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A Few Suggestions for Using Lewis and Clark in the Curriculum

History

Our third president, Thomas Jefferson, was a scientist as well as a politician; the Lewis and Clark expedition is a good jumping off place for learning about this aspect of Jefferson's life.

One of the most important goals of the expedition was to establish relationships with Native American tribes. How did Lewis and Clark deal with the Indians, and what has been the history of the relationship between them and the government since then?

How did the territory west of the Mississippi River that Lewis and Clark explored end up as states? What other countries explored them and wanted to have them?

Geography

Use maps to find out which parts of the Lewis and Clark Trail are now highways. Why would so much of the trail be transformed into modern roadways?

Learn about the importance of rivers and mountains to travel in the 19th century. Why were rivers so important back then?

Make a map of the United States showing states and territories in 1803 and/or 1806 and compare it to a map of the U.S. today.

Language Arts

Look at the original spelling and writing style of the journals; rewrite a journal entry in today's English.

Find words new to you in the journals and look up their definitions; have their meanings changed in 200 years?

Write an essay, "I Traveled with Lewis and Clark". This can be done from the viewpoint of one of the leaders, one of the men, Sacagawea, Charbonneau, or Lewis's dog, Seaman.

Observe your pet, then describe its appearance and behavior with as much accuracy and attention to detail as Lewis did with some of the animals he described.

Visual Arts

Read a description of a place along the trail, an encounter with an animal, or Indian clothing and use it as the basis for a drawing or painting.

Science

Science has changed tremendously since 1800. Dinosaurs were unknown then. Plate tectonics, the mechanism that explains the topography of the Rocky Mountains, hadn't been discovered, and so forth. How does science progress? How do scientific theories evolve over time?

Many of the animals and plants encountered by the expedition are now extinct or endangered. What is extinction? How does it come about?

Research Skills

Follow the careers of expedition members after the journey--e.g. John Colter

Find diaries of other western explorers during the 1800s--e.g. Maximilian

Look for art related to the early 1800s--e.g. Charles Russell, Karl Bodmer

Lewis and Clark Books by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw, "Animals on the Trail with Lewis and Clark," Clarion Books, 2002.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw, "The Lewis and Clark Trail Then and Now," Dutton, 2002.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw, "Plants on the Train with Lewis and Clark," 2003

Some Useful References on Lewis and Clark

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Fifer, Barbara, and Vicky Soderberg, "Along the Trail with Lewis and Clark," Second Edition, Farcountry Press, 2002

Jackson, Donald, ed., "Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with Related Documents: 1783-1854, 2nd ed.," University of Illinois Press, 1978

Long, Benjamin, "Backtracking: By Foot, Canoe, and Subaru Along the Lewis and Clark Trail," Sasquatch Books, Seattle, 2000

Moeller, Bill and Jan, "Lewis & Clark: A Photographic Journey," Mountain Press, 1999

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