

Lewis and Clark: Exploring the Louisiana Purchase



Illustration from Patrick Gass, *Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery*, 1808 (Library of Congress)

Lewis and Clark: Exploring the Louisiana Purchase

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2013, revised in 2023)

Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: Four 45-minute periods

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original documents of historical significance.

The four lessons in this unit explore the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which mapped the Louisiana Purchase. Students will read entries from journals written during the expedition. They will then engage in classroom discussion to evaluate the experiences of the expedition and study maps to compare the journal entries with the actual route of exploration.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of primary sources by answering critical thinking questions, citing evidence from the text
- Discuss, defend, and if appropriate, amend their answers based on class discussion
- Identify a transformative moment in American history (e.g., the Louisiana Purchase) and the changes it exemplified (e.g., westward expansion, tension and alliance building between White Americans and Indigenous peoples)
- Identify key figures and peoples in American history (e.g., Sacagawea, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, York)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were the challenges the explorers faced?
- What were the explorers' accomplishments?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on [grade-level] topics, texts, and issues building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 1: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, May 14, 1804–November 4, 1804, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Activity Sheet 2: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, December 25, 1804–August 17, 1805, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Activity Sheet 3: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, October 16, 1805–September 23, 1806, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Modern map of the United States (not provided)
- William Clark and Samuel Lewis, “A Map of Lewis and Clark’s Track, across the Western Portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean; By Order of the Executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6” published in Meriwether Lewis, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814). Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC, loc.gov/item/79692907/ (accessed 2023).
- Teacher’s Resource: Dated Summaries of the Expedition’s Movements and Activities (adapted from “A Timeline of the Trip,” *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html) on pages 23–25 and the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites on page 5.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

by Jay H. Buckley, Brigham Young University

On January 18, 1803, President Thomas Jefferson sent a secret message to Congress requesting \$2,500 for a military expedition to explore the Missouri River to its headwaters and find an all-water route to the Pacific Ocean. On July 4, 1803, he announced that the United States had purchased from Napoleonic France the “right of discovery” to 828,000 square miles of territory beyond the Mississippi River for \$15 million. Jefferson asked his personal secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to lead the expedition, called the “Corps of Discovery.” He sent Lewis to Philadelphia for professional training in science and medicine and to purchase supplies.

Lewis contracted for a 55-ft keelboat in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and procured weapons at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). He invited William Clark, his former military commander, to join him as the expedition’s principal navigator and mapmaker. They joined forces in October 1803 in Louisville, Kentucky, recruited men, and traveled to their winter encampment at Camp River Dubois (Illinois).

Their entourage—consisting of four dozen men (soldiers, hunters, interpreters, French *voyageurs* [boatmen], and York, an enslaved man brought by Clark)—embarked from St. Louis, Missouri, on May 14, 1804. Ascending the Missouri against the current in their 10-ton keelboat and two pirogues (dugout canoes) required herculean efforts to cover ten to twenty miles a day. The expedition consumed nine pounds of meat per person per day. They experienced dysentery, venereal disease, boils, tick bites, and injuries from prickly pear; and yet only one man perished. The captains, sergeants, and two enlisted men kept journals. As instructed by President Jefferson, Lewis observed latitude and longitude and kept detailed notes about the soil, climate, animals, plants, and Indigenous peoples. He identified 178 plants and 122 animals new to science.

The corps passed through fifty-five Native homelands. They held councils with Indian peoples, distributed gifts, and requested intertribal peace. Most tribes welcomed trading opportunities and provided the expedition with food, shelter, intimacy, guides, knowledge, and entertainment. This assistance was integral to the success of the expedition. The British-allied Lakotas, however, did not view American competition favorably because it would make their enemies stronger. Their attempt to prevent the expedition from proceeding upstream nearly turned violent, but Chief Black Buffalo’s diplomacy defused the impasse.

The expedition arrived at the Knife River villages (Mandan and Hidatsa) near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, in November 1804 and constructed Fort Mandan. The captains prepared maps, artifacts, mineral samples, plant specimens, and papers to send to Jefferson. On April 7, 1805, a small crew departed for St. Louis on the keelboat laden with materials for Jefferson that included live magpies and a prairie dog. Meanwhile, the thirty-three people in the permanent party, including soldiers, boatmen, York, the French Canadian interpreter Toussaint Charbonneau, his teenaged Shoshone wife Sacagawea, and their new baby boy Jean Baptiste, proceeded up the Missouri in six canoes and two pirogues.

Near the Three Forks of the Missouri River (the confluence of the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin Rivers in present-day Montana), Sacagawea informed the captains they were entering Shoshone territory. Sacagawea’s brother Cameahwait, the Shoshone leader, provided the expedition with horses to cross the Bitterroot Range. The Nez Percé helped the expedition after they exited the mountains on the recommendation of a respected elderly Nez Percé woman, Watkuweis. Leaving their horses with Chief Twisted Hair, the explorers floated down the Clearwater and Snake Rivers to the Columbia in five cottonwood dugout canoes.

