



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Lewis & Clark: A Native American View

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- History

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will understand the role of stories in the writing and recounting of history.
- Students will be able to describe ways in which the experience of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was different for Native Americans than for other Americans.
- Students will describe how they can make up their own minds about the truths of the stories they hear.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why is it important to hear all sides of a story?
- What perspectives might be missing from stories of U.S. and Oregon history?
- How might Native American views of the Lewis and Clark Expedition differ from the views typically expressed in textbooks?

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Overview

The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–1806 was of great consequence for the United States, the future state of Oregon, and the vast numbers of Indigenous people who had been living in the American West for thousands of years. The passage of time, mythmaking, and selective interpretation have obscured or distorted both minor and major realities about the purposes of the expedition, the people involved, and its impact.

In this lesson, students will explore how historical events can be viewed and interpreted differently by different people, and why some stories about historical events can dominate or exclude others. These occurrences in the historical record were often intentionally organized and supported to present a narrative that was favorable to one side over another. Students will also learn details about the Lewis and Clark Expedition that provide a fuller picture of Native American contributions to the journey and its long-term impact on Indigenous people, specifically in Oregon. This lesson can be incorporated into elementary Oregon history units and/or provided as an extension. It assumes that students are already familiar with the general outline and key people of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom
- How are the students organized?
 - Whole class
 - Teams: 3 – 5
 - Pairs
 - Individually

TIME REQUIRED

50 minutes

Background for teachers

The Lewis and Clark Expedition, which began in May 1804 and ended in September 1806, was the first U.S. government-sponsored expedition to explore the interior of the American West. President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the expedition, also known as the Corps of Discovery, to explore and map the newly acquired territory of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, find an overland route to the Pacific Ocean, and establish an American presence in the region before other European countries tried to claim it. The expedition was also charged with studying the region's plants and animals and learning about and establishing trade with the Native American tribes they encountered.

The expedition was remarkably successful at accomplishing these goals, and it has been commemorated and honored as a pivotal moment in U.S. history ever since. However, mythmaking and self-interested interpretations have obscured and distorted the purposes of the expedition, the people involved, and its impact.

STANDARDS

Oregon English language arts standards

4.RL.6 – Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

4.RL.9 – Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

4.SL.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Oregon social sciences standards

4.13 – Give examples of changes in Oregon's agricultural, industrial, political, and business development over time, and the impacts on the people of the state (including people of different socioeconomic status, ethnic groups, religious groups, and other traditionally marginalized groups). (History, Multicultural Studies)



Foremost among these distortions has been the failure to acknowledge the essential contribution of Native American tribes and individuals to the expedition. The Corps of Discovery crossed paths with more than 50 tribes, whose generosity, hospitality, and forbearance enabled the corps to complete the voyage from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back, with minimal hostilities and no deaths (except one due to appendicitis). This success would have been impossible without the contributions of Native people—as Lewis, Clark, and other corps members attested in their journals. In addition, the corps benefitted enormously from the help of Sacagawea, a Lemhi Shoshone woman, whose contributions were downplayed, distorted, or mythologized for nearly two centuries.

History books, films, and other depictions of the expedition have also typically failed to include any Native perspective on its long-term impact. Lewis and Clark helped open the American West to Euro-American encroachment, settlement, and colonialism, which had catastrophic consequences for many generations of Indigenous people.

The story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is only one example of how the Native American perspective has been left out of the historical record. Slowly, this is beginning to change, as more Native people in Oregon and elsewhere are finding ways to share their versions of the story and to counter the ignorance and arrogance that often accompanies mainstream interpretations of U.S. history.

MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- **PowerPoint presentation** – Load the slides prior to the lesson to ensure they are displaying properly.
- **Poster paper and markers**
- **Classroom writing surface** – (i.e., blackboard or whiteboard)
- **Copy of the book, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith.** Recorded readings may also be available online.

VOCABULARY

Civilized – Having an advanced stage of society and culture.

