

## WESTWARD EXPANSION

At the beginning of the 19th century, immense interest grew in exploration of the western United States. President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase which added a vast area of land to the United States that had never been explored. European settlers traveled in covered wagons to this new land in search of a new beginning. They saw the West as an opportunity for adventure. Some men saw potential wealth through trade and settlement of the West. Early explorers to the West called the Plains area the “Great American Desert,” since much of the land was flat desert. However, Jefferson thought that there was more to the West than desert. He saw a land of opportunity for discovery and trade.

Jefferson was interested in the West for two main reasons. He had an avid interest in science and ethnology, therefore he was interested in the wildlife, geography, and peoples of the West. He also wanted to find what he called the “Northwest Passage,” the most direct water route across the United States. He believed this would increase trade and commerce. In order to explore the West, Jefferson asked Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to head an expedition to the West. This was the “Voyage of Discovery,” and the expedition left

Camp River Dubois in 1804. Although Lewis and Clark did not find the “Northwest Passage,” they encountered many interesting plants, animals, and peoples. They encountered Plains Indians (including the Sioux, Arapaho, Osage, Comanche, Cheyenne and Kiowa) who helped Lewis and Clark navigate their route. “Mountain men,” who were rugged hunters and explorers, joined the expedition. George Drouillard was a famous mountain man who was part of the trip. The men kept a thorough record of their travel and compiled important information about the West for future explorers.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) Which United States President was first to be interested in exploring the West?

Answer: President Thomas Jefferson

2) What did early explorers call the “Great American Desert?”

Answer: the Plains area

3) Jefferson was interested in the West for two main reasons. What were these reasons?

Answer: a) avid interest in science: wanted to find out about the plants, animals and peoples of the West

b) he wanted to find what he called the “Northwest Passage,” the most direct water route across the United States. He believed this would increase trade and commerce.

4) What was the “Northwest Passage?”

Answer: Jefferson believed there was a direct water route to the Pacific Ocean which he called the “Northwest Passage.”

5) Who did Jefferson ask to go on the “Voyage of Discovery?”

Answer: Meriwether Lewis and William Clark

6) Where did the expedition leave from in 1804?

Answer: Camp River Dubois

7) Who were “mountain men?”

Answer: rugged hunters and explorers

8) Who was George Drouillard?

Answer: a famous “mountain man” on the Lewis and Clark expedition

## MISSING LETTERS

Fill in the missing letters to these words. There are clues to help you find the answer.

Use the words from the list.

Sioux

Mountain Men

Plains

West

Jefferson

Camp River Dubois

Louisiana Purchase

Drouillard

Northwest Passage

Lewis, Clark

Voyage of Discovery

1) The direction the “Voyage of Discovery” traveled.

\_ E \_ T

2) The President that was interested in exploring the West.

\_ \_ F \_ E R \_ \_ N

3) The major purchase of the United States in 1803.

\_ \_ U I \_ I A \_ \_ \_ U R \_ \_ A S \_

4) The area that some explorers called the “Great American Desert.”

\_ \_ A \_ N S

5) The route that Jefferson hoped Lewis and Clark would discover on the expedition.

\_ \_ \_ T \_ W \_ S \_ \_ A S \_ \_ G \_

6) The leaders of the expedition.

\_ \_ W I \_ \_ L A \_ K

7) The name of the expedition.

\_ O Y A \_ \_ \_ F \_ I \_ \_ O V \_ R \_

8) The name of the camp that Lewis and Clark left from in 1804.

\_ A \_ P \_ I V \_ R \_ U \_ O I \_

9) The name of one of the Native American tribes the expedition encountered.

\_ I O \_ \_

10) Another name for rugged hunters and explorers.

\_ \_ U N T \_ \_ N \_ \_ N

11) A famous "Mountain Man" on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

\_ R \_ \_ \_ L \_ A R \_

## MISSING LETTERS (ANSWER KEY)

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L O U I S I A N A      P U R C H A S E

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N O R T H W E S T      P A S S A G E

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L E W I S      C L A R K

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V O Y A G E                      O F                      D I S C O V E R Y

8) The name of the camp that Lewis and Clark left from in 1804.

C A M P                      R I V E R                      D U B O I S

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D R O U I L L A R D