“Ocian in view! O! the joy” Clark exclaimed in his journal when they arrived at the Pacific Ocean in mid-November. Fierce winter storms raged as the party voted on where to spend the winter. The corps built Fort Clatsop near present-day Astoria, Oregon, and endured a wet, miserable winter by journal writing, drying meat, making salt, and sewing moccasins. Since they did not encounter ocean-going vessels that could transport them home, they began their inbound return via the Columbia and Missouri waterways on March 23, 1806.

After recrossing the Bitterroots, the expedition divided on July 3, 1806. Several groups floated down the Missouri to the Great Falls while Clark explored the Yellowstone River. In the meantime, Lewis and three men met eight Blackfeet teenagers on July 26 near present-day Cut Bank, Montana. This turned deadly when Lewis stabbed Side Hill Calf, who was stealing their horses and guns. The four men fled on horseback for twenty-four hours, rejoining other expedition members at the Missouri River. The groups reunited at the Mandan villages, bade farewell to the Charbonneau family, and continued downstream, arriving in St. Louis on September 23, 1806, having traveled nearly 8,000 miles.

Congress rewarded the expedition members with double pay and public land grants. The captains each received 1,600 acres, and their men received 320 acres. The final cost for the expedition totaled \$38,000. Jefferson appointed Lewis governor of Upper Louisiana Territory and appointed Clark Indian agent for the western tribes. Most of the expedition members returned to military service, entered the fur trade, became lawyers, or began farming. The fates of Sacagawea and York have been touched by rumor and legend. Records suggest Sacagawea died of a fever in 1812 in Dakota Territory, but Native American oral histories recount her death decades later. York remained enslaved to Clark until sometime between 1811 and 1815. Years later Clark said that York had died of cholera in Tennessee.

The expedition contributed significant geographic and scientific knowledge of the West, aided the expansion of the fur trade, and strengthened US claims to the Pacific Northwest. Clark's 1810 and 1814 maps portraying the geography of the West were the best available until the 1840s. In 1978 Congress established the 3,700-mile Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, recently expanded eastward in 2019 to include the stretch from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the Mississippi River. While Lewis and Clark took great pains to document Indian cultures, they represented a government whose policies contributed to Indian dispossession and cultural genocide. The attempt by both the Indian tribes and the federal government to resolve this dichotomy was on display during the expedition's Bicentennial (2003–2006) when both sides agreed to call the bicentennial a “commemoration” and not a “celebration.”

Selected Bibliography

Editor Gary E. Moulton's 13-volume *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1979–2001) remains the definitive edition, with an atlas (vol. 1), herbarium (vol. 12), and index (vol. 13); Moulton also produced a one-volume version, *The Lewis and Clark Journals: An American Epic of Discovery* (2003).

The best primary source of the correspondence is Donald D. Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783–1854*, 2nd ed., 2 vol. (1978).

Larry E. Morris, *The Fate of the Corps: What Became of the Lewis and Clark Explorers after the Expedition* (2004), examines the post-expedition lives. David Lavender, *The Way to the Western Sea: Lewis and Clark across the Continent* (1988, reissued 2001), is an engaging narrative account. Elin Woodger and Brandon Toropov, *Encyclopedia of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (2004), provides a helpful general reference. A useful teacher's guide is Alison Schmitke, Leilani Sabzalian, and Jeff Edmundson, *Teaching Critically about Lewis and Clark: Challenging Dominant Narratives in K–12 Curriculum* (2020).

Selected Websites

Discovering Lewis & Clark, lewis-clark.org

Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu

Scholarly articles on Lewis & Clark, lewisandclark.org/wpo/article_index.php

Jay H. Buckley, an associate professor of history at Brigham Young University, is the author of William Clark: Indian Diplomat (2008), co-author of By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis (2006), and co-editor of Zebulon Pike, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West (2012).

LESSON 1

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, 1804

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2013, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will read several of the expedition's journal entries. These entries follow the Corps of Discovery (US Army) from St. Louis to Fort Mandan. Students will use critical thinking questions to facilitate a close reading of the text and track their understanding.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of primary sources by answering critical thinking questions, citing evidence from the text
- Discuss, defend, and if appropriate, amend their answers based on class discussion
- Identify a transformative moment in American history (e.g., the Louisiana Purchase) and the changes it exemplified (e.g., westward expansion, tension and alliance building between White Americans and Indigenous peoples)
- Identify key figures and peoples in American history (e.g., Sacagawea, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, York)

Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. The four lessons in this unit explore the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which mapped the Louisiana Purchase.

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 1: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, May 14, 1804–November 4, 1804, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Teacher's Resource: Dated Summaries of the Expedition's Movements and Activities (adapted from "A Timeline of the Trip," *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html) on pages 23–25 and the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites on page 5.

PROCEDURE

1. You may choose to discuss some of the information from the Historical Background on pages 4–5 with the students. Resist the temptation to provide an in-depth historical context for the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase as the goal is for the students to develop ideas and conclusions based solely on the textual evidence.
2. Hand out Activity Sheet 1. The excerpts from each journal entry are reproduced with the original spelling, punctuation, and grammar. This will be challenging for many students but can be an interesting puzzle as they tease out the meaning from the text.
3. Determine whether the students can independently read the text. If so, go to step 4. If the students need additional support, you may choose to "share read" the document by having the class follow along silently while you read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few sentences while

you continue to read aloud. This technique will support struggling readers and English language learners (ELL).

