



WEBQUEST: THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION

By Roberto Fernández III

Roberto Fernández III, a social studies teacher for Broward County Public Schools, has taught American History for over five years. He has been involved in curriculum writing for the State of Florida Task Force on African-American History, Broward County Public Schools, and El Pozo Productions, Inc.

Grade: 9-12

Objective: To understand the impact of the Lewis and Clark expedition on westward expansion
To evaluate selections from the journals of Lewis and Clark
To explain the expedition's contributions to biological, geographical and cultural knowledge

Time: Three class periods of 50 minutes or two class periods of 90 minutes

Standards:

United States:

Era 4: Standard 1: United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans

Background:

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson guided a splendid piece of foreign diplomacy through the U.S. Senate: the purchase of Louisiana territory from France. After the Louisiana Purchase Treaty was made, Jefferson initiated an exploration of the newly purchased land and the territory beyond the "great rock mountains" in the West.

Jefferson chose his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, an intelligent and literate man who also possessed skills as a frontiersman. Lewis in turn solicited the help of William Clark, whose abilities as draftsman and frontiersman were even stronger. Lewis so respected Clark that he made him a co-commanding captain of the Expedition, even though Clark was never recognized as such by the government. Together they collected a diverse military Corps of Discovery that would be able to undertake a two-year journey to the great ocean.

Jefferson hoped that Lewis and Clark would find a water route linking the Columbia and Missouri rivers. This water link would connect the Pacific Ocean with the Mississippi River system, thus giving the new western land access to port markets out of the Gulf of Mexico and to eastern cities along the Ohio River and its minor tributaries. At the time, American and European explorers had only penetrated what would become each end of the Lewis and Clark Trail up the Missouri several miles to the trapper headquarters at Fort Mandan and up the Columbia just a bit over a hundred miles to a point a little beyond present-day Portland, Oregon.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition paddled its way down the Ohio as it prepared the Expedition to be launched officially from Camp Wood, just outside St. Louis, in the summer of 1804. That summer and fall the company of explorers paddled and pulled themselves upstream, northwest on the Missouri River to Fort Mandan, a trading post, where Corps of Discovery set up camp, wintered, and prepared for the journey to the Pacific.

When the spring of 1805 brought high water and favorable weather, the Lewis and Clark Expedition set out on the next leg of its journey. They traveled up the Missouri to present-day Three Forks, Montana, wisely choosing to follow the western-most tributary, the Jefferson River. This route delivered the explorers to the doorstep of the Shoshone Indians, who were skilled at traversing the great rock mountains with horses. Once over the Bitterroot Mountains, the Corps of Discovery shaped canoe-like vessels that transported them swiftly downriver to the mouth of the Columbia, where they wintered (1805-1806) at Fort Clatsop, on the present-day Oregon side of the river.

With journals in hand, Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the Expedition returned to St. Louis by September 1806 to report their findings to Jefferson. Along the way, they continued to trade what few goods they still had with the Indians and set up diplomatic relations with the Indians. Additionally, they recorded their contact with Indians and described (and at times drew) the shape of the landscape and the creatures of this western world, new to the white man. In doing so, they fulfilled many of Jefferson's wishes for the Expedition. Along the way, William Clark drew a series of maps that were remarkably detailed, noting and naming rivers and creeks, significant points in the landscape, the shape of river shore, and spots where the Corps spent each night or camped or portaged for longer periods of time. Later explorers used these maps to further probe the western portion of the continent.

The Expedition of the Corps of Discovery shaped a crude route to the waters of the Pacific and marked an initial pathway for the new nation to spread westward from ocean to ocean, fulfilling what would become too many Americans an obvious destiny.

Over the next two centuries the new Americans and many immigrants would wash across the central and western portions of what would eventually become the contiguous 48 United States. This wave of development would significantly transform virgin forests and grasslands into a landscape of cities, farms, and harvested forests, displacing fauna such as the buffalo and squeezing the Indians who survived onto reservations.

Procedures:

- 1) Ask students to view Michael Tate's presentation on "Exploring the West" a few days before you expect to conduct the activity and to take notes on the presentation. Collect the notes or have a class discussion on the expedition.
- 2) Provide students with laptops or allow students to use a computer lab so they could explore the sites which discuss the expedition and have primary source documents.
- 3) Provide students with a blank map of the United States, the Questions on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Sources of Information in this lesson plan (Page 3).
- 4) Students can work individually, pairs or in groups.
- 5) Circulate around the classroom/ computer lab to ensure students are focused on the assignment and answer any questions student may have.
- 6) If students were put into groups assign each group one question to answer and then create a presentation to be delivered to the class. After students have completed the assignment (or heard the presentations) have them submit the handouts as an assessment.

Questions Concerning the Lewis and Clark Expedition:

- 1) Identify on a map the states in which the Corps of Discovery explored.
- 2) List 15 contributions to biological, geographical and cultural knowledge made by the Corps of Discovery.
- 3) Explain some of the hardships that the Corps of Discovery endured on its expedition.
- 4) Does the vote at Station Camp reveal American Democracy as proposed in the U.S. Constitution?
- 5) Explore the Journals of Lewis and Clark and explain what they reveal about the "first contacts" between the United States and Native Americans?
- 6) Explain the secrecy of Thomas Jefferson decision to send the Corp of Discovery to explore the West in relation to the United States' decision to Purchase the Louisiana territory.

Sources for Information:

- 1) <http://www.fpri.org/multimedia/20100410.tate.frontier.html> Items at this site include talks from the Wachman Center Weekend on The Military in America's Domestic History, April 2010. Including a lecture on Exploring the West presented by Michael Tate.
- 2) <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/lewis-clark/> Items at this site include primary source documents from the National Archives in Washington D.C. relating to the Lewis and Clark Expedition the Background section of the lesson plan was taken from this website.
- 3) <http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/> Items at this website include interactive maps, the Journals of the Corps of Discovery, maps and interviews by historians.
- 4) <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/index.html> This site contains online copies of the Journals of Lewis and Clark which can be used for online or "smart" classrooms.
- 5) <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr001.html> Items at this site include copies of maps and correspondence between President Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis.
- 6) <http://www.usgs.gov/features/lewisandclark.html> Items at this site include the contributions of the expedition to natural resource management, scientific contributions, and mapping.
- 7) <http://www.lewisandclarktrail.com/section1/necities/Omaha/lctnps.htm> Items at this site include information on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. You will also find contact information to request brochures that can be used for bulletin board displays in your classroom.
- 8) <http://washingtonhistoryonline.org/LC-columbia/whyclatsop/station-vote.htm> This site focuses on the vote that occurred at Station Camp and includes a copy of the vote results.

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Alan Luxenberg at 215-732-3774, ext. 105, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.