

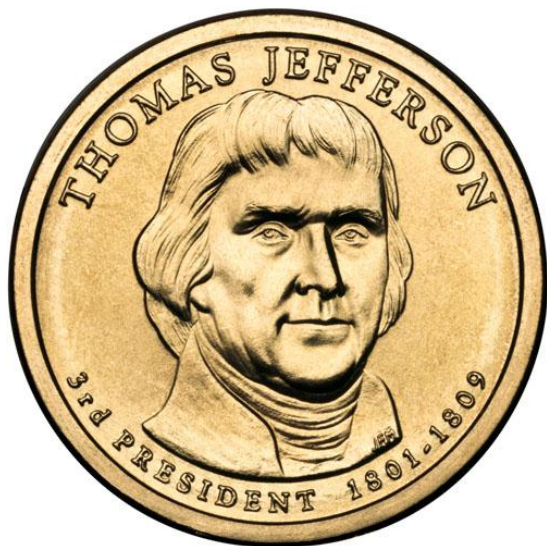
The Lewis and Clark Expedition



Learning Objectives:

1. Begin to understand the causes and events of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
2. Discover how Lewis and Clark overcame problems during their expedition.
3. Report back to President Jefferson what you have discovered.

Background to the Expedition



When Jefferson became President in 1801 the Louisiana Purchase, when the US bought a significant portion of land from France, had not yet been made and the area around the headwaters of the Missouri and Columbia rivers was still unexplored. This vast region was not part of the United States and what it contained was uncertain; it was unclear who the land belonged to.

One of Jefferson's first measures was to arrange for this area to be explored in detail which was rumoured to be rich in furs, timber and minerals. In the winter of 1802–03, Congress agreed on the sum of \$2,500 for the purpose. Jefferson organized the party as a military expedition sent out by the War Department.

Meriwether Lewis, Jefferson's private secretary, was put in command. Lewis asked that William Clark, an old friend and a fellow soldier, be made co-leader of the expedition. Lewis was given a Captain's commission, and Clark was made a Lieutenant. Lewis refused to recognise the difference in rank. Clark was addressed as 'Captain' throughout the expedition and is referred to as Captain today.

Jefferson gave clear and very specific instructions to Lewis and Clark. In his letter to Lewis, Jefferson wrote; "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or and other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce. Beginning at the mouth of the Missouri, you will take *careful* observations of latitude & longitude, at all remarkable points on the river, & especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, at islands, & other places & objects distinguished by such natural marks & characters of a durable kind, as that they may with certainty be recognised hereafter. The courses of the river between these points of observation may be supplied by the compass the log-line & by time, corrected by the observations themselves. The variations of the compass too, in different places, should be noticed".

Lewis and Clark were men of exceptional physical and mental ability, and worked well together as a team. Both had long experience in wilderness living and river travel. Lewis was the natural leader and had the more scientific mind. Clark was a skilled frontiersman with a genius for negotiating with Indians.

The Expedition

Your task is to record a short message to President Jefferson telling him about the journey so far, what you have discovered and what problems you have encountered. It is up to you when you will report back.

Use the space surrounding the map to show the key issues faced by Lewis and Clark... show how the journey progressed; this will help you make your decision.



Making Jefferson Proud!

Look back to Jefferson's letter to Lewis setting the aims of the expedition; what kinds of things will you have to consider in your report back to him to show you are fulfilling these?

Focus on the part of the expedition you have selected; what is it important that you let Jefferson know? Why?

Think back to what you have learned about Jefferson. How will you link your report to his guiding principles and his interaction with the enlightenment movement?

In your group, work through the following ideas and plan your report back to Jefferson. This could take whatever form you want; a letter, journal entry, short film message or audio recording.