

Explorers Head West

Americans knew little about western Native Americans or the land they lived on. President Jefferson wanted to learn more about the people and land of the West. He also wanted to see if there was a river route that could be taken to the Pacific Ocean.

Lewis and Clark Expedition

In 1803 the president asked Congress to fund an expedition to explore the West. To lead it, he chose former army captain **Meriwether Lewis**. Lewis then chose his friend Lieutenant **William Clark** to be the co-leader of the expedition.

To prepare for the journey, Lewis spent weeks studying with experts about plants, surveying, and other subjects. This knowledge would allow him to take careful notes on what

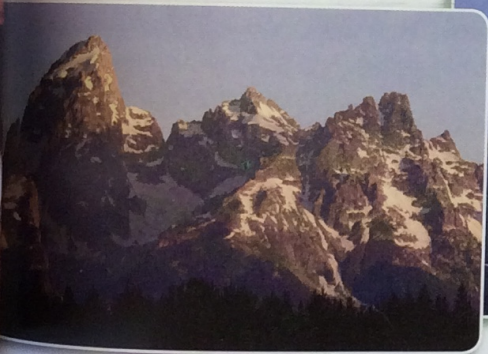
he saw. With Clark, Lewis carefully selected about 50 skilled frontiersmen to join the Corps of Discovery, as they called their group.

In May 1804 the **Lewis and Clark expedition** began its long journey to explore the **Louisiana Purchase**. The Corps of Discovery traveled up the Missouri River to the village of St. Charles. Once past this village the men would receive no more letters, fresh supplies, or reinforcements.

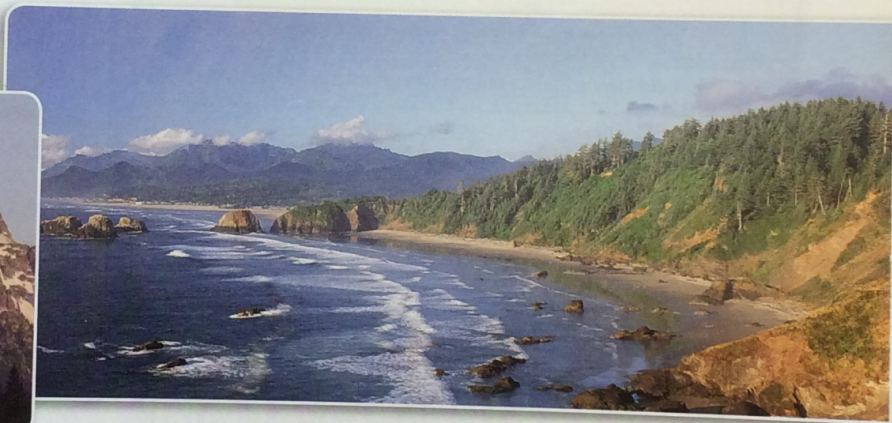
Lewis and Clark used the Missouri River as their highway through the unknown lands. As they moved upstream, a lookout on the boats kept a sharp eye out for sandbars and for tree stumps hidden underwater. When darkness fell, the weary explorers would pull their boats ashore. They cooked, wrote in their journals, and slept. Swarms of gnats, flies, and mosquitoes often interrupted their sleep.

FOCUS ON OHIO

In 1787 the Northwest Territory was considered the western edge of the United States. Only 16 years later, with the Louisiana Purchase, it had shifted to the middle of the nation. Over these years, American settlers transformed the state from frontier wilderness into profitable farms and communities.



The expedition relied on 24 horses to cross the Rocky Mountains.



The explorers paddled down the Columbia River toward the Pacific in five canoes.

August 12, 1805

Lewis climbs the first ridge to the Continental Divide.

September 1805

The expedition nearly starves. Local peoples help the explorers.

November 7, 1805

The expedition reaches a bay of the Pacific Ocean.

August 23, 1805 The hills or mountains were not like those I had seen, but like the side of a tree straight up.

—William Clark

ANALYSIS SKILL

READING TIME LINES

On what date did the explorers reach the western most point of their journey?

Primary Source

JOURNAL ENTRY

September 17, 1804, Great Plains

While traveling across the Great Plains, Meriwether Lewis marveled at the richness of the land.

"The shortness . . . of grass gave the plain the appearance throughout its whole extent of beautiful bowling-green in fine order . . . this scenery, already rich, pleasing, and beautiful was still farther heightened by immense herds of Buffalo, deer Elk and Antelopes which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains. I do not think I exaggerate when I estimate the number of Buffalo which could be compre[hend]ed at one view to amount to 3000."