4. The students should now do a close reading of the journal entries and answer the critical thinking question for each entry as they re-read. Students must use evidence from the text in forming their answers. Show them how to pull a quote from a journal entry and use it in their answer. If you are having students work with partners or in groups, let them negotiate the best answer for each question. Students can brainstorm as partners or small groups but must fill out their own activity sheet to complete the assignment.
5. Class discussion: Have the different groups or individual students share out and compare their answers to the critical thinking questions. Share information from the Historical Background, the Dated Summaries, or other resources related to these journal entries as needed to address questions about the historical context.

LESSON 2

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, 1804–1805

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2013, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will continue reading entries from expedition journals. These entries follow the Corps of Discovery from their winter quarters in present-day North Dakota until the expedition crossed the Continental Divide. Students will use critical thinking questions to facilitate a close reading of the text and track their understanding.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of primary sources by answering critical thinking questions, citing evidence from the text
- Discuss, defend, and if appropriate, amend their answers based on class discussion
- Identify a transformative moment in American history (e.g., the Louisiana Purchase) and the changes it exemplified (e.g., westward expansion, tension and alliance building between White Americans and Indigenous peoples)
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MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 2: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, December 25, 1804–August 17, 1805, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Teacher's Resource: Dated Summaries of the Expedition's Movements and Activities (adapted from "A Timeline of the Trip," *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html) on pages 23–25 and the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites on page 5.

PROCEDURE

1. Briefly review what the class did in the previous lesson. You may choose to share some historical context to help students understand the journal entries they have read.
2. Hand out Activity Sheet 2. You can share read the text as described in Lesson 1 or have the students go right into a close reading of the excerpts, answering the questions as they read. Remind them to use evidence from the text to support their answers.
3. Class discussion: Have the different groups or individual students share out and compare their answers to the critical thinking questions. Share information from the Historical Background, the Dated Summaries, or other resources related to these journal entries as needed to address questions about the historical context.

LESSON 3

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, 1805–1806

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2013, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will continue reading entries from expedition journals. These entries follow the Corps of Discovery (US Army) as they canoed west toward the Pacific Ocean, and then returned to St. Louis. Students will use critical thinking questions to facilitate a close reading of the text and track their understanding.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of primary sources by answering critical thinking questions, citing evidence from the text
- Discuss, defend, and if appropriate, amend their answers based on class discussion
- Identify a transformative moment in American history (e.g., the Louisiana Purchase) and the changes it exemplified (e.g., westward expansion, tension and alliance building between White Americans and Indigenous peoples)
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MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 3: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, October 16, 1805–September 23, 1806, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Teacher's Resource: Dated Summaries of the Expedition's Movements and Activities (adapted from "A Timeline of the Trip," *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html) on pages 23–25 and the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites on page 5.

PROCEDURE

1. Briefly review what the class did in the previous lessons. You may choose to share some historical context to help students understand the journal entries they have read.
2. Hand out Activity Sheet 3. Share read the text with the class as described in Lesson 1 or have the students do a close reading on their own. Remind them to use evidence from the text to support their answers to the critical thinking questions.
3. Class discussion: Have the different groups or individual students share out and compare their answers to the critical thinking questions. Share information from the Historical Background, the Dated Summaries, or other resources related to these journal entries as needed to address questions about the historical context.

LESSON 4

LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, 1804–1806

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2013, revised in 2023)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will review entries from expedition journals. They will use the information from these journals to trace the expedition's movements on a map.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 1: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, May 14, 1804–November 4, 1804, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Activity Sheet 2: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, December 25, 1804–August 17, 1805, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Activity Sheet 3: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, October 16, 1805–September 23, 1806, with Critical Thinking Questions, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu.
- Modern map of the United States (not provided)
- William Clark and Samuel Lewis, “A Map of Lewis and Clark’s Track, across the Western Portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean; By Order of the Executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6” published in Meriwether Lewis, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814). Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC, loc.gov/item/79692907/ (accessed 2023).
- Teacher’s Resource: Dated Summaries of the Expedition’s Movements and Activities (adapted from “A Timeline of the Trip,” *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html) on pages XX and the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites on page 5.

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PROCEDURE

- Using a modern map of the United States, point out the starting position of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: Camp River DuBois, outside St. Louis. Then have the students try to reason out the route of the expedition and approximately where the Corps of Discovery was at each date as described in the journals. They should review the activity sheets and circle the names of places that could be located on the modern map.
- Supplement the information students have retrieved from primary sources as needed with knowledge drawn from

the Historical Background, the Dated Summaries of the Expeditions Movements and Activities, or the Selected Bibliography and Selected Websites. Students can also make well-reasoned judgements, given the obvious constraints of geographical features and the journals' descriptions of transportation methods.

3. Compare students' attempts to trace the journey to an annotated map published for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial, found at loc.gov/item/2003627093/. You can use this to see how accurate the students are with their estimates. You may also have students look at a map made in 1814 using the Corps of Discovery's maps and journals. This map, broken into three sections, is provided in the student handouts. But you may prefer to access a digital copy that can be examined more closely on the website of the Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/79692907/.
4. Drawing upon the journals and the map exercise, ask the class to discuss and formulate responses to the unit's Essential Questions:
 - What were the challenges the explorers faced?
 - What were the explorers' accomplishments?

