Pack!

Name _____

Date _____

Remembering A Great Adventure... The Journey of Lewis and Clark

Two hundred years ago, in February 1803, President Thomas Jefferson got approval from the United States Congress for a great adventure. This was the first step in the epic story of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Read the article below to find out more about the adventures of this expedition as they searched for the northwest passage!

President Thomas Jefferson wondered if Americans could travel along the Missouri River and then the Columbia River to get to the Pacific Ocean. He hoped this was possible because he knew that a good transportation route to the west would help with the fur trade. Both the Congress and President Jefferson also wanted to know more about the plants, animals, geography, and climate of the west. They wanted to understand the customs and traditions of the Indians who made their home in this area.

For this great adventure, Thomas Jefferson chose a neighbor from his home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Meriwether Lewis had spent his boyhood exploring the woods of Virginia. He had a natural curiosity and good knowledge of plants and animals. The president sent Lewis to visit his scientific friends in Philadelphia. These people taught him to use the stars to navigate, how to use field medicine, and taught him about the natural sciences. While meeting with these scientists, Lewis bought a Newfoundland dog. Seaman would go along on this epic expedition.

Lewis knew he would need a talented partner for this adventure. He asked a friend from the army, William Clark, to be his co-leader. Clark had many skills from his boyhood in the forests of Virginia and Kentucky. He had the ability to make maps. This would be helpful to the expedition.

In December 1803, Lewis and Clark journeyed to their staging area near St. Louis, Missouri. They camped where the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers meet. Here they enlisted many men and soldiers to join them.

On May 14, 1804 about 45 men set out from this point. They traveled in a 55 foot keelboat and 2 smaller boats. Immediately they found it was not easy to navigate. Lots of rain, high winds, and even sunken trees made traveling difficult.

In early November 1804, the expedition finally arrived in North Dakota. Here they spent 4 weeks making a fort they called Fort Mandan. They met the Minitari Indians and learned about their customs. The group spent 5 busy months in this area. Some of the men made tools and traded these with the Indians. In exchange they received food like corn and beans. They talked with the Indians and French to get advice and information about their planned route.

Probably the most important outcome of their stay in North Dakota was their friendship with Sacagawea. She was a Shoshoni Indian who came to the camp with her husband. At the age of 12, Sacagawea had been kidnapped from her tribal area in the Rocky Mountains and brought to North Dakota. She spoke several Indian languages and was knowledgeable about the land. Immediately, Lewis and Clark recognized how valuable Sacagawea would be to their expedition. They also knew that just her presence would help convince the Indians in the west that this was a peaceful mission. Women did not travel with war parties.

It wasn't just Sacagawea and her husband that joined the travelers. Before the group resumed their travels, Sacagawea gave birth to a baby boy, Jean Baptiste. William Clark took a special liking to the baby. He nicknamed him Pomp because he liked to dance around.

As the group moved west they saw many herds of buffalo, elk, antelope, and deer. There was always danger, though. Many grizzly bears lived in the area, and these bears often charge intruders. They also faced terrible weather. There were high winds and the boats were often in danger of tipping over. But the group forged on, and by the end of May 1805, they laid eyes on the Rocky Mountains.

This meant Lewis and Clark had a decision to make. In this area the Missouri River seems to divide in two. It took them 9 days to decide whether to take the south branch or the north branch. Finally the men realized that the south branch was the route to take. Later they came to a big waterfall. While this obstacle was usually a problem for the expedition, this waterfall was welcomed. They had been told to expect falls around this area of the Missouri River. Now Lewis and Clark knew for sure they had taken the right route. Still it was not an easy task to portage around the falls. The weather was hot. There was torrential rain and hail. The group had to climb steep hills, and the spines of the prickly pear hurt their feet.

On July 25, 1805, the group again reached a division in the Missouri River. This time there were 3 forks. They followed the fork that headed west and even named it for Thomas Jefferson.

Soon Lewis decided to go on ahead. In August, he reached a very important point. He came to a brook and saw it ran west. He had reached the Continental Divide! This is the place where the continent of North America divides. East of this place, all rivers run east. West of the Continental Divide, the rivers run west.

Before long, Lewis met some Shoshoni women who were digging edible roots. This was the tribe of Sacagawea! Lewis and several Shoshoni on horses rode back to the main party. They made camp together and called it Camp Fortunate. Imagine Sacagawea's joy when she saw a girlfriend from her childhood. This friend told Sacagawea that her brother was now the chief of the Shoshoni! It must have been quite a scene when she saw her family again after so many years. Journal entries of the group describe the reunion as being very emotional.

Finally the entire group crossed the Continental Divide and traded with the Shoshoni Indians. The horses they received were helpful in following the old Indian trails across Montana and Idaho. Again, though, weather made the journey difficult. There were early snowstorms and frigid air. This made finding food nearly impossible.

