

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A Troublesome Portage

Captain Lewis was impressed with the beauty of the Great Falls of the Missouri when he first saw them. He soon realized, however, that getting his pirogues and supplies around them was going to be more difficult than he had planned. The reports the men had heard from the Indians indicated that there was only one waterfall. So, they thought that they could portage (carry their supplies) around it in about a week. In reality, there were five falls. This meant that the men of the Corps of Discovery would have to transport all their belongings more than eighteen miles around the obstacle.

The ground the men had to cover was rough, rocky and strewn with large sagebrush. Even worse, there was prickly-pear cactus growing everywhere. Most members of the expedition had worn out the shoes they had at the beginning of the trip. They were wearing moccasins they made from deer or buffalo hide instead. During the portage, they sewed double soles on their moccasins, and still had to have a new pair about every two days.

Animals in the area caused problems for the explorers, too. They were all bothered by swarms of gnats and mosquitoes that invaded their eyes and noses. Rattlesnakes were plentiful and loved to escape the summer heat by resting beneath the ever-present sagebrush. A grizzly bear chased Captain Lewis while he was near the river. He only escaped by plunging into the deep water where the bear did not wish to follow him. Lewis also had a run-in with some kind of a large cat he called a "tyger." Most people think it was a mountain lion or bobcat, but whatever it was, the captain had to shoot at it to scare it back into its burrow. A few minutes later, three large bull bison charged Lewis. As he was attempting to reload his gun, they stopped and retreated for an unknown reason.

The dugout canoes that the Corps of Discovery used were very heavy. The men could not possibly carry them, so they made crude wheels by cutting slices of tree trunks and fastening them under the canoes. These "sleds" helped the men to move their loads, but it was still very hard work. They wore harnesses on their shoulders that were hitched to the sleds. Captain Lewis wrote in his journal that the men pulled "as much as they could possibly move." They were forced to rest every few minutes, and they often fell asleep as soon as they hit the ground. Sometimes, if it was very windy, they put sails up on the canoes and let the wind help them move along. They had to make eight trips back and forth under these conditions in order to carry their six canoes and other baggage around the falls.

Since it was the middle of the summer when the portage took place, the members of the expedition were frequently caught in thunderstorms. These often contained lightning, heavy rain, and hailstones as big as eggs. After one such storm, Captain Clark, Sacagawea, and Pomp were all nearly washed away in a flash flood. They did lose several pieces of equipment. In spite of all the difficulties, the group finished their portage in about a month and according to Captain Lewis, they did not complain, but "continued with cheerfulness."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### A Troublesome Portage Questions

Find each word in the paragraph as indicated. Write its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) *as used in the selection* in the middle column and a dictionary definition in the third column.

Word (Paragraph #)	Part of Speech	Definition
Transport (1)		
Moccasins (2)		
Ever-present (3)		
Helped (4)		
Frequently (5)		

Imagine that you are one of the men on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write a journal entry telling about at least two of the problems you face while portaging around the falls.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A Troublesome Portage Questions (Cont'd)

Reread each paragraph of the story. Then choose the sentence that best states the main idea of each paragraph.

Paragraph 1: \_\_\_\_\_

- A) Waterfalls are beautiful.
- B) The Great Falls pose a large obstacle to Lewis and Clark.
- C) The Missouri River has one waterfall.
- D) Indians lied to Lewis and Clark.

Paragraph 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- A) The ground around the falls is rough.
- B) Cactus is prickly.
- C) Moccasins are useful.
- D) The men had no shoes.

Paragraph 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- A) A bobcat is dangerous.
- B) The men of the expedition hate insects.
- C) Lewis kills a bison.
- D) Animals along the trail cause problems.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A Troublesome Portage Questions (Cont'd)

Paragraph 4: \_\_\_\_\_

- A) The men make wheels from trees.
- B) The canoes have sails.
- C) The portage around the falls is very difficult.
- D) The men fall asleep.

Paragraph 5: \_\_\_\_\_

- A) Bad weather does not discourage the men.
- B) A flood is dangerous.
- C) Thunderstorms are frightening.
- D) Pomp causes problems.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A Troublesome Portage Answers

Find each word in the indicated paragraph. Write its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) as used in the selection in the middle column and a dictionary definition in the third column.

Word (Paragraph #)	Part of Speech	Definition
Transport (1)	Verb	To move items from one place to another.
Moccasins (2)	Noun	Soft leather footwear
Ever-present (3)	Adjective	There at all times
Helped (4)	Verb	Aided
Frequently (5)	Adverb	Often

Imagine that you are one of the men on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write a journal entry telling about at least two of the problems you face while portaging around the falls.

*Answers should be written in the style of a journal entry and discuss at least two of the following: rough ground, worn out shoes, dangerous animals, heavy loads, or bad weather.*

Reread each paragraph of the story. Then choose the sentence that best states the main idea of each paragraph.

1) B 2) A 3) D 4) C 5) A