NAME _____ PERIOD _____ DATE _____

Activity Sheet 1: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals May 14, 1804–November 4, 1804

William Clark, May 14, 1804

a Cloudy morning fixing for a Start. . . . Set out from Camp River a Dubois at 4 oClock P. M. and proceeded up the Missouri under Sail to the first Island in the Missouri and Camped on the upper point opposit a Creek on the South Side below a ledge of limestone rock Called Colewater, made 4½ miles, the Party Consisted of 2, Self one frenchman and 22 Men in the Boat of 20 ores, 1 Serjt. & 7 french in a large Perogue [boat], a Corp and 6 Soldiers in a large Perogue. a Cloudy rainy day. wind from the N E. men in high Spirits

Critical Thinking Question #1: What is the attitude of the men as they start their journey?

Patrick Gass, May 25, 1804

We proceeded three miles and passed a creek on the south side, called Wood river the banks of the river are here high and the land rich: arrived at St. John's, a small French village situated on the north side, and encamped a quarter of a mile above it. This is the last settlement of white people on the river.

Critical Thinking Question #2: The United States bought the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon in 1803. What evidence of that is there in this journal entry?

Joseph Whitehouse, August 3, 1804

This morning was foggy, the Indians had behaved themselves well in their encampment which lay near ours.— At 9 o'Clock Captains Lewis & Clark held a treaty with those Indians. There was Six Chiefs of the Zoto nation, and Six of the Mesouri Chiefs, Captain Lewis gave to three of the heads Chiefs, each a Medal, and the other three Chiefs Commissions, in the name of the President of the United States, they all seemed well content with what they received, The commanding officer, (Captain Lewis) gave each of the others (to whom he had given Commissions) some small presents, which gave general satisfaction—& they consider'd that they were well paid for their Visit.

Critical Thinking Question #3: How did Whitehouse perceive the reactions of the Indigenous leaders to the explorers?

NAME	PERIOD	DATE
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William Clark, September 7, 1804

a verry Cold morning Set out at Day light . . . near the foot of this high Nole we discovered a Village of an annamale the french Call the Prarie Dog which burrow in the grown . . . The Village of those little dogs is under the ground a considerable distance we dig under 6 feet thro rich hard clay without getting to their Lodges Some of their wholes we put in 5 barrels of water without driveing them out, we caught one by the water forceing him out. ther mouth resemble the rabbit, head longer, legs short, & toe nails long ther tail like a ground Squirrel which they Shake and make chattering noise . . .

Critical Thinking Question #4: The expedition wanted samples of the plants and animals that they encountered. How did they try to catch a prairie dog?

Patrick Gass, September 25, 1804

We stayed here to wait for the Indians, who were expected to arrive, and at 10 o'clock they came, about 50 in number. The commanding officers made three of them chiefs and gave them some presents . . . Captain Clarke and some of our men in a periogue went ashore with them; but the Indians did not seem disposed to permit their return. They said they were poor and wished to keep the periogue with them. Captain Clarke insisted on coming to the boat; but they refused to let him, and said they had soldiers as well as he had. He told them his soldiers were good, and that he had more medicine [weapons] aboard his boat than would kill twenty such nations in one day. After this they did not threaten any more . . .

Critical Thinking Question #5: Why did Captain Clark threaten the American Indians?

William Clark, October 24, 1804

Set out early a Cloudy day Some little Snow in the morning . . . we Saw one of the Grand Chiefs of the Mandins, with five Lodges hunting, this Cheif met the Chief of the *Ricares* who accompanied us with great Cordiality & Sermony Smoked the pipe & Capt. Lewis with the Interpreter went with the Chiefs to his Lodges at 1 mile distant, after his return we admited the Grand Chief & his brother for a few minits on our boat . . . Soon after our landg. 4 Mandins Came from a Camp above, the Ricares Chief went with them to their Camp.

Critical Thinking Question #6: How did the explorers try to make friends with the Mandan people?

Source: *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>.

NAME _____ PERIOD _____ DATE _____

Activity Sheet 2: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals, December 25, 1804–August 17, 1805

Patrick Gass, December 25, 1804

The morning was ushered in by two discharges of a swivel, and a round of small arms by the whole corps. Captain Clarke then presented to each man a glass of brandy, and we hoisted the American flag in the garrison, and its first waving in fort Mandan was celebrated with another glass.— The men then cleared out one of the rooms and commenced dancing. At 10 o'clock we had another glass of brandy, and at 1 a gun was fired as a signal for dinner. At half past 2, another gun was fired, as a notice to assemble at the dance, which was continued in a jovial manner till 8 at night; and without the presence of any females, except three squaws, wives to our interpreter, who took no other part than the amusement of looking on.

Critical Thinking Question #1: In what ways did the expedition celebrate the Christmas holiday?