Frontier – A line or border between countries or between land with people living on it and “wilderness.”

Myth – A traditional story, legend—often referred to as an oral tradition by American Indians—especially about the history of a people; can also mean a widely held but false belief or idea.

Savage – A brutal, cruel, or “uncivilized” person or group; often used by one group to disparage or dehumanize another group.

Wilderness – A wild, empty area with no people living in it.



Resources

- Josephy, A. M. (Ed.) (2007). *Lewis and Clark through Indian eyes*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Olson, K. (Spring 2006). Discovering Lewis and Clark. *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*, 29. Retrieved August 2, 2019, from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2006/discovering-lewis-and-clark>
- Public Broadcasting System. (n.d.). *Lewis & Clark: The journey of the Corps of Discovery*. [Online] Retrieved August 6, 2019, from <https://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html>
- Ronda, J. (1984). *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Scigliano, E. (October 9, 2006). The myths and myopia of Lewis and Clark. *Seattle Weekly*. Retrieved August 5, 2019, from <https://www.seattleweekly.com/news/the-myths-and-myopia-of-lewis-and-clark/>

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

Students should be assessed formatively. The formative assessment will be teacher observation of student participation in class discussions and group work. Summative assessment is provided by an end-of-lesson writing exercise and can be supplemented by having students complete an exit ticket or a writing exercise in which they answer the Essential Questions for the lesson.

Practices

- The teacher must be prepared to activate engagement strategies and foster whole-group discussions.
- Both teachers and students must have general familiarity with the Lewis and Clark Expedition through prior teaching and learning of Oregon history.

Learning targets

- I understand that history can be described as stories.
- I can describe why some stories of history can be missing important information.
- I can describe why the Lewis and Clark Expedition may be viewed differently by Native Americans than by other Americans.

Options/extensions

- Have students review the list of tribes the Lewis and Clark Expedition met on their journey, which is available at the Public Broadcasting System website, <https://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/native/index.html>
- Have students write a report on what they learned and then share the report with the class. This could be done as an individual assignment or as a group assignment.

Reflection/closure

Sum up the lesson by reviewing the learning targets. Invite students to share with a partner or out loud with the class one thing they learned about the Native American experience of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides.PPT

Activity 1

Activate Prior Knowledge

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1:

Confirm that students are familiar with the traditional version of The Three Little Pigs.

Step 2:

With the class, read or have students take turns reading, book, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (or show an online recorded reading of the book) and then debrief together.

Say:

I hope you enjoyed the story! Some of you may have read it before. It's meant to be funny, but it has something to teach us about stories. What do you think that is? [Take a few responses; share a few of the following to prompt deeper reflection.]

- *How are the two versions of the story alike? How are they different?* [You could co-create a Venn diagram with students to illustrate this.]
- *Which version of the story do you like better? Why?*
- *Which version of the story do you think is true? Why?*
- *Have you ever disagreed with somebody about something that happened? Did you figure out what really happened?*
- *Has someone ever told you about something that happened that you believed at first but then you later learned something new that made you change your mind?*
- *What can we do when we have two versions of an event? How can we figure out which one, if either, is true?*

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

- *Do you think that the police and reporters were fair to the wolf? Did they have a reason to be unfair? Explain.*
- *If you were a pig, would you be more likely to believe the pigs' story? What if you were a wolf?*

Step 3:

Make a transition to the next segment.

Say:

All human beings—children and adults—love stories. We especially like stories that make us feel happy, or proud, or important, or help us make sense of the world we live in. Groups of people—even entire countries—can like stories, too. They also like stories that make them feel good about themselves or ones that they believe help them understand where they come from.

When we learn history, we are learning stories. History is made up of stories about things that happened in the past. We can't really know for sure what happened in the past, because we weren't there to see it for ourselves. We must rely on the stories people tell about what they saw at the time and what they chose to record for others to learn about later.

