

The Expedition Gets Underway

After spending nearly a year recruiting men, gathering supplies, and studying a few primitive maps, Lewis and Clark began their incredible journey. On May 14, 1804, the Corps of Discovery headed up the Missouri River. They had a 55-foot keelboat to carry supplies, and two smaller canoe-like boats called pirogues. Captain Lewis had the job of studying the plants, animals and soils they encountered, so he walked alongside the river most of the time. Captain Clark was in charge of mapping their route. Therefore, he usually stayed on the keelboat and charted the changes of direction in the meandering waterway. Both Captains kept careful journals where they recorded the events of the trip.

May is a time when spring rains and melting snow cause rivers to rise. The Missouri was full and swift, and the men had to use paddles, poles and ropes to push and pull their crafts against the current. By working all day, they could travel about 15 or 20 miles. There were plenty of hazards along the way, including submerged trees, violent thunderstorms, sandbars, and swarms of mosquitoes

The entire expedition was aware that they would most likely encounter Native Americans (called Indians by the men). They did not know whether the natives would be friendly. Therefore, they camped on islands in the middle of the river whenever it was possible. They carried weapons, but hoped that they would not need to use them against the local people. The expedition traveled until the end of July and did not meet any natives at all.

On August 2, 1804, the explorers encountered a group of Indians for the first time. They were members of the Oto and Missouri tribe, and were quite friendly. The Captains had their men don their army uniforms and then they marched in formation and demonstrated their weapons. This display greatly impressed the natives. Captain Lewis used translators to explain to the chiefs that they had a "great father" who lived in Washington DC and wanted to have peace with them. The natives were given medals that had a picture of President Jefferson on one side and two clasped hands on the other. They also received tobacco, face paint, and beads.

The corps continued up the Missouri throughout the summer and fall and had several more meetings with native people. All the encounters were peaceful, except the one with the Teton Sioux. This tribe was large and powerful, and did not want the explorers to interfere in their affairs. No one on the expedition could speak their language, and arguments broke out several times between the men and the natives. Captain Lewis avoided an actual battle, however, when he aimed the large swivel gun mounted on the keelboat at the Sioux warriors. Both sides backed down, and the trip continued.

In late October, the expedition established a winter camp near the Mandan Indians who lived in present day North Dakota. They used a grove of cottonwood trees that was growing close to the river for logs to build a fort. It took about four weeks for them to build it along with several small huts nearby. They called the settlement Fort Mandan. With a long, cold winter ready to begin, the men of the Corps of Discovery settled in to wait for spring.

Name _____

Date _____

The Expedition Gets Underway Questions

Fill in the chart by writing an antonym or a synonym for each given word, which can be found in the designated paragraph of the story.

| Paragraph | Antonym | Synonym |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| One | Modern | Winding |
| Two | Peaceful | Fast |
| Three | Foreigners | Guns |
| Four | Followers | Met |
| Five | Hostile | Dominant |
| Six | Enormous | Modern |

Imagine you are Captain Lewis and write a journal entry explaining what happened when the expedition met the Teton Sioux. Were you worried about a fight breaking out, or not? How did you feel when the group left the Indians and continued traveling?

Name _____

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The Expedition Gets Underway Questions (Cont'd)

Refer to the story and put the best answer for each question on the line.

1)_____What did many Native American tribes find most impressive about the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

- A. Their large keelboat.
- B. Their singing while paddling up the river.
- C. Their uniforms and weapons.
- D. Their great physical strength.

2)_____How did Captain Lewis usually communicate with the native people?

- A. With smoke signals.
- B. By drawing pictures.
- C. By tying ribbons on tree branches.
- D. By using a translator.

3)_____Who were Lewis and Clark talking about when they told the natives that they had a "Great Father" in Washington DC?

- A. Chief Joseph
- B. President Jefferson
- C. George Washington
- D. Benjamin Franklin

4)_____Which of the following was **not** mentioned as a hazard the Expedition met on their trip?

- A. Angry bison
- B. Submerged trees.
- C. Bothersome insects.
- D. Bad weather.

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The Expedition Gets Underway Questions (Cont'd)

5)_____Which Indian tribe nearly got into a battle with the men of the Corps of Discovery?

- A. The Oto Tribe
- B. The Teton Sioux
- C. The Yankton Sioux
- D. The Missouri Tribe

6)_____What is a pirogue?

- A. A breakfast pastry.
- B. A musical instrument.
- C. A type of boat.
- D. A happy outcome.

7)_____What do you think the “clasped hands” on the medals given to the natives symbolized?

- A. Peace and friendship
- B. War
- C. Great wealth
- D. Hunger

Name _____

Date _____

The Expedition Gets Underway Answers

| Paragraph | Antonym | Synonym |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| One | Modern Primitive | Winding Meandering |
| Two | Peaceful Violent | Fast Swift |
| Three | Foreigners Natives | Guns Weapons |
| Four | Followers Chiefs | Met Encountered |
| Five | Hostile Peaceful | Dominant Powerful |
| Six | Enormous Small | Modern Present (day) |

Imagine you are Captain Lewis and write a journal entry explaining what happened when the expedition met the Teton Sioux. Were you worried about a fight breaking out, or not? How did you feel when the group left the Indians and continued traveling?

Students' answers should be in the form of a journal entry and reflect an understanding of the tense situation described in the story.

Comprehension Answers:

- 1) C 2) D 3) B 4) A 5) B 6) C 7) A