Meriwether Lewis, February 11, 1805

... about five oclock this evening one of the wives of Charbono was delivered of a fine boy ... her labour was tedious and the pain violent; Mr. Jessome informed me that he had freequently adminstered a small portion of the rattle of the rattle-snake, which he assured me had never failed to produce the desired effect, that of hastening the birth of the child; having the rattle of a snake by me I gave it to him and he administered two rings of it to the woman broken in small pieces with the fingers and added to a small quantity of water. Whether this medicine was truly the cause or not I shall not undertake to determine, but I was informed that she had not taken it more than ten minutes before she brought forth perhaps this remedy may be worthy of future experiments ...

Critical Thinking Question #2: How did Lewis and Jessome help Sacagawea with her difficult childbirth?

NAME	PERIOD	DATE
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Meriwether Lewis, April 7, 1805

... we were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden; the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine ... I could but esteem this moment of my (our) departure as among the most happy of my life. The party are in excellent health and spirits, zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper of murmur or discontent to be heard among them, but all act in unison, and with the most perfect harmony. I took an early supper this evening and went to bed. Capt. Clark myself the two Interpreters and the woman and child sleep in a tent of dressed skins ... to erect this tent, a parcel of ten or twelve poles are provided, fore or five of which are attached together at one end, they are then elevated and their lower extremities are spread in a circular manner ... and the leather is then thrown over them forming a conic figure.—

Critical Thinking Question #3: With over 2000 miles to go to the Pacific Ocean, what was the attitude of the explorers?

Meriwether Lewis, June 13, 1805

... my ears were saluted with the agreeable sound of a fall of water and advancing a little further I saw the spray arise above the plain like a column of smoke ... which soon began to make a roaring too tremendous to be mistaken for any cause short of the great falls of the Missouri ... the water after falling over the precipice beats with great fury; this barrier extends on the right to the perpendicular cliff which forms that board of the river ... between this abrupt extremity of the ledge of rocks and the perpendicular bluff the whole body of water passes with incredible swiftness ... I walked down the river about three miles to discover if possible some place to which the canoes might arrive or at which they might be drawn on shore in order to be taken by land above the falls; but returned without effecting either of these objects; the river was one continued sene of rappids and cascades which I readily perceived could not be encountered with our canoes, and the Clifts still retained their perpendicular structure and were from 150 to 200 feet high ...

Critical Thinking Question #4: Why was the expedition faced with having to leave the river and carry their supplies?

NAME	PERIOD	DATE
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Meriwether Lewis, August 12, 1805

... after refreshing ourselves we proceeded on to the top of the dividing ridge from which I discovered immense ranges of high mountains still to the West of us with their tops partially covered with snow. I now descended the mountain about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile which I found much steeper than on the opposite side, to a handsome bold running Creek of cold Clear water. here I first tasted the water of the great Columbia river . . . the men in the water almost all day. they are geting weak soar and much fortieged; they complained of the fortiege . . . and wished to go by land Capt. C. engouraged them and passified them. one of the canoes was very near overseting in a rapid today. they proceeded but slowly.

Critical Thinking Question #5: After climbing to the top of the Continental Divide Lewis expected to see a river running to the Pacific Ocean to ensure a quick final leg of their journey. How did what he saw change this plan?

Meriwether Lewis, August 17, 1805

... Shortly after Capt. Clark arrived with the Interpreter Charbono, and the Indian woman [Sacagawea], who proved to be a sister of the Chif Cameahwait. the meeting of those people was really affecting, particularly between Sah cah-gar-we-ah and an Indian woman, who had been taken prisoner at the same time with her, and who had afterwards escaped from the Minnetares and rejoined her nation. At noon the Canoes arrived, and we had the satisfaction once more to find ourselves all together, with a flattering prospect of being able to obtain as many horses shortly as would enable us to prosicute our voyage by land should that by water be deemed unadvisable.

Critical Thinking Question #6: Why was Sacagawea's relationship to Chief Cameahwait advantageous for the explorers?

Source: *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>

NAME _____

PERIOD _____

DATE _____

Activity Sheet 3: Selected Entries from Corps of Discovery Journals October 16, 1805–September 23, 1806

Joseph Whitehouse, October 16, 1805

... we passed over several bad Rapids, which lay quite across the River, which were full of rocks. One of our Canoes struck on a rock, which was in a rapid, & swung round and remained fast ... The Men from the two Canoes got the load out of the Canoe, & got her off the rock & to the shore ... we found a very bad Rapid by far the worst that we had yet seen on this River; & we halted our Canoes above the Rapid. We carried a considerable quantity of our baggage about a Mile by land below this rapid.— We got all our canoes safe over this (rapid) difficult place & loaded them and proceeded on down the River; & passed several more Rapids.

Critical Thinking Question #1: How did the explorers deal with the dangerous rapids they encountered?

William Clark, November 7, 1805

Great joy in camp we are in *View* of the *Ocian*, this great Pacific Octean which we been So long anxious to See. and the roreing or noise made by the waves brakeing on the rockey Shores (as I Suppose) may be heard distictly

Critical Thinking Question #2: What was the reaction of the explorers when they thought they had finally reached the Pacific Ocean?

Patrick Gass, November 24, 1805

... At night, the party were consulted by the Commanding Officers, as to the place most proper for winter quarters; and the most of them were of opinion, that it would be best, in the first place, to go over to the south side of the river, and ascertain whether good hunting ground could be found there.