When the expedition met the Nez Perce in September of 1805, they were so happy to eat the roots, berries, and salmon this tribe gave them. Unfortunately, because they were not used to this kind of food, it made them sick. After recovering, the group left their horses with the Nez Perce. They made new canoes and navigated the huge boulders and dangerous rapids of the Clearwater River.

In early October 1805, the group reached the Snake River and then came to the Columbia River. Excitement ran high on November 7, 1805, when the group thought they saw the Pacific Ocean! But they got a surprise. It was only the storm waters of the estuary of the Columbia River. The Pacific was still 25 miles away. And when traveling on foot, 25 miles is a long way! For 9 long days the group was forced to camp while a storm raged. It wasn't until the middle of November that the group stood on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. They had reached their goal! This journey had taken 554 days, and they had traveled 4132 miles.

The group had with them a letter of credit from President Jefferson promising payment to any ship that would take them back. It was a good thing Lewis and Clark did not want to do this. There were not any ships to be seen.

A camp was made on the north shore of the river. But it was soon apparent there were terrible storms and poor hunting in this area. An historic first took place. The expedition took a vote on whether they should move to the south side of the river. This was the first time the votes of a black man and a woman were counted in an American election.

Soon the group moved and built new quarters which they named Fort Clatsop for the Indians that lived near-by. Here the group engaged in many activities including hunting elk and making clothing. Lewis studied the plants, animals, climate, and Indian life. He recorded his observations in his journal. Clark spent his time making sure his maps were up to date. One day a whale washed up on the beach. Sacagawea and others took oil and blubber from it.

On March 23, 1806 the expedition started back. They arrived in St. Louis on September 23 of the same year. They brought with them a huge wealth of information about Indian life and the plants, animals, and climate of the west. But, they had to tell President Jefferson that there was not an easy northwest passage. They discovered that the Rocky Mountains were just too wide to make an easy connection between the east and west coast of the young country.

The trip had been difficult, but Lewis and Clark remained friends. Their adventure is still a model for the American spirit. Yet, there are some parts of the expedition that cause some embarrassment. The leaders and their men received gifts of land. Sacagawea received nothing. Clark had taken along a black slave, York. His help had been valuable to the expedition. But it is still not clear if he ever received his freedom. Today we can learn from these mistakes of the past. Perhaps you will want to go further and study the important individual contributions of these two people who were such an important part of this great American adventure!

Thinking About It

A. Make a list of at least 3 ways Sacagawea was helpful to the Lewis and Clark expedition.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. You read several ways some Indian tribes were helpful to Lewis and Clark.
List 3 of those ways.

1.

2.

3.

When studying history, it is important to know the order in which things happened. Dates are important in helping us to understand how long things took. Look at this time line of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Use the article to help you fill in the date boxes. The first one is done for you. When you finish you will have a visual picture of the journey.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Feb.
1803

President Jefferson gets approval from Congress for the expedition.

Lewis and Clark journey to St. Louis.

The expedition sets out.

The group leaves the Pacific Ocean and starts back east.

Lewis and Clark arrive back in St. Louis.

Writing About History

Imagine life on the trail with the Lewis and Clark expedition. What conversations might have taken place? Choose one of the following ideas and write what you think might have been said.

- What might Sacagawea have said to her childhood girlfriend when they met after so many years?
- What might two expedition members have discussed before voting whether or not to move to the south side of the river?
- Imagine Meriwether Lewis standing on the Continental Divide with his dog, Seaman. What might he have said to the dog?
- What do you think President Thomas Jefferson said to Meriwether Lewis when he asked him to go on this adventure?
- What might members of one of the Indian tribes have said to each other about the expedition?



Dear Colleague,

We are all sure to hear quite a bit about the Lewis and Clark expedition in the next few years. The United States Forest Service has wonderful pamphlets and material highlighting the bicentennial of this great American adventure. Many books and movies are available to help your students learn more about this journey. Our activity packet is meant to serve as a beginning overview. Hopefully you and your students will take the opportunity to research more about people such as York who took part in the hunt for the Northwest Passage. I felt it was important to note the way both Sacagawea and York were treated. You may want to have a class discussion about issues such as this. Following are the answers to the time line. You could also point out that making such a line is a good way to study for tests. Of course, answers to the **Thinking About It** and **Writing About History** sections will vary.

Happy teaching!

Kathy

- Box 1 – Answer is given
- Box 2 – Dec. 1803
- Box 3 – May 14, 1804
- Box 4 – Nov. 1804
- Box 5 – May 1805
- Box 6 – Aug. 1805
- Box 7 – Oct. 1805
- Box 8 – Nov. 16, 1805
- Box 9 – March 23, 1806
- Box 10 – Sept. 23, 1806

Goals:

Students will read an article about the Lewis and Clark expedition. They will demonstrate their ability to recall and summarize information by making lists of important facts. They will exhibit their ability to find specific content in a social studies passage by completing a timeline. Students will also demonstrate the ability to understand historic people by imagining their feelings and writing realistic conversations based on historic facts. This activity is available on two levels, primary and intermediate.