Lewis and Clark SAC Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
Were Lewis and Clark respectful to the Native Americans they met on their journey?

Materials:
- Lewis and Clark SAC PowerPoint
- Copies of Lewis and Clark Documents A-E
- Copies of Lewis and Clark Guiding Questions
- Copies of Lewis and Clark SAC Graphic Organizer

Plan of Instruction:

Note: This activity works best if students have an opportunity to read documents and answer Guiding Questions before starting the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC).

1. Introduction: Lewis and Clark SAC PowerPoint.
   a. Slide 1: The Lewis and Clark Expedition.
   b. Slide 2: [Map of Lewis and Clark Expedition.] At the start of the 19th century, the newly independent United States consisted of the original thirteen colonies plus most of the former British land claims east of the Mississippi River.

   France claimed a large expanse of land in the middle of the continent, which they named La Louisiane, from 1699-1762. In 1763 France ceded the land to their ally Spain as part of the treaty ending the Seven Years’ War with Britain. Louisiana included the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, which became more and more important as trade in the West grew. It also included the port of New Orleans, a huge commercial center at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Through a treaty with Spain in 1795, the United States was allowed to export goods through New Orleans and to navigate the rest of the Mississippi. However, in 1798 Spain revoked the treaty, upsetting American merchants.

   In 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte took Louisiana back from Spain. The next year, Jefferson sent diplomats to Paris to negotiate the purchase of New Orleans and the surrounding areas in order to secure American control of trade on the Mississippi. Though Napoleon had reclaimed Louisiana in the hopes of establishing a French empire in North America, he soon abandoned his plans as France failed to defeat the Haitian Revolution and war with Britain continued.
The American diplomats were authorized to pay up to $10 million for New Orleans and the surrounding area. They were shocked when the French offered the enormously larger territory of Louisiana for $15 million. Convinced that the United States would approve, the American representatives accepted the offer on April 30, 1803. Though there were some doubts over the constitutionality of the deal, Congress quickly ratified the treaty.

**Note:** If you’ve covered Federalists and Anti-Federalists previously, you might remind students that President Thomas Jefferson was an Anti-Federalist. He favored a national economy based on agriculture rather than industry and as such was eager to acquire more land for the country’s growing population. You can download our lesson on Federalists and Anti-Federalists at [https://sheg.stanford.edu/federalists-antifederalists](https://sheg.stanford.edu/federalists-antifederalists).

c. Slide 3: The Louis and Clark Expedition. *Though on paper Louisiana belonged to the United States, Americans had no established command and little knowledge of the purchased land. So, President Jefferson ordered an expedition of thirty U.S. Army volunteers, led by his aide Meriwether Lewis and soldier William Clark, to explore the territory. The objectives of the expedition included:*

   i. Exploring resources and mapping territory
   ii. Finding a route across the continent for commerce
   iii. Establishing an American presence to preempt European powers from claiming it
   iv. Establishing trade with Native American tribes
   v. Emphasizing the United States’ sovereignty to Native Americans

   The expedition lasted from May 1804 to September 1806. They departed from St. Louis and reached the Pacific coast.

d. Slide 5: Native Americans in the West. *While the members of Lewis and Clark’s expedition were the first Americans to see the western half of the continent, dozens of Native American nations had lived in the region for millennia. While there were possibly millions of indigenous people living in the present-day American West before European contact, by 1800, the population was reduced to hundreds of thousands, mostly by diseases brought by Europeans.*

   Lewis and Clark’s team came into contact with nearly fifty Native American tribes during their expedition. These nations had very diverse societies and cultures. To give a very few examples:

   1. The Mandans farmed corn, beans, and squash. They lived in earth lodges and were open to trade with the United States.
2. Breeding and herding horses was important to the Lakota, who used the animals to hunt buffalo and protect their lands from foreigners.

3. Chinookan tribes were coastal peoples whose staple was salmon. They made large canoes, lived in long houses, and had little conflict with their neighbors.

4. The land of the Nez Perce covered millions of acres, where they lived in over 100 villages.

5. By contrast, the Clatsop were a small tribe, composing just three villages.

Some of these tribes had been in contact with English and French traders for decades before Lewis and Clark arrived. Others may not have seen white or black people before the Corps of Discovery but had indirectly been in contact with the relative newcomers through trade, the introduction of horses, and disease.

e. Slide 6: Central Historical Question. Today you will read five documents and participate in a Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) to answer the question: Were Lewis and Clark respectful to the Native Americans they met on their journey?

2. If this is your students’ first SAC, introduce the SAC as new activity. Show PowerPoint slides 6-9. Ask if students have any questions about the structure.

Today’s Central Historical Question: Were Lewis and Clark respectful to the Native Americans they met on their journey?

3. Divide students into groups of four, and then divide each group of four into Team A and Team B.

Team A will argue Lewis and Clark were respectful.
Team B will argue Lewis and Clark were not respectful.

Teams use the Graphic Organizer to collect data for their side. [If students haven’t answered Guiding Questions in advance, they should do so before beginning to collect evidence for their side].

3. Team A presents to Team B, and Team B repeats arguments back to Team A, until Team A is satisfied.

4. Team B presents to Team A, and Team A repeats arguments back to Team B, until Team B is satisfied.

5. Teams try to reach consensus.
6. Share out groups’ consensus. Discuss:
   • Were Lewis and Clark respectful to the Native Americans they met on their journey?
   • What perspectives are missing from this document set?

Citations
Document A

Document B

Document C

Document D

Document E

Reference

Acknowledgments
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