But people might tell stories differently. They might not have all the information. Or they might have only been witness to a part or portion of the actual events. Or they might choose to leave out of their stories things they don't care about or don't think are important or don't want people to know about. Or, maybe they try to keep other people from telling their version of the story because they think what they saw is correct or that their version of the story is more important.

Step 4:

Show the slide representing a broken pair of glasses.

Activity 1 (Continued)

Say:

Sometimes people say that we see history through a “lens,” like a pair of glasses. But what if a pair of glasses was blurry or scratched, so they were hard to see through? Or what if they were broken? Or what if someone else had a different pair of glasses that caused them to see things differently? Maybe you’d like to trade glasses with them so you could see what they’re seeing. This would be called a change in perspective.

We’re going to take a closer look at a story that we hear about the history of our state and country. It’s the story of Lewis and Clark. We’re going to see if there might be parts of the story that we are missing or whether we might understand the story of Lewis and Clark differently if we look at it through someone else’s glasses.

Activity 2

Lewis and Clark: A Native American View

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1:

Confirm that students are familiar with the general outlines and main events and people involved in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Review if necessary.

Step 2:

Ask students to share with a partner or table group what they think they know about the expedition. Ask a few volunteers to share out what they discussed. Record their main points on chart paper or on a whiteboard or blackboard.

Step 3:

Explain how certain realities of the expedition have been overlooked or forgotten.

Say:

The Lewis and Clark Expedition happened a long time ago, so we have to rely on the stories of others about what happened. Unfortunately, there is one story of the expedition that we rarely hear. It's the story of the Native Americans that Lewis and Clark met along their journey. Let's think about that for a minute. Have you ever heard someone talking about what the Lewis and Clark Expedition might have been like for Native Americans? [Ask for a show of hands.] Let's look at how the Native lens or perspective might be different than the perspective of Lewis and Clark or President Jefferson.

Step 4:

Click through the slides in the presentation, sharing the explanations for the images provided below.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Click:

How the U.S. and Europe Saw North America slide

At the time of Lewis and Clark, Americans and Europeans thought North America was an open or empty territory that was theirs to claim, even though people had been living there for a very long time. This map shows how America, Spain, Britain, and France were trying to gain control over different parts of North America.

Click:

What North America Was Really Like slide

In reality, North America was full of people, probably more than a million of people, who had lived there for thousands of years. Today, we call these people Native Americans, because they were native or original to this continent. They spoke many different languages and had unique cultural views and lifeways. Some lived in permanent villages and grew crops, others roamed across a large area, following the seasonal patterns, hunting animals and gathering plants.

Click:

“Wilderness” for Whom? Places slide

Americans in Lewis and Clark’s day thought of the American West as a “wilderness” or the “frontier.” They thought the land to the west was mostly empty or that the Native people were not civilized or as important as Americans who had come from Europe. [Define wilderness, frontier, and civilized using definitions above, if needed.] In fact, Native Americans were civilized; their civilizations were just different from those of European-Americans. Their societies and cultures—their ways of living—showed an amazing awareness of the natural world, for example, and they had storytelling traditions that were as rich as those from any culture in the world. Their way of living had allowed them to thrive in North America for thousands of years, and they knew every detail of their homeland. The Lewis and Clark Expedition actually followed well-established trails that Native Americans had created for their own travel and trade purposes.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Click:

American Entrepreneurs slide

Native Americans used technology and had sophisticated ways of communicating and getting along in the world. They traded with each other all across the continent and beyond. Here in Oregon, the area we now call The Dalles was a major meeting place where tribes from all over the region would meet up and trade food, clothing, tools, jewelry, and everything one could need. They traded with Europeans as soon as they arrived in North America, and they quickly made use of new things such as horses, cotton fabric, and rifles.

Click:

A Military Operation slide

Lewis was a captain and Clark was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and most of the men in the expedition were soldiers. Jefferson sent soldiers instead of other people, such as explorers and traders, because he thought they'd be more organized and disciplined. He also wanted to impress or scare Native people with American power so they would listen to him and work with Americans and not the British or French. Whenever Lewis and Clark met with a group of Native Americans, they had the soldiers get into their best uniforms, march around, and fire their rifles and the guns on their riverboat.

