

Lewis and Clark – Main Ideas Focus

After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Thomas Jefferson selected Meriwether Lewis to lead an expedition to explore the wilderness, Native Americans, botany, and geology of the new lands acquired in the deal. Lewis selected William Clark to help him in this colossal effort. The expedition became known as the Corps of Discovery. Little did they know, that this adventure would become one of the most storied in American history.

On May 14, 1804, the historic journey began, as Lewis, Clark, and 38 other Corps members sailed from St. Charles, Missouri, west on the Missouri River. Averaging about 20 miles of distance per day, the Corps sailed past La Charette, the last White settlement on the Missouri River on May 25. On July 4, the Corps celebrated the first Independence Day spent west of the Mississippi River by firing their keelboat cannon and naming a creek (near present day Atchison, Kansas) Independence Creek.

On August 3, 1804, the Corps encountered Native Americans for the first time near present day Omaha, Nebraska. The Native Americans were presented with such gifts as peace medals and flags and told of a "Great Father to the East" that would ensure their prosperity provided they didn't attack White settlers. On August 20, the Corps experienced their first and only death when Charles Floyd died of a burst appendix. Nevertheless, the expedition continued. As the Corps entered the Great Plains, new animals previously unknown such as coyote and antelope were recorded. As the Corps sailed north, they met up with the Teton Sioux. Near present-day Pierre, South Dakota, the Teton Sioux (Lakota) demanded one of their boats as a toll for moving farther upriver. A fight nearly ensued, but was defused by the diplomacy of a chief named Black Buffalo. For three more anxious days, the expedition stayed with the tribe.

On October 24, the Corps reached the villages of the Mandan near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. The villages were huge, and contained more people than many major cities in America. Lewis and Clark decided to build a fort, which they named Fort Mandan, across the river from the Indian villages. Communication was constantly an issue between the Corps of Discovery and local Indian tribes. For this reason, Lewis and Clark hired Toussaint Charbonneau, a French-Canadian fur-trapper and his wife, Sacagawea, to translate for them when they headed west toward the mountains.

1.) Which of the following WAS NOT something likely experienced by the Lewis and Clark expedition as described in the third paragraph?

- a.) boredom
- b.) sadness
- c.) tension
- d.) discovery

2.) The last paragraph tells...

- a.) the number of expedition members who survived the winter at Fort Mandan.
- b.) how Lewis and Clark managed to avoid armed conflict with the Teton Sioux.
- c.) about trade between Lewis and Clark and the Mandan.
- d.) why Lewis and Clark hired a translator to travel with them.

3.) What is the purpose of the first paragraph?

- a.) To explain who Thomas Jefferson was
- b.) To explain who Lewis and Clark were
- c.) To inform the reader that Lewis and Clark would encounter Native Americans
- d.) To provide background and purpose for the expedition

4.) Which of the following could be a title for the second paragraph?

- a.) Lewis and Clark and the naming of Independence Creek
- b.) Lewis and Clark: Sailing the Mississippi River
- c.) Lewis and Clark: The Beginning of an Epic Journey
- d.) Lewis and Clark: The Last Days of a Disastrous Journey

ANSWERS:

- 1.) A
- 2.) D
- 3.) D
- 4.) C