Critical Thinking Question #3: How did Lewis and Clark decide on the best place to spend the winter?

NAME	PERIOD	DATE
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Meriwether Lewis, March 23, 1806

... we accordingly distributed the baggage and directed the canoes to be launched and loaded for our departure.— at 1 P.M. we bid a final adieu to Fort Clatsop. we had not proceeded more than a mile before we met Delashelwilt and a party of 20 Chinooks men and women. this Cheif leaning that we were in want of a canoe some days past, had brought us one for sale, but being already supplied we did not purchase it. I obtained one Sea Otter skin from this party.

Critical Thinking Question #3: What kind of relationship did the expedition have with the Chinook tribe?

Meriwether Lewis, July 27, 1806

This morning at day light the indians [they had meet the day before] got up and crouded around the fire, J. Fields who was on post had carelessly laid his gun down behid him near where his brother was sleeping, one of the Indians ... sliped behind him and took his gun and that of his brothers unperceived by him, at the same instant two others advanced and seized the guns of Drewyer and myself, J. Fields seing this turned about to look for his gun and saw the fellow just runing off with her and his brothers he called to his brother who instantly jumped up and pursued the indian with him whom they overtook at the distance of 50 or 60 paces from the camp sized their guns and rested them from him and R Fields as he seized his gun stabled the indian to the heart with his knife the fellow ran about 15 steps and fell dead ... Drewyer who was awake saw the indian take hold of his gun and instantly jumped up ... his jumping up and crying damn you let go my gun awakened me I jumped up and asked what was the matter which I quickly learned when I saw drewyer in a scuffle with the indian for his gun. I reached to seize my gun but found her gone, I then drew a pistol from my holster and terning myself about saw the indian making off with my gun I ran at him with my pistol and bid him lay down my gun (at the instant) which he was in the act of doing when the Fieldses returned and drew up their guns to shoot him which I forbid as he did not appear to be about to make any resistance or commit any offensive act, he dropped the gun and walked slowly off ... as soon as they found us all in possession of our arms they ran and indeavored to drive off all the horses I now hollowed to the men and told them to fire on them if they attempted to drive off our horses ... I called to them as I had done several times before that I would shoot them if they did not give me my horse and raised my gun, one of them jumped behind a rock and spoke to the other who turned around and stoped at the distance of 30 steps from me and I shot him through the belly, he fell to his knees and on his wright elbow from which position he partly raised himself up and fired at me, and turning himself about crawled in behind a rock which was a few feet from him. he overshot me, being bearheaded I felt the wind of his bullet very distinctly. not having my shotpouch I could not reload my peice and as there were two of them behind good shelters from me I did not think it prudent to rush on them with my pistol which had I discharged I had not the means of reloading untill I reached camp; I therefore returned leasurely towards camp ...

Critical Thinking Question #4: What was the order of events on July 27, 1806? What happened first, next, and so on?

NAME	PERIOD	DATE
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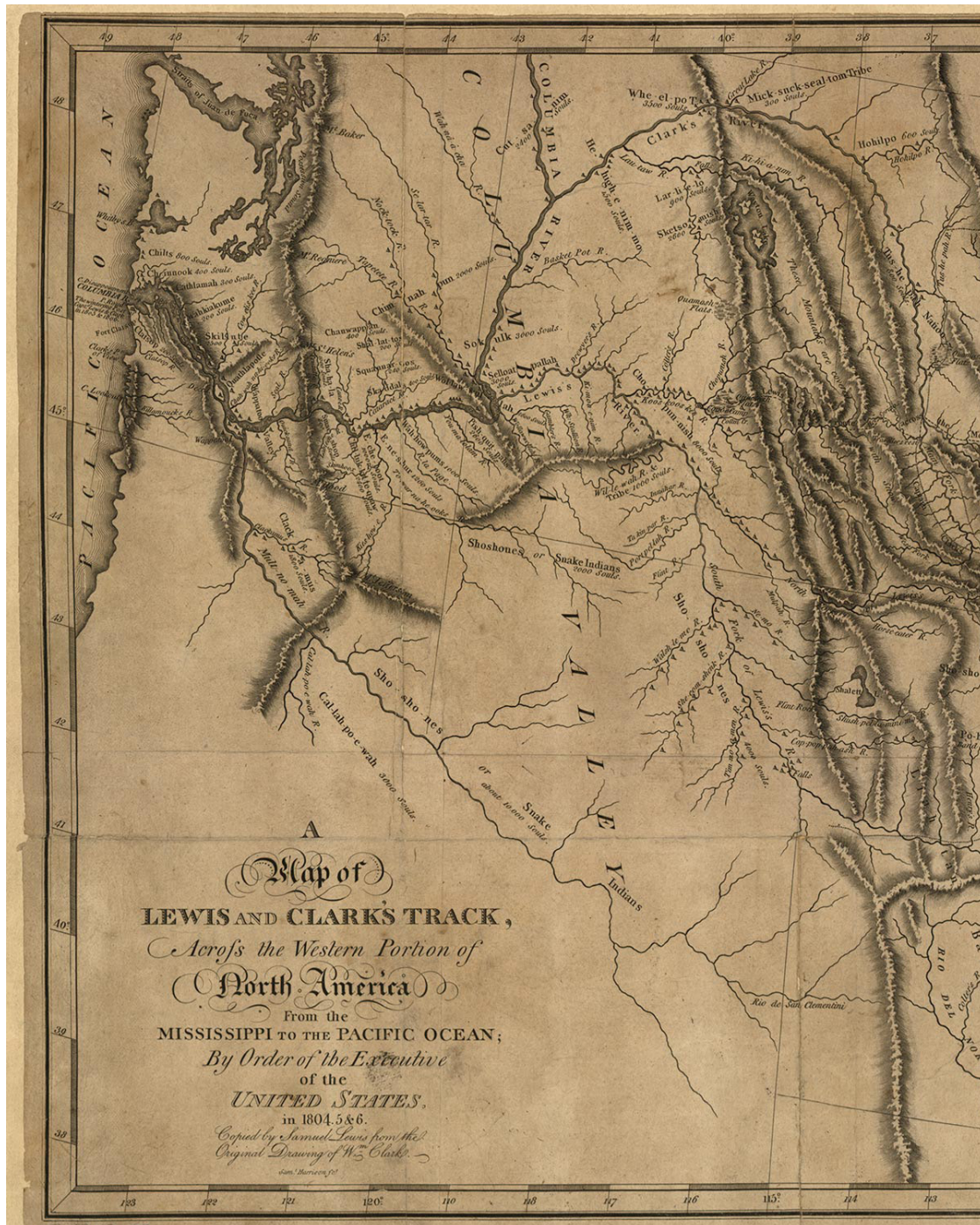
William Clark, September 23, 1806

