

LEWIS AND CLARK: SAME PLACE, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Overview:

The area that the Lewis and Clark Expedition explored was unknown to American settlers, but well known to the more than 170 Native American tribes and bands—hundreds of thousands of people—who lived west of the Mississippi in 1803. The homeland of thousands of Native Americans became part of the United States as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. One of President Jefferson’s instructions to Lewis and Clark was to lay a solid foundation for trade with Native Americans, and to inform them that the United States now claimed their land. Students will write about several encounters between the expedition and various Native American groups from the viewpoint of an expedition member or one of the Indians. Students can see the large-format film *Lewis and Clark: Great Journey West* before or after the lesson.

Connections to the Curriculum:

geography, history, language arts

Connections to the National Geography Standards:

Standard 4: “The physical and human characteristics of places”

Standard 6: “How culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions”

Standard 10: “The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics”

Time:

one hour

Materials Required:

- Photocopies of the five-page student handout “Expedition Encounters” ([Download a free copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view this file.)
- Photocopies of the map “Lewis and Clark Expedition Routes and Control of Lands”
- Photocopies of the map “Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route, Native Americans, and Forts”
- “Jefferson’s Instructions to Lewis” (Excerpts)

Objectives:

- Compare how encounters during the expedition may have been viewed by the expedition and by Native American groups
- Understand that peoples’ perceptions of places and of other people are based on their **own** culture and experience

Geographic Skills:

Asking Geographic Questions
Acquiring Geographic Information
Organizing Geographic Information
Answering Geographic Questions
Analyzing Geographic Information

S u g g e s t e d P r o c e d u r e

Opening:

How do students describe the physical and human characteristics of their town or city? How would their parents describe their hometown? How would visitors? Compare these answers to show that people can think about or describe a place in markedly different ways.

Have students imagine they are part of the Lewis and Clark expedition, looking at an expansive, seemingly endless sea of prairie grass. How might they think about the following: “expedition,” “the West,” wilderness,” “uncharted territory”? How might someone from a Native American tribe have described those things?

Development:

1. Make two photocopies of the five-page handout [“Expedition Encounters.”](#) and divide the class into five teams. Give each team two copies of one of the encounters (each team should have a different encounter).

Each encounter describes a situation and the place where it occurred. Journal entries describe the point of view of expedition members. (Explain that the apparent misspellings are the result of the way that Lewis and Clark spelled certain words when writing in the journals.) Because Native American history passed from generation to generation through storytellers, tell students they will need to use the information given to imagine what a Native American might have thought.

2. Divide each team into two groups. Have one group focus on the encounter from a Native American perspective; the other group from the perspective of someone in the expedition. Students can refer to a map during their discussions, either [“Lewis and Clark Expedition Routes and Control of Lands”](#) or [“Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route, Native Americans, and Forts.”](#)

3. After the small-group discussions, have each student write about the encounter from “their” point of view. (Remind students that people in the same group can have different perspectives.) Students should use descriptive language and describe geographic factors that may have affected the encounter. (Optional: Using the links below, students can find more journal excerpts and information about Native American tribes.)

Closing:

Have representatives from each team read aloud descriptions of their event. How do the perceptions of the events and places differ? Why might they differ?

Suggested Student Assessment:

Ask students to write about something that happened during the expedition as they imagine Sacagawea or York (Clark’s African-American slave) might have perceived it.

Extending the Lesson:

- What similar things might Native American tribes and the expedition have wanted? (Common needs or wants would have contributed to the success of the expedition.)
- Have students work individually or in pairs to develop a “dialogue” poem (in which alternating lines of dialogue are written from two different perspectives) that describes an event or place.
- Investigate Native American inter-tribal activities. How did tribes communicate and trade with each other? How and why did their opinions about Lewis and Clark vary?
- Examine [photos](#) showing various cultures. Describe how a child, an adult, a traveler, or a business executive might interpret or view each culture.

Related Links:

[Ableza: Teaching About Native American People](#)
[Information About Native Americans](#)
[Journal Entries From Expedition Members](#)
[Lewis and Clark Education Center](#)
[Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Site](#)
[National Geographic Photography](#)
[Public Broadcasting System](#)