

LEWIS AND CLARK: NATIVE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Overview:

The Lewis and Clark Expedition faced many difficult challenges, due primarily to the group's lack of knowledge about the geography of the area through which they traveled. In large measure, the expedition succeeded because Native Americans generously shared their knowledge and resources. In this lesson, students will learn about specific instances in which Native Americans helped the expedition overcome obstacles. This lesson can be conducted before watching the large-format film *Lewis and Clark: Great Journey West*.

Connections to the Curriculum:

geography, science

Connections to the National Geography Standards:

Standard 6: "How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions"

Standard 15: "How physical systems affect human systems"

Standard 17: "How to apply geography to interpret the past"

Time:

one hour

Materials Required:

- Photocopies or overhead transparency of the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Routes"
- Photocopies of the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route" (Students should use this map as they match Needs and Contributions cards.)
- Photocopies or overhead transparency of the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route, Native Americans, and Forts" (Show this map to students **after** they have matched Needs and Contributions cards.)
- Photocopies of the four-page student handout "Survival Needs and Native American Contributions" ([Download a free copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader.](#))

Objectives:

Students will:

- Use the geographic inquiry process
- Analyze data to locate important events and places
- Describe how people adapt to their environment
- Identify how Native Americans contributed to the Lewis and Clark Expedition

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:

When Lewis and Clark began their expedition, they knew they were likely to encounter mountains, and believed there was an easy all-water route that might take them directly to the Pacific Ocean. Give students the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Routes" and have students think about the real challenges the expedition might have faced. What geographic information would have been useful to know before the expedition began? Have students identify geographic features that might pose other challenges, and other potential risks, such as winter and summer weather.

Development:

Students may work in groups or individually.

1. Before you conduct the lesson, prepare copies of Needs cards and Contributions cards using the four-page student handout "Survival Needs and Native American Contributions." Instructions for preparing the cards are on the handout.
2. Give each group or each student the four Survival Needs cards; each contains clues about a place where the expedition needed assistance and the Native Americans who helped. Clues include things such as geographic features; names of mountains, rivers, or regions; and descriptions of climate. The cards include excerpts from journals kept by expedition members—with the authors' original spelling and punctuation. Allow students 15 minutes to read the four Need cards.
3. Give each student or group the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route" (Do **not** give students the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route, Native Americans, and Forts" —that map would give students the answers!) Have students locate the four Survival Needs locations, then draw the corresponding "Need" symbols (rectangle, triangle, oval, or diamond) on those places on the map. Have students list the needs (summarized on the card) next to each Need symbol on the map. (See answer key, below.)
4. Next, give each student or group the four Native American Contributions cards. Students should now match each Need card with the corresponding Contribution card. After students think they've made the right match, have them write the name of the Native American group next to the corresponding Need symbol on the map. (See answer key, below.) (Allow about 35—40 minutes for this.)
5. Have students explain where they placed each "Need" symbol and how they chose the location. (You may want to make an overhead transparency of the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route" and point to the locations as students share.)
6. Give students the map "Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Route, Native Americans, and Forts" which has a key to Native American groups. (You may want to make an overhead transparency of the map and add the Need symbols.) (See answer key, below.) If students located a Need incorrectly, what led to that decision? Is the place they chose similar to the actual "Need" location? How? Discuss how the physical geography of each location contributed to the expedition's needs. If students have identified the incorrect Native American group, have students correct their map.

Answer Key:

Survival Need—Native American Contribution—Number on map

- On the Great Plains—Mandan and Hidatsa Indians—5
- West of the Mountains—Nez Perce Indians—8
- In the Mountains—Shoshone Indians—6

- At the Mouth of a River—Clatsop Indians—10

Closing:

Review the physical characteristics of each of the places students just studied. Why were Native Americans able to survive in these places? How had they adapted to their environment? What are those places like now? How do people adapt to those environments today?

Suggested Student Assessment:

Have students consider how cultures are influenced by the environments in which they evolve. Ask students to explain how people have adapted in order to live in mountains, deserts, plains, floodplains, or other “challenging” environments. Discuss things such as housing, clothing, activities, livelihood, and technology.

Extending the Lesson:

Have students research other Native American groups’ interaction with the expedition and mark the location on a map. The expedition had contact with over 50 Native American groups.

Related Links:

[Ableza: Teaching About Native American People](#)
[Public Broadcasting System](#)
[Smithsonian](#)