... Set out decended to the Mississippi and down that river to St. Louis at which place we arived about 12 oClock. we Suffered the party to fire off their pieces as a Salute to the Town. we were met by all the village and received a harty welcom from it's inhabitants.

Critical Thinking Question #5: How did both the members of the expedition and the citizens of St. Louis react to the Corps of Discovery's return after being gone for 2 ½ years?

Source: *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>

Map of Lewis and Clark's Track across the Western Portion of North America, Part 1



From Meriwether Lewis, History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clarke
(Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814) (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division)

Map of Lewis and Clark's Track across the Western Portion of North America, Part 2



From Meriwether Lewis, History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clarke (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814) (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division)

Map of Lewis and Clark's Track across the Western Portion of North America, Part 3



From Meriwether Lewis, History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clarke
(Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814) (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division)

Dated Summaries of the Expedition's Movements and Activities

LESSON 1

May 14, 1804

The expedition set off from St. Louis with about four dozen men (the precise number is unknown) from every corner of the young nation. Reuben and Joseph Field were brothers. George Drouillard, Pierre Cruzatte, and François Labiche were sons of French Canadian fathers and Indigenous mothers. In addition to the captains, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, other diarists were John Ordway, a young soldier from New Hampshire; Patrick Gass, a carpenter of Irish stock from Pennsylvania; Joseph Whitehouse, a tailor from Virginia; and Charles Floyd of Kentucky, a “young man of much merit,” Lewis wrote.

They traveled in a big keelboat (55 feet long, 8 feet wide, capable of carrying 10 tons of supplies) and two smaller boats called pirogues. Proceeding up the Missouri River involved sailing, rowing, using setting poles, and sometimes wading along the bank to pull the boats with ropes. Fourteen miles was a good day’s progress.

May 25, 1804

The expedition passed La Charette, a cluster of seven dwellings less than 60 miles up the Missouri. Gass noted this was “the last settlement of white people on the river.”

August 3, 1804

The first official council between representatives of the United States and western Indian tribes occurred north of present-day Omaha when the Corps of Discovery met with a small delegation of Oto and Missouri Indians. The captains established the routine for subsequent councils with Indigenous peoples: hand out peace medals, 15-star flags, and gifts; parade men and show off technology (magnets, compasses, telescopes, Lewis’s air gun); give speech about the new “great father” far to the east and promising future of peace and prosperity if tribes don’t make war on Whites or other tribes.

September 7, 1804

Moving into the Great Plains, the expedition began to see animals unknown in the East: coyotes, antelope, mule deer, and others. On this particular day, all the men were employed drowning a prairie dog out of its hole for shipment back to Jefferson. In all, the captains described in their journals 178 plants and 122 animals that previously had not been recorded for science.

September 25, 1804

Near what is now Pierre, South Dakota, the Teton Sioux (the Lakota) demanded one of the boats as a toll for moving farther upriver. A fight nearly ensued, but it was defused by the diplomacy of a chief named Black Buffalo. For three anxious days, the expedition stayed with the tribe.

October 24, 1804

North of what is now Bismarck, North Dakota, the Corps of Discovery reached the earth-lodge villages of the Mandans and Hidatsas. Some 4,500 people lived there—more than lived in St. Louis or even Washington, DC, at the time. The captains decided to build Fort Mandan across the river from the main village. In this entry Clark mentioned both the Ricares (Hidatsa) and Mandin (Mandan) tribes.