—Meriwether Lewis, quoted in *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, edited by Reuben Bold Theraites

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

What did Lewis find so impressive about the Great Plains?

Insects were not the only cause of sleeplessness for the Corps of Discovery. As weeks passed without seeing any Native Americans, the explorers wondered what their first encounter would be like.

Contact with Native Americans

During the summer of 1804 the Corps of Discovery had pushed more than 600 miles upriver without seeing any Native Americans. But when the men spotted huge buffalo herds in the distance, they guessed that Indian groups would be nearby. Many Indian groups depended on the buffalo for food, clothing, and tools.

Lewis used interpreters to talk to the leaders of each of the peoples they met. He told them that the United States now owned the land on which the Native Americans lived. Yet the explorers relied on the goodwill of the people they met. **Sacagawea** (sak-uh-juh-WEE-uh),

a Shoshone from the Rocky Mountains, accompanied the group with her husband, a French fur trader who lived with the Mandan Indians and served as a guide and interpreter. Sacagawea helped the expedition by naming plants and by gathering edible fruits and vegetables for the group. At one point, the group met with Sacagawea's brother, who provided horses and a guide to lead the expedition across the mountains.

After crossing the Rocky Mountains, Lewis and Clark followed the Columbia River. Along the way they met the powerful Nez Percé. Like the Shoshone, the Nez Percé provided the expedition with food. At last, in November 1805, Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean. The explorers stayed in the Pacific Northwest during the rough winter. In March 1806 Lewis and Clark set out on the long trip home.

Lewis and Clark had not found a river route across the West to the Pacific Ocean. But they had learned much about western lands and paths across the Rockies. The explorers also established contact with many Native American groups and collected much valuable information about western plants and animals.

Pike's Exploration

In 1806 a young army officer named **Zebulon Pike** was sent on another mission to the West. He was ordered to find the starting point of the Red River. This was important because the United States considered the Red River to be a part of the Louisiana Territory's western border with New Spain.

Heading into the Rocky Mountains, in present-day Colorado, Pike tried to reach the summit of the mountain now known as Pikes Peak. In 1807 he traveled into Spanish-held lands until Spanish cavalry arrested him. They suspected Pike of being a spy. When he was finally released, he returned to the United States and reported on his trip. Despite his imprisonment, he praised the opportunities for doing business with the Spanish in the Southwest. Pike's

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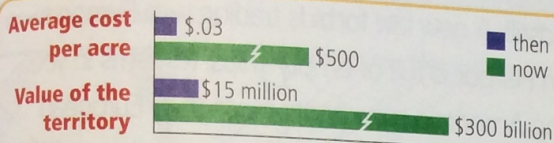
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LINKING TO TODAY

The Louisiana Purchase

Lewis and Clark would be surprised to see what has become of the lands they explored. The lands of the Louisiana Purchase are rich with natural resources and support enormous agricultural production.



Natural Resources oil, natural gas, coal, gemstones, copper, iron ore, lead, zinc, silver, limestone, sulphur, diamonds, helium

Major Agricultural and Livestock Production rice, cattle, chicken, hogs, corn, wheat, sugarcane, cotton, dairy products, hay



ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Other than agricultural goods, what types of valuable resources are found in the former Louisiana Purchase?

report offered many Americans their first description of the Southwest.

READING CHECK Supporting a Point of View

What would you do if you were Pike and found yourself in Spanish territory?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW The Louisiana Purchase nearly doubled the size of the United States. In the next section you will learn about increasing tensions between the United States and Great Britain.

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SR8 HP8

Section 2 Assessment

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. **Identify** What new states were added to the Union by the early 1800s?

b. **Explain** Why were New Orleans and the Mississippi River important to settlers in the West?
- a. **Recall** What two reasons did Napoléon have for selling Louisiana to the United States?

b. **Summarize** Why was the **Louisiana Purchase** important to the United States?

c. **Predict** What are some possible results of expansion into the Louisiana Purchase?
- a. **Describe** What areas did the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Pike expedition explore?

b. **Draw Conclusions** Why were **Meriwether Lewis** and **William Clark** chosen to lead the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase?

Critical Thinking

- Sequencing** Review your notes on the Louisiana Purchase. Then copy the graphic organizer below and use it to rank the three most important effects of the Louisiana Purchase, from most important to least important, and explain why you chose that order.

Importance	Why
1.	
2.	
3.	

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Gathering Information about a Person's Actions** Make a list of Jefferson's actions—the ones that would put him on that top-ten list. Add any new character traits you have discovered.