

Sample Lesson

Lewis and Clark's Discoveries

More than two hundred years ago, President Thomas Jefferson purchased a large area of land in North America. It was west of the Mississippi River. Many tribes of Indians were living on this land. But other Americans had not yet settled there.

The president chose two men to do some exploring. Their names were Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The men led a group called the Corps of Discovery. Their job was to map the area and report everything they discovered.

Early on, the group met a Native American woman named Sacagawea. She and her husband joined the Corps of Discovery. Sacagawea was the only woman in the group. She helped them get horses and important supplies. She guided the group through unknown lands. She knew which plants were safe to eat. Sacagawea helped the men communicate with other Indians they met along the way.

Lewis and Clark kept daily records about the Indian tribes they met. They also wrote about plants and animals and their habitats. The men saw buffalo, grizzly bears, jack rabbits, and magpies. They had never seen these animals before. They wanted to send one of these creatures to President Jefferson. But most of the animals were too big or too difficult to capture.

When the group traveled through some grassy prairies, they saw little mammals. They were the size of rabbits. The creatures lived in underground tunnels. They stood on their hind legs and called to each other. Lewis and Clark called them “barking squirrels.” Others in the group called them “little dogs.”

Captain Lewis thought the president should see this animal. It seemed the perfect size to send back. But the men had a tough time catching one. They dug into the burrows but could not find the little mammal. They finally forced one out by pouring water down a tunnel entrance. Then Lewis sent a shipment with the prairie dog and other discoveries to President Jefferson.

The president was delighted by the prairie dog. He later sent it to a museum in Philadelphia for others to see.



Painting of Sacagawea with Lewis and Clark

1. Who sent Lewis and Clark on a journey west of the Mississippi?

President Jefferson The Corps of Discovery French fur traders

2. Why did Lewis and Clark travel west of the Mississippi?

- A) Many Indian tribes lived there.
- B) Captain Clark wanted to catch a prairie dog.
- C) The president wanted them to explore the land.

3. Choose the meaning of each bold word.

prairies	grasslands	insects	science
habitats	homes	animals	underground
delighted	alive	terrific	thrilled

4. What did Lewis and Clark do when they met Indians or found plants and animals that they had not seen before?

5. Who joined the Corps of Discovery after it had begun?

President Jefferson Sacagawea soldiers

6. Check the ways Sacagawea helped the Corps of Discovery.

- _____ helped President Jefferson buy the land
- _____ knew where to get horses and supplies
- _____ captured a prairie dog
- _____ helped the group find its way through unknown lands
- _____ knew which plants were safe to eat
- _____ helped communicate with other Indians