

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Lewis & Clark: A Native American View

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- History

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will describe the difference between primary and secondary sources and their benefits and challenges for understanding history.
- Students will describe how perspective and bias can affect how people understand history.
- Students will understand why the Lewis and Clark Expedition may be viewed differently by Native Americans than by other Americans.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are primary and secondary sources, and what are their benefits and challenges in helping us understand history?
- How can perspective and bias influence how historical events are recorded, interpreted, and understood?
- What perspectives might be missing from stories and texts on U.S. and Oregon history?

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Overview

The Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–1806 was of great consequence for the developing United States, the future state of Oregon, and the Native American 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. As is said, every story has (at least) two sides, and until recently the Native American point of view has rarely been heard.

In this lesson, students will learn about primary and secondary sources, as well as point of view and bias and the impact they can have on the intention behind the recording and retelling of history. They will do so by reading three accounts (see reading packet in the class materials) from an incident that occurred during the Lewis and Clark expedition on October 19, 1805, in which the explorers encountered a Native American tribe near the Umatilla River in Oregon. Students will read one primary source relating to the incident (an entry from William Clark’s journal for the day), as well as two secondary sources that provide different



LOGISTICS

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

TIME REQUIRED

90 minutes

points of view or interpretations of how the explorers and the Native Americans saw each other and judged each other's intentions. Each article is followed by a set of reflection questions students can answer individually in class, as homework, or together with peers, in pairs or small groups. The session ends with a whole-class discussion using prompts that help students be better-informed and adept learners of American history.

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

STANDARDS

Oregon English Language Arts Standards

8.RL.6 – Determine an author's perspective, and/or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to any conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

8.RL.9 – Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Oregon Social Sciences Standards

8.29 (Historical Thinking) – Use and interpret relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to U.S. History from multiple perspectives.

8.32 (Social Science Analysis) – Critique and analyze information for point of view, historical context, distortion, bias, propaganda and relevance including sources with



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 generally successful in meeting these goals, and it has been commemorated and honored as a pivotal moment in U.S. history ever since. However, much of the interpretation of the expedition and the history of the American West since then has omitted, obscured, or minimized the contributions Native Americans made to the expedition and its impact on them afterwards. 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 (as Lewis, Clark, and other corps members attested in their journals).

Unfortunately, Lewis and Clark also 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, often intentionally. Slowly, this is beginning to change, as more Native people, in Oregon and elsewhere, are finding ways to share their versions of the story of U.S. history and to counter the ignorance and arrogance that often accompanies it.

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.
- Classroom writing surface – (i.e., blackboard or whiteboard)
- Primary and Secondary Sources Worksheet – (one copy per student)
- Incident at Umatilla – (one copy per student; or one copy per group if having students work in pairs or small groups)
- Audio/visual setup – (if playing optional instructional video on perspective; see “Resources” section)

VOCABULARY

Bias – Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared to another.

Perspective – The position or attitude from which something or someone is observed.

Primary source – An original document or other material that has not been changed in any way. Typically produced by someone with direct personal knowledge of the events that are described.

Secondary source – A document or other material that interprets, evaluates, or discusses information found in one or more primary sources. Secondary sources depend on primary or original sources of information.



Resources

- Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (n.d). *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online*. Retrieved from <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>
- HistorySkills.com. (n.d.). *How do you determine a source's perspective?* [Online] Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/BQP7sQUiYZY>
- Olson, K. (2006, spring). Discovering Lewis and Clark. *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*, 29. [Online] Retrieved 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 from <https://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html>

References

- Josephy, A. M. (Ed.) (2007). *Lewis and Clark through Indian eyes*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ronda, J. (1984). *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

Assessment will depend on how you choose to have students read and respond to the selected readings and the accompanying reflection questions. If assigning the readings as individual work, summative assessment can be achieved by having students submit their responses to the reflection questions. If students work in pairs or groups, summative assessment can be achieved by reviewing group responses or by having groups give an oral report in class.

Practices

- The teacher must be prepared to activate engagement strategies and foster pair, small-group, and 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.
- You might consider reviewing the first reading (from William Clark’s journal) together in class with students to help them understand it. The passage may be challenging for students to read given its style, non-standard spelling and grammar, and inclusion of extraneous detail. You may also wish to review the passage ahead of time. The University of Nebraska provides access to online versions of the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with helpful annotations and notes (see link in “Resources” section above).

Learning targets

- I can describe the difference between primary and secondary sources and their benefits and challenges for understanding history.
- I can describe how perspective and bias can affect how people understand history.
- I understand why the Lewis and Clark Expedition may be viewed differently by Native Americans, than by other Americans.

Options/extensions

- Have students read the article from *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (Olson, 2006) (a link is provided in the “Resources” section), and submit a reflection on the underrepresentation of the Native American voice in traditional teaching of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
- Have students choose one tribe in Oregon the Lewis and Clark Expedition encountered and write a brief paper on their history since the expedition. The PBS website (<https://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/index.html> and also provided in the “Resources” section) is a great resource for this. Questions the students can try to answer include:
 - How did the lives of tribal members change after contact with Euro-Americans?
 - Where do tribal members live now? Where were they living when the Lewis and Clark Expedition encountered them in the 19th century?
 - What steps are they taking to maintain their distinct cultures?
 - Which tribes are federally recognized tribe or are part of a confederation of tribes that is federally recognized?
- Have students conduct a web search for images depicting Sacagawea (paintings, sculptures, image on U.S. currency, and others) for which information about the artwork and the artist can be found. Have students pick at least two sets of images and creator bios and add them to a document (being sure to cite sources). Then, have students add to their documents by responding to the following prompts:
 - What do you notice about the images? How are they similar? How are they different?
 - What is the background of the artist? Was the artist Native American? Why might that matter?
 - What was the image, sculpture, or painting created for? Who might have paid for it? What was its intended use?
 - What sources might the artist have used to imagine what Sacagawea looked like?

