

Name _____

The Purpose of the Expedition

In the early 19th century, the United States was a young nation expanding rapidly westward. President Thomas Jefferson had a vision of exploring the vast territories acquired through the Louisiana Purchase and finding a route to the Pacific Ocean. To fulfill this vision, he commissioned an ambitious expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The purpose of this expedition was multifaceted and aimed to achieve several important objectives.



First and foremost, the Lewis and Clark Expedition sought to explore and map the newly acquired lands of the Louisiana Purchase. This vast territory doubled the size of the United States and was largely uncharted. President Jefferson was eager to learn about the geography, flora, fauna, and resources of these territories. Lewis and Clark meticulously documented their discoveries, recording detailed descriptions of the landscape, rivers, mountains, and wildlife they encountered. Their maps and journals provided valuable information about the western regions of the United States, paving the way for future exploration and settlement.

Another crucial objective of the expedition was to find a practical and navigable route to the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson hoped that such a route would facilitate trade with Asia and enhance the nation's economic prospects. Lewis and Clark, accompanied by their team of explorers, embarked on an arduous journey up the Missouri River, across the Rocky Mountains, and down the Columbia River to the Pacific Coast. Despite facing numerous challenges, including harsh weather, rugged terrain, and encounters with Native American tribes, they persevered in their quest to reach the western seaboard.

In addition to exploration and mapping, the Lewis and Clark Expedition aimed to establish peaceful relations with Native American tribes encountered along the way. Jefferson instructed Lewis and Clark to treat indigenous peoples with respect and diplomacy, seeking their assistance as guides, interpreters, and trading partners. Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman, played a crucial role as a guide and mediator, facilitating communication between the expedition and various Native American tribes. The expedition's efforts to establish friendly relations helped to mitigate potential conflicts and fostered goodwill between indigenous peoples and the United States government.

Overall, the Lewis and Clark Expedition was a landmark endeavor that achieved its objectives of exploration, mapping, and diplomacy. Through their courage, perseverance, and scientific curiosity, Lewis, Clark, and their team of explorers made significant contributions to the expansion and understanding of the young nation.

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Multiple Choice Questions

1. What was one of the main purposes of the Lewis and Clark Expedition?
 - A) To discover new lands for colonization
 - B) To conquer Native American territories
 - C) To explore and map the Louisiana Purchase
 - D) To establish a new government in the West
2. Why did President Jefferson commission the Lewis and Clark Expedition?
 - A) To search for gold and silver
 - B) To conquer foreign lands
 - C) To expand the slave trade
 - D) To find a route to the Pacific Ocean
3. Who were the leaders of the Lewis and Clark Expedition?
 - A) Thomas Jefferson and Sacagawea
 - B) Meriwether Lewis and William Clark
 - C) Lewis and Sacagawea
 - D) William Clark and Thomas Jefferson
4. How did Lewis and Clark document their discoveries?
 - A) They wrote detailed journals.
 - B) They painted pictures of the landscapes.
 - C) They made maps using GPS technology.
 - D) They sent letters to the president.
5. What role did Sacagawea play in the expedition?
 - A) She served as a military leader.
 - B) She was a skilled mapmaker.
 - C) She was a guide and interpreter.
 - D) She was a European explorer.