November 4, 1804

The captains hired Toussaint Charbonneau, a French Canadian fur trader living among the Hidatsas, as an interpreter. His Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, had been captured by the Hidatsas several years earlier and then sold to Charbonneau (along with another Shoshone girl). Having been told that the Shoshones lived at the headwaters of the Missouri and had many horses, the captains believed the two would be helpful when the expedition reached the mountains.

LESSON 2

December 17–25, 1804

Clark noted a temperature of 45 degrees below zero—“colder,” John Ordway added, “than I ever knew it be in the States.” A week later, on Christmas Eve, Fort Mandan was considered complete and the expedition had moved in for the winter. This entry refers to “a swivel” or a small cannon mounted on the boat.

February 11, 1805

Sacagawea gave birth to a boy, Jean Baptiste. The men assisted in speeding the delivery by giving her a potion made by crushing the rings of a rattlesnake’s rattle into powder.

April 7, 1805

Lewis and Clark dispatched the keelboat and roughly a dozen men back downriver along with maps, reports, Native artifacts, and boxes of scientific specimens (Indian corn, animal skins and skeletons, mineral samples, and five live animals including the prairie dog) for President Jefferson. The same day, the “permanent party” headed west, traveling in the two pirogues and six smaller dugout canoes. The expedition totaled thirty-three people, including Charbonneau, Sacagawea, and their baby. Lewis described the use of a tepee as a shelter.

June 13, 1805

Scouting ahead of the rest of the expedition, Lewis came across “the grandest sight I ever beheld”—the Great Falls of the Missouri, a series of waterfalls. The Corps of Discovery would have to leave the river and carry everything eighteen and a half miles to get around them all. When the rest of the expedition arrived, they made crude carts from cottonwoods, buried some of their cargo, and began hauling the canoes and remaining supplies over the broken terrain. Broiling heat, hail storms, prickly pear cactus, and other obstacles marked the difficult portage, which instead of the half day the captains had planned the previous winter, took nearly a month.

August 12, 1805

The shipment sent from Fort Mandan arrived in the East. President Jefferson planted the Indian corn in his Monticello garden, hung elk antlers in his foyer, and sent the surviving animals—a magpie and the prairie dog—to a natural science museum located in Philadelphia’s Independence Hall. Reading Lewis’s confident letter, he imagined that the expedition had already reached the Pacific Ocean. That same day, Lewis ascended the final ridge toward the Continental Divide. Climbing the rest of the ridge—Lemhi Pass, on the present-day border between Montana and Idaho—he expected to see from the summit a vast plain to the west, with a large river flowing to the Pacific: the Northwest Passage that had been the goal of explorers since the time of Columbus. Instead, all he saw were more mountains.

August 17, 1805

Having discovered a Shoshone village, Lewis tried to negotiate for the horses he now knew were necessary to cross the daunting mountains. On this day, Clark and the rest of the expedition arrived and Sacagawea was brought in to help translate. Remarkably, the Shoshone chief, Cameahwait, was her brother. The captains named the spot Camp Fortunate.

LESSON 3

October 16, 1805

Having raced down the Clearwater and then the Snake Rivers, the expedition reached the Columbia River. They needed to navigate series after series of dangerous rapids, sometimes having to carry their canoes around the whitewater.

November 7, 1805

Thinking he saw the end of land in the distance, Clark wrote his most famous journal entry: “Ocian in view! O! the joy.” (His spelling.) But what he saw was actually only the eastern end of Gray’s Bay, still twenty miles from the sea. Fierce Pacific storms, rolling waters, and high winds pinned them down for nearly three weeks, “the most disagreeable time I have experienced,” according to Clark.

Later, Clark estimated they had traveled 4,162 miles from the mouth of the Missouri to the Pacific. His estimate, based on dead reckoning, turned out to be within 40 miles of the actual distance.

November 24, 1805

To make the crucial decision of where to spend the winter, the captains decided to put the matter to a vote. Significantly, in addition to the others, York, an enslaved man brought by Clark, was allowed to vote—nearly 60 years before enslaved people in the US would be emancipated and enfranchised. Sacagawea voted too—more than a century before either women or American Indians would be granted the full rights of citizenship.

The majority decided to cross to the south side of the Columbia, near modern-day Astoria, Oregon, to build winter quarters, Fort Clatsop.

March 23, 1806

The expedition set off for home after turning over Fort Clatsop to the local Native Americans.

July 27, 1806

Heading back toward the Missouri, Lewis met eight Blackfeet warriors. They camped together warily, but the morning of the 27th the explorers caught the Blackfeet trying to steal their horses and guns. In the fight that followed, two Blackfeet men were killed—the only act of bloodshed during the entire expedition. Lewis left a peace medal around the neck of one of the corpses “that they might be informed who we were.”

The explorers galloped away, riding for twenty-four straight hours, met the group with the canoes on the Missouri, and paddled off toward the rendezvous with Clark, who was exploring a different route.

September 23, 1806

This was their last day as the Corps of Discovery as they reached St. Louis. Having been gone nearly two and a half years, they had been given up for dead by the citizens, who greeted the explorers enthusiastically. “Now,” young John Ordway wrote, “we intend to return to our native homes to see our parents once more, as we have been so long from them.”

Adapted from “A Timeline of the Trip,” *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, PBS, pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html.