- What potential perspectives or bias might the artist have brought to their work?
- Why might one artist have depicted Sacagawea one way and another artist depicted her differently? What different interpretations of Sacagawea might the artists have been trying to encourage or promote?

Appendix

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

- Slides.ppt
- Materials_Primary and Secondary Sources Worksheet.doc
- Materials_Incident at Umatilla.doc

Activity 1

Activate Prior Knowledge

Time: 30 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 their pre-knowledge on the topic, or what they think they know or remember about the expedition. Ask a few volunteers to share what they discussed. Record their main points on a classroom writing surface.

Step 3:

Invite students to discuss with partners or table groups the following prompt:

Say:

How do we know what we think we know about the Lewis and Clark expedition?

After a few minutes, ask volunteers to share out what they discussed and record some of their responses on the classroom writing surface. It is important to point out any inaccuracies or misinformation in the narrative students share.

[Possible answers: textbooks, history classes/lessons in school, field trips, websites, books, movies.]

Step 4:

Introduce the terms “primary source” and “secondary source”. Begin by asking students to explain or guess what the terms mean based on their prior knowledge. Record their definitions on the classroom writing surface.

Activity 1 (Continued)

Step 5:

Distribute the Primary and Secondary Sources Worksheet, if you have not already.

Step 6:

Give students several minutes to fill out the worksheet by responding to the prompts provided. They can work individually, in pairs, or in table groups (per your preference).

Step 7:

When finished, ask volunteers to share how they, their pair, or group responded to the prompts. Record their responses on the classroom writing surface.

Step 8:

Review the slides discussing the benefits and challenges of primary and secondary sources and use them to confirm or expand on student understanding.

Step 9:

Using the definitions in this lesson plan and the accompanying slides, discuss the terms “perspective” and “bias” and how they can influence our understanding of history.

Step 10:

If time permits, play the video on historical perspective (<https://youtu.be/BQP-7sQUIYZY> and also provided in the “Resources” section).

Activity 1 (Continued)

Step 11:

Wrap up by telling students that they will be putting on their historian hats and looking at an incident that happened in Oregon during the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Prepare them to ask critical questions about what happened and about how people might see and understand it differently, both then and now.

Activity 2

Incident at Umatilla (Reading and Reflection Activity)

Time: 40 minutes

Step 1:

Distribute the Incident at Umatilla reading packet to students and provide the following overview.

Say:

We're going to read three passages describing an incident that happened between Lewis and Clark and Native Americans near the Umatilla River in Oregon. After each, we're going to answer some questions that help us determine whether it is from a primary or secondary source, what the perspective of the author might be, and what it tells us about how the people involved might have seen or understood it differently. The first reading is from William Clark's journal for October 19, 1805. The second reading is from a book written by an historian and published in 1984. The third is from an author who is descended from the tribe that was involved in the incident.

Step 2:

Depending on available time, your sense of your students' abilities, and your preference for students working with the material individually, in pairs, or in small groups, provide instructions and scaffolding to help students read the packet and respond to the reflection questions. If you think the reading from Clark's journal may be confusing for students, consider reading and interpreting it together in class, then have students work on their own or with each other for the remaining two.

Step 3:

Give students enough time in or out of class to read the three passages and respond to the reflection questions.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 4:

Reconvene students as a large group and ask if students have any questions about what they read. As time permits, have individual volunteers, pairs, or groups summarize their experiences in reading the three passages, and how they responded to the questions.

Activity 3

Reflection

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1:

Conduct a whole-class debrief with students about what they have learned by reading the three passages, using the following prompts and/or others that you choose to add. (Alternatively, you can have students respond to them as an individual writing exercise.)

1. How do the perspectives of the three authors differ as to what happened at the Umatilla River on October 19, 1805? What might be influencing or shaping their perspective?
2. Is it possible to determine if there is a “correct” perspective on what happened? Why or why not?
3. What have you learned about perspective and its importance in understanding history?
4. When studying history, what can you do to make sure you are getting the “full story?”

Step 2:

Review the learning objectives with students and discuss any, as needed, to confirm understanding and to answer any final questions.

Step 3:

Provide a brief statement to summarize and close the lesson. Consider using or adapting the following:

Say:

When looking at history, we have to consider where our information comes from, the perspective of the people who recorded and interpreted it, and whether any intentional or unintentional bias might have crept into their observations or thinking. Historians today try to be extra cautious when deciding which sources to

Activity 3 (Continued)

use and how to interpret them. They try to gather as many sources as possible and use rules of evidence to determine which are most credible and worthy of consideration. To avoid bias, they try to include as many perspectives as possible, and they try not to favor certain perspectives over others. The main criteria are how factual an account appears to be and how many other sources corroborate—or back up—that account. Historians still make mistakes, as we all do, but they are constantly asking critical questions about the historical events and people they study to try to present as fair a picture as possible.

For decades, the Native American perspective was excluded or overlooked in the retelling of Oregon and U.S. history. Thankfully, historians are beginning to seek out and include stories from the Native American perspective as they look at the Lewis and Clark Expedition and other events in our history. Tribes in Oregon and across the United States are finding ways to tell their own stories and to help others understand that without their stories, a big part of our shared knowledge is incomplete. That isn't to say one perspective will always be correct, but all are necessary to provide the fullest picture possible, so we can make up our own minds.