Click:

Not the First slide

Sometimes people think Lewis and Clark were the first Europeans or European-Americans to explore Western North America. But others had explored the area and visited the West Coast in ships. Twelve years before Lewis and Clark, a Canadian named Alexander Mackenzie had already crossed North America from east to west. Many Native Americans had already met Europeans and European-Americans, and some had been trading with them for decades.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Click:**Could We Have Some Horses, Please? slide**

Lewis and Clark got a lot of help from Native Americans. The Sioux Tribe let them pass through their territory without attacking them. The Shoshones supplied them with horses to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Mandan in North Dakota and the Clatsop in Oregon let them stay on their lands and build their forts to get through two winters. Tribes supplied food, information, and guides that helped Lewis and Clark find their way to the ocean. Lewis and Clark wrote in their journals about how many of the Native Americans they met were honest, warm, and generous.

Click:**Who's the "Savage"? slide**

Americans and Europeans in Lewis and Clark's time described Native Americans as "savage," meaning cruel and uncivilized. As we already saw, the tribes had a very sophisticated society and in some ways they may have viewed the European-Americans as savage. For example, they thought it was cruel that Lewis and Clark punished soldiers who broke the rules by whipping them, and the Nez Perce, who bathed in rivers and used sweat lodges to stay clean, thought the men of the expedition were "smelly."

Click:**An Unhappy Ending slide**

Unfortunately, the Lewis and Clark Expedition was only the beginning of a long period of injustice and violence inflicted on Native Americans. Within a few years of the expedition, white settlers, railroad companies, and the U.S. Army began moving into the West and forcing Native Americans off their lands. Sometimes the Native people tried to get along with the newcomers, other times they tried to fight to protect their lands and way of life, but there were too many whites and they were too powerful to resist. Those who tried were often killed. And those who survived were forced to move on to reservations, often far from their homeland.



Activity 2 (Continued)

Later, the U.S. and state governments forced Native Americans to learn English and took their children away and sent them to far away boarding schools where they were punished for speaking their languages and forced to learn European culture and customs.

We can't blame Lewis and Clark for all of this, but their expedition into the West—and the journals they kept—led the way for other Americans to think they could move there and take the land from the Native people. Despite the kindness and generosity that were shown to them, they still viewed Native people as savages. They helped create a version of the story—the story of the American West—in which the land was there for the taking and the rights of Native people did not need to be respected. In the end, despite their amazing ability to observe things like plants and animals, they were unable to see and understand the full humanity and rich cultures of the Native people they encountered.

Step 5:

Debrief the slides with students to answer any questions they have and clarify any misunderstandings. Encourage them to think about why the Native American side of the Lewis and Clark Expedition story is not known by many people, using the following prompt:

- Why, do you think, most Americans don't hear much about the Native American side of the Lewis and Clark story?

Step 6:

Prompt and encourage students to generate reasons, supplying the following as needed:

- People like simple stories with happy endings. They don't like complicated stories or stories with sad endings.
- For many years, Native Americans weren't allowed to tell their side of the story, or they were ignored if they did.

Activity 2 *(Continued)*

- Many of the stories about the expedition were written by European-Americans for other European-Americans. They didn't see—or they chose to ignore—the things they didn't want to see.
- The U.S. government wanted Americans to ignore the Native American side of the story because the government was responsible for many bad things that happened to Native people after the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Activity 3

Reflection Activity

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Ask students to take out a piece of paper and write a reflection using the following prompts [write the prompts on chart paper or a blackboard or whiteboard, if helpful]:

- What is one new fact you learned about the Lewis and Clark Expedition?
- What other events have you learned about in Oregon history that might have looked different to the tribes living here?
- What have you learned about stories and how to make up your own mind about what is true?