

Answer Key: GIS Activity: The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Introduction: Using the Browser Tools

3. What is the year, month, and day that that campsite was occupied by members of the expedition?

Yr _____ Mo _____ Day _____

Answers will vary

What is the latitude and longitude of that campsite?

Lat _____ Long _____

Answers will vary

What segment of the expedition did you click on?

Answers will vary

Was this segment part of the Eastbound journey, the Westbound journey or both?

Answers will vary

Activity 1: Where are the key benchmarks along the Lewis and Clark Trail?

In which segment of the expedition did Lewis and Clark travel the greatest distance? Circle one.

A – B B – C C – D

List some possible reasons why this segment of the expedition might have gone so much faster?

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- The explorers knew where they were going – no need to take time looking for the best route
- Familiarity with the route enabled them to be prepared for difficulties and avoid costly delays
- The explorers were less focused on data and specimen collection than they had been on the outbound route
- The explorers were anxious to get home and report what they had learned.

Activity 2: How much did the Lewis and Clark Expedition contribute to geographic knowledge of the far west?

Do you think the Lewis and Clark Expedition accomplished its goal of expanding geographic knowledge by exploring, surveying, and mapping the path of the Missouri River to its source and from there down the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean? Explain your answer briefly.

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- Yes, they did reach the Pacific via the Missouri and Columbia Rivers
- Yes, their maps of the route they traveled provided far more detail about the area than had been previously known
- Yes, they recorded detailed observations about the land, climate, and population they encountered along their route

List three examples of changes in geographic knowledge about Northwest America that resulted from the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- Yes, they discovered that the Rocky Mountains were much larger than previously believed
- Yes, they discovered that there were coastal mountains between the Rockies and the Pacific
- Yes, they realized that the Oregon and Columbia Rivers were one and the same

Activity 3: Did Lewis and Clark find a direct and practical water route across North America?

Refer to the Arrowsmith map to describe misconceptions about the North American landscape that led Jefferson and others of his era to believe that there was a good possibility of a water route linking the Missouri River and the Columbia Rivers.

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- They believed that the Rocky Mountains were a single ridge and (based on Indian reports) that the source of the Columbia River was only a short distance from the source of the Missouri
- They believed the continent was relatively flat between the Rockies and the Pacific coast

Refer to the USGS Color shaded relief image in answering the following question.

Why isn't it possible for such a water route to exist in North America?

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- Ruggedness and extent of the Rocky Mountains
- Coastal mountains (Cascade Range)
- Significant drop in elevation from the Rockies to the coast means the rivers have many rapids and falls

Activity 4: What Native American tribes did Lewis and Clark encounter on their expedition?

Note the difference between the way Minor tribes and Major Tribes are indicated. Explain that difference in the space below.

Minor tribes are labeled with Title Case and Major tribes are labeled with UPPER CASE

Identify three major tribes that Lewis and Clark encountered in this segment.

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- Missouri
- Omaha
- Yankton
- Arikara

Toggle between the 1814 map and the Native American map (by turning the 1814 layer on and off) to identify the Native American from whom the explorers sought assistance in finding their way out of the mountains.

Answers will vary, but possible answers include the following:

- Nez Perce
- Flathead
- Lemhi (Shoshone)

Conclusion: Observations and Reflections

List three more questions about the Lewis and Clark expedition that you could explore using the maps in the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. Which maps would help you explore the questions?

Answers will vary

Describe something that you have learned about the Lewis and Clark Expedition from this activity that you did not know before you began.

Answers will vary