

## Learning Objectives

- 1) Know about the history leading up to the Lewis and Clark expedition. After the Revolutionary war, America's population exploded. In 1803 the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French, which doubled the size of the country. American citizens then moved into the newly annexed area of land. Even though little was known about the land west of the Louisiana Territory, which was occupied mainly by Indians and fur traders, both the United States and Great Britain were interested in obtaining the land.
- 2) Understand the purpose of the Lewis and Clark expedition. When Thomas Jefferson began his presidency, he knew that the British were extremely interested in the West, so he wanted to send an expedition west, from St. Louis, to explore the area and stake claims for the United States. President Jefferson wanted to explore the land west of the Louisiana Territory to find a water passage that would lead all the way to the Pacific Ocean, natural resources, and farmland, which could be inhabited and farmed by Americans that would move west. Driven by personal reasons, President Jefferson was curious about the plants and animals that inhabited the West; those who were sent on the expedition, would have to conduct a "biological inventory" of the West. President Jefferson also wanted the expedition to report on the Indian tribes that inhabited the West.
- 3) Understand why Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were chosen to lead the expedition. President Jefferson chose Meriwether Lewis because he was a fellow Virginian, he was a military officer (the President thought it should be a military expedition), he was courageous, he was accustomed to the woods, and he was deeply fascinated by the West. Lewis chose William Clark, 1770, to co-lead the mission because Clark was a fellow military officer.
- 4) Know about the journey and understand the role the Indians played in guiding the expedition through the West. The journey was long and hard; it covered 7000 miles (at 15 miles per day) and took 28 months! Lewis and Clark, along with the other members of the expedition left St. Louis in 1804 and traveled up the Missouri River, thinking that it would lead to the Pacific Ocean. However, the river did not lead to the Pacific coast; in fact, the mission failed to find such a water passage. After five months of traveling up the Missouri, the expedition built Fort Mandan along the river and rested for the winter. Then, in 1805, Lewis and Clark hired a French fur trader, named Charbonneau, and his Shoshone Indian wife, Sakakwea (Sacajawea or Sacagawea). Sakakwea proved to be an important resource of knowledge to the expedition; she helped the group find edible roots to prevent the members from starving when other food was scarce, and she guided them into the Rocky Mountains to Shoshone territory, where the tribe gave the expedition horses. The horses were used to travel through the mountains to Nez Perce territory. The Nez Perce Indians taught the expedition members how to build dugout canoes, which were used to travel down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia rivers to the Pacific Ocean. Once the Lewis and Clark expedition reached the Pacific coast, the members built a crude fort, named Fort Clatsop. At the fort, Lewis and Clark finished their reports describing the American interior. Then, the expedition headed back to St. Louis with the aid of the American Indians.
- 5) Realize that since there were no supply resources on the trail, the expedition needed to bring everything necessary to complete the mission. The

things Lewis and Clark brought included rifles and gunpowder (food and protection); trade goods to give to the Indians as tokens of future trade with the United States; medicines; maps and guidebooks; and boats.

- 6) Understand that the Lewis and Clark expedition paves the way for the western expansion of the United States. A treaty was then signed with Great Britain that extended the borders of the United States to include most of the Oregon territory.

## Suggested Activities:

### 1) Before Viewing the Video:

- a) Ask the students what they know about the Lewis and Clark expedition. What was the reason for the mission (e.g., land, resources, and even political reasons)? How long was the mission? What problems may have been encountered on the trail? How might have the American Indians aided in the success of the mission? Watch the video to find out the answers to the above questions. Encourage students to take notes.

### 2) After Viewing the Video:

- a) See if students can answer the questions above more completely.
- b) Tell the Students to pretend that they are part of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Based on what they observed in the video, have the class compile a list of supplies they should bring. Be sure that the students understand that they are walking through the wilderness, so they must bring what can be carried on the trail.

