

## On to the Great Falls

After a long and frigid winter at Fort Mandan, the men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition were very happy to see signs of spring. The captains gathered together the maps, notes and journals they had been making throughout the trip and sent them back to President Jefferson with some of the men. This “return party” was instructed to carry samples of plant and animal life, including a live prairie dog, as well. Eleven men took the keelboat, which was too large for the increasingly narrow river, back to St. Louis. They also took one dugout canoe and enough supplies to help them make the trip.

On April 7, 1805, the permanent party of the expedition left their friends of the Mandan tribe and continued on the next leg of their journey. Up until this point, the explorers had had some fairly accurate maps to help them along their way. These came from trappers and traders who had floated their goods down the river and shared information with others. The lands west of Fort Mandan, however, were almost completely uncharted. Captain Lewis had talked to a variety of Indians and mountain men, and he knew that the Missouri had a “great falls” in it that they would have to get around. He also knew that the Rocky Mountains lay somewhere in front of him, but he had no real idea of how far away they were, or how difficult they would be to cross. The Corps of Discovery was heading out into a great unknown.

One of the biggest adventures of the spring for the group occurred at the end of April. The men had all heard stories of the huge and fierce grizzly bears that lived along the river. The Indians were quite fearful of the beasts and never hunted them with fewer than ten or twelve men. Even then, many natives lost their lives to angry, wounded grizzlies. Captain Lewis, however, did not really believe that his men would be in any danger. He reasoned that the bears might be hazardous to hunters armed with only bows and arrows, but he thought the rifles carried by his soldiers would easily handle any bear. On April 29, he discovered that he was wrong. Captain Lewis was on shore with one other hunter when they came upon two of the beasts. They both fired their rifles. Both bears were wounded and one escaped across the prairie. The other, however, turned and charged at Lewis. The bear chased the captain seventy or eighty yards until his injuries caused him to slow down. Lewis then was able to reload his gun and kill the animal. But he did not underestimate the power of a grizzly again. He wrote in his journal that he “would rather fight two Indians than one bear.”

After two months of slow progress up the river, Captain Lewis was the first white man to see the Great Falls of the Missouri River. He heard the roaring of the water while he was still seven miles away. On June 13, when he was finally able to see the spectacle, he wrote this in his journal, “It is the grandest sight I ever beheld. There is a beautiful rainbow produced, which adds not a little to the beauty of this majestically grand scenery.” Now, he had to figure out how to get his men and equipment past this imposing natural feature.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## On to the Great Falls Questions

Refer to the story and answer T or F for each question. Rewrite each False answer to make it true.

1)\_\_\_\_\_The “return party” walked back to Washington with specimens and maps.

---

2)\_\_\_\_\_ Captain Lewis knew he would come to a large waterfall in the Missouri River.

---

3)\_\_\_\_\_The Indians warned the men about dangerous grizzly bears.

---

4)\_\_\_\_\_ Lewis and Clark got information about the land they were exploring by reading detailed maps.

---

5)\_\_\_\_\_ Two or three Indians often hunted grizzlies together.

---

6)\_\_\_\_\_ Captain Lewis thought the waterfall on the river was ugly.

---

7)\_\_\_\_\_ Lewis and Clark knew that the Appalachian Mountains were ahead of them.

---

8)\_\_\_\_\_ The Mandan Indians were friendly to the men of the Corps of Discovery.

---

9)\_\_\_\_\_ Grizzlies are easily killed with bows and arrows.

---

10)\_\_\_\_\_ Trappers and mountain men talked to Lewis and Clark about the land they would see.

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### On to the Great Falls Questions (Cont'd)

Subtitles are often used in nonfiction materials to help a reader process the information he or she is learning more easily. Reread each of the four paragraphs in the story. Write a subtitle for each paragraph that expresses its main idea.

Paragraph 1.

---

Paragraph 2.

---

Paragraph 3.

---

Paragraph 4.

---

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter traveling with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write an article about the hunters' run-in with grizzly bears. Be sure you tell *Who* did it, *What* happened, *When* it occurred, *Where* it took place, and *How* it turned out. Write a headline for your story, too.

(Headline) \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### On to the Great Falls Answers

- 1) F The “return party” used a canoe and keelboat to get back to Washington with specimens and maps.
- 2) I
- 3) I
- 4) F Lewis and Clark got information about the land they were exploring by talking to trappers, traders and Indians and by looking at primitive maps
- 5) F Ten or twelve Indians often hunted grizzlies together.
- 6) F Captain Lewis thought the waterfall on the river was grand, beautiful and majestic.
- 7) F Lewis and Clark knew that the Rocky Mountains were ahead of them.
- 8) I
- 9) F Grizzlies are **not** easily killed with bows and arrows.
- 10) I

**Subtitles are often used in nonfiction materials to help a reader process the information he or she is learning more easily. Reread each of the four paragraphs in the story. Write a subtitle for each paragraph that expresses its main idea.**

*Answers will vary. They should contain something similar to the following.*

Paragraph 1. The Return Party Goes back to Washington in the Spring

Paragraph 2. The Expedition Enters Unknown Lands

Paragraph 3. Hunters Meet a Grizzly Bear

Paragraph 4. Captain Lewis Reaches the Falls

**Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter traveling with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write an article about the hunters’ run-in with grizzly bears. Be sure you tell Who did it, What happened, When it occurred, Where it took place, and How it turned out. Write a headline for your story, too.**

*Students should write an article and headline in newspaper style describing the event.*