

Winter with the Mandans

After beginning the world's most famous camping trip in May of 1804, Lewis and Clark and their men reached present day North Dakota in late October. The Missouri River was beginning to freeze, and they knew that they needed a place to stay warm and fed throughout the cold weather to come. The Expedition chose to stop for the winter at a spot near two Mandan Indian villages. The natives were friendly and were willing to trade food for items that the explorers had with them. The men of the Corps of Discovery spent about a month cutting trees from a grove of cottonwoods that grew along the river. They used the logs to build a fort and several individual huts. Captain Lewis named the settlement Fort Mandan in honor of their peaceful neighbors.

The weather during the winter of 1804 was extremely cold. Captain Clark carried a thermometer with him and often recorded the daily temperatures in his journal. There were times when he reported nights as cold as 45 degrees below zero. Anyone going outside with bare skin exposed at that temperature would develop frostbite within just a few minutes. Many men of the Corps of Discovery did suffer from exposure to the cold. Some even lost the use of some of their fingers or toes.

The Mandan Indians were expert buffalo hunters. During the winter, they invited the men of the Expedition to accompany them on their hunts. One of the men described such a hunt in his journal entry of December 7, 1804. He said that a Mandan Chief came to their fort to tell them about a herd of bison that was near by. Captain Clark and fifteen of the men went out on the prairie to help the Indians in the chase. The warriors rode horses and used bows and arrows to bring down the massive beasts. Women and children then came in to cut up the meat and take it back to their village. The natives used every part of the buffalo for something. The hides were used for warm blankets and robes; the horns were made into cups and other utensils. They even made thread from the tendons and ligaments. Some of the meat was eaten right away and some was salted, dried, and made into jerky. Captain Clark brought five bison back to the fort and the men of the expedition lived on buffalo meat for most of that long, cold winter.

A very important thing happened to the Expedition during the time at Fort Mandan. The men met a French trapper named Toussaint Charbonneau. He had been living in the area for several years and could speak the languages of many of the local tribes. His Indian wife was called Sacagawea. She had been born to the Shoshone tribe many miles to the west. Charbonneau wanted the expedition to hire him as a translator. Lewis and Clark agreed to have him and his wife join their group, especially because they knew they would need Sacagawea to help them talk to her people when they reached the Rocky Mountains.

February 11, 1805, was an exciting day for everyone in the fort. Sacagawea had a baby boy. He was named Jean Baptiste, but everyone called him "Pomp." He traveled with his mother and the rest of the group when they left Fort Mandan. Captain Clark became very fond of the little fellow, and wrote about him in his journal many times. When the trip was over, Clark even brought Pomp to live with him and helped him to get a good education.

Name _____

Date _____

Winter with the Mandans Questions

Use the context of the story to match each word with its best definition.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1) _____ Extremely | A. Very large |
| 2) _____ Translator | B. To travel with |
| 3) _____ Massive | C. Items that are useful as tools |
| 4) _____ Utensils | D. A variety of large tree |
| 5) _____ Exposed | E. Not protected |
| 6) _____ Cottonwood | F. The greatest possible extent |
| 7) _____ Warriors | G. One who transfers words from one language to another |
| 8) _____ Accompany | H. People who fight or hunt |

Imagine you are a young member of the Mandan Tribe meeting the strange-looking white men in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write a letter to your friend in another village that describes the odd things the visitors do and say. You could write about their clothes, tools, houses, or any other differences you observe.

Name _____

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Winter with the Mandans 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) North Dakota is a big state.
- B) Cutting trees is hard work.
- C) Lewis and Clark get ready for the winter.
- D) Winter begins in October.

Paragraph 2: _____

- A) Frostbite is dangerous.
- B) The winter of 1804 is very cold.
- C) Captain Clark keeps a journal.
- D) The snow is deep.

Paragraph 3: _____

- A) The Mandans and Expedition members hunt for buffalo.
- B) Mandans use hides for blankets.
- C) Mandan children work hard.
- D) Buffalo meat is tasty.

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Winter with the Mandans Questions (Cont'd)

Paragraph 4: _____

- A) Translators speak many languages.
- B) Lewis and Clark meet Charbonneau and Sacagawea.
- C) Fort Mandan is a busy place.
- D) The Rocky Mountains are beautiful

Paragraph 5: _____

- A) Pomp goes to school.
- B) Captain Clark writes about a baby.
- C) Pomp joins the expedition.
- D) Sacagawea is a good guide.

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Winter with the Mandans Answers

Use the context of the story to match each word with its best definition.

- 1) F 2) G 3) A 4) C 5) E 6) D 7) H 8) B

Imagine you are a young member of the Mandan Tribe meeting the strange-looking white men in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Write a letter to your friend in another village that describes the odd things the visitors do and say. You could write about their clothes, tools, houses, or any other differences you observe.

The student's response should be written in first person in standard "friendly letter" format. It should mention several of the items above and explain why they are